

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 20th December, 1897.

Petition: Stockyard Creek Gold-mining Syndicate (praying for relief by grant); Speaker's Ruling—(Question: Additional water supply for Perth—Mining on Private Property Bill: first reading—Loan Estimates: in committee—Papers (plans of new railway—) Presented—Homesteads Act Amendment Bill: first reading; second reading (moved and withdrawn)—City of Perth Tramways Bill: first reading—Annual Estimates (adoption): in Committee of Ways and Means—Appropriation Bill: first reading—Lady Broome Annuity Bill: second and third readings—Sharks Bay Pearlshell Fishery Act Amendment Bill: second and third readings—Bunbury Racecourse Railway Bill: second and third readings—Collie Quarry Railway Bill: second and third readings—Kalgoorlie-Guamballa Lake and Boulder Townsite Loop Railways Bill: second and third readings—Point of Procedure re Railway Bills—Public Education Bill: second reading—Industrial Statistics Bill: Legislative Council's Amendments considered—Employment Brokers Bill: Legislative Council's Amendments considered (progress reported)—Imported Labour Registry Bill: Legislative Council's Amendments considered—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7-30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION—STOCKYARD CREEK GOLD-MINING SYNDICATE.

MR. OLDHAM moved for leave to present a petition from the Stockyard Creek Gold-mining Syndicate, praying for redress in connection with the marking out of a certain gold-mining prospecting area on the Margaret River.

Leave given, and petition read.

SPEAKER'S RULING.

THE SPEAKER: It seems to me that this petition is out of order, as it prays for relief in the shape of a money grant. I think this shows the necessity of the Speaker having an opportunity of seeing petitions before they are presented to the House. Unless I have such opportunities—and I do not have them—I am unable to say whether petitions are in order before they have been read. Now that my attention is drawn to it, I must certainly rule this petition out of order.

Petition accordingly ruled out of order.

QUESTION—ADDITIONAL WATER SUPPLY FOR PERTH.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): With regard to the question which the member for West Perth has down on the Notice Paper, as to what steps the Government intend to take with

regard to an extra water supply for the city of Perth during the coming summer, I do not know what the hon. member expects me to say. A large sum has already been spent by the Metropolitan Waterworks Board, and now more is required. I do not think the Treasury is in a position to advance the money. I will try and answer the hon. member at another time.

MINING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY BILL.

Introduced by Mr. QUINLAN, and read a first time.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House resolved into committee of the whole, to consider the Estimates of Expenditure from Loan Funds for the financial year ending June 30th, 1898.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the first item, said: I must again inform hon. members that the Loan Estimates are in a different position from the ordinary Estimates for the year, inasmuch as they do not introduce any matter whatever that has not already been approved of by Parliament. The object of submitting Loan Estimates to Parliament is, in the first place, in order that the committee should have an opportunity of scrutinising and controlling the expenditure from loan votes on account of salaries. Hon. members will notice that there are a great many officers employed and paid from loan votes, the amount expended on this head amounting to the large sum of £101,183. It is particularly useful to hon. members, I think, to have set before them the number of officers employed under loan votes, as also the salaries paid them. The consideration of these salaries certainly forms one of the most important functions of this committee in regard to the Loan Estimates. Another object effected by submitting these Loan Estimates is that this procedure affords the committee an opportunity of controlling the expenditure of certain works during the current year. Parliament has approved of these works being undertaken under loan votes, but it is for this committee to say in what order the works are to be undertaken, and to what extent in

any one year. This committee can exercise a serious influence in these matters, for hon. members can judge for themselves whether the works which have been approved of by law are proposed to be undertaken in proper sequence and to a sufficient extent. These are the two reasons why Loan Estimates are submitted to this committee. There is an appropriation really under the Loan Acts for many of these works, but the committee have now to say whether the distribution of salaries is on an accurate basis, whether the works proposed to be undertaken are such as should be undertaken this year, and whether the manner of the expenditure meets with their approval. Hon. members will notice that there is a very large sum proposed to be expended from loan votes. Altogether during this year, of which five months have elapsed, it is proposed to spend £1,784,765; and, of this amount, up to the end of November £694,000 odd has been expended. Besides that, there is a great deal in these Estimates which appears as expenditure for which money has already been provided. Hon. members will notice that rails, fastenings, and rolling stock have been indented for, but I do not suppose there will be any real expenditure of money on account of those items during the coming seven months.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about the stores?

THE PREMIER: Stores are charged against the vote as they are required. As I said the other night, owing to one reason or the other—reasons all bad, I think—there is a delay sometimes in charging the vote as quickly as it should be; but that has been overcome, and we hope that our system will work more quickly in the future than it has done in the past, and that, so soon as the goods are issued, they will be charged against the vote. It sometimes happens that a larger amount of stores is in the hands of the Storekeeper, and perhaps there are outstanding vouchers amounting to a considerable sum which would reduce the item, but till the Storekeeper gets a release he is charged with the full value. I do not know I need say very much in regard to these Estimates, but I will say a few words in regard to some of the railways. The Geraldton-to-Murchison goldfields railway, the Southern Cross-to-Kalgoorlie

railway, the Donnybrook-to-Bridgetown railway, the Collie Coalfield railway, the Menzies railway, the Kanowna railway, the Kalgoorlie-Boulder railway—all these, hon. members are aware, are in hand. We hope they will all be finished, or nearly so, by the 30th June next. Of course expenditure has gone on in regard to each of these railways. I have before me the figures up to the end of November, showing the amount expended during the five months that are past on each of these railways. It is supposed that the items in the third column on page 13 will suffice to carry on the construction of these railways during the currency of the present financial year. Then we come to additions and improvements to opened railways, on which the large sum of £525,797 18s. 6d. was spent last year—an immense sum, and perhaps too much. At any rate it was a very large sum. It was not too much in regard to the necessities of the work. I am not going to say anything against that. I believe they have all been necessary, and all will decrease the working expenses of the railway; but still a very large sum of money has been expended, when money was not too plentiful. During this year it is proposed to expend £300,000, and of that amount £165,710 had been spent up to the 30th November. On railway workshops the proposed expenditure is not large, being only £3,727 for this year; and I may explain that until the Engineer-in-Chief has finally decided in regard to the machinery for the workshops, it is not desirable to go ahead with their construction very rapidly. During his recent visit to England, the Engineer-in-Chief had an opportunity of obtaining reports from some of the best engineers in regard to the construction and arrangement of railway workshops; and the information so obtained has modified the view originally held as to the construction of railway workshops in this colony. In regard to rails and fastenings, the account for this is kept separate from that of the railway rolling stock, under our new system. For rails it is proposed to expend £125,000 this year, and of that amount there had been spent up to the end of November £40,431. For rolling stock it is proposed to expend £300,000 this year, and of that amount we had expended up to

the end of November £209,683. so that there is not much more of that amount to expend. Class 3 comprises items under the head of "Harbour and River Improvements," and in regard to the Fremantle harbour works, on which £202,770 was expended last year, we propose to expend £194,457 during the present financial year, and of that amount we had expended up to the end of November £46,415. On the Fremantle dock and slip we proposed to expend £17,000, and of that amount we had expended, up to the end of November, £5,646. The other items in this class are small, and it is not necessary to refer to them in detail. Class 4 provides small amounts for public buildings. In regard to class 5, "Water Supply and Sewerage for Towns," it is proposed to expend £35,000 on water supply, and that is made up to a large extent of expenditure in connection with Fremantle and other towns of the colony. These water supplies for towns are a great trouble to the Government, involving a large expenditure; and something will really have to be done in regard to them, unless the Government are to undertake all these works in the various towns at their own expense, and on their own responsibility. The Fremantle water supply has been a continual drain, though not a large one; and I think it would be much better if the Fremantle people would enter into some arrangement with the Government for taking over the water supply for Fremantle. Some time ago they did offer to take it over, and the Government did not then consent. I regret that we did not do so, for I am satisfied now it would have been better for the colony if we had made a present of the works to the people of Fremantle free of all cost, rather than continue to manage them and incur more expenditure for supplying further facilities and conveniences which are continually being demanded.

MR. A. FORREST: They have not paid any water rate at Fremantle.

THE PREMIER: But they do now. The whole question of water supply for towns is a serious one. Take, for instance, the water supply of Perth, which we last year placed under the control of the Metropolitan Waterworks Board. In compliance with a wish of the citizens, the Government purchased the waterworks from the old company,

which was in a sort of dying condition, not able to do anything for effectually carrying on or increasing the supply; and in despair the citizens asked the Government to purchase the works, saying that if we did so, and handed them over to the management of the citizens, the arrangement would be much more satisfactory. The Government purchased the works, and placed them under the control of a new body, the Metropolitan Waterworks Board. Besides the purchase money, we provided £130,000 for improving the water supply, believing that sum would be sufficient; but we now find that every penny of the money has been spent, and the new board are in debt at the present moment.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What have they done with the money?

THE PREMIER: I do not know; but I suppose the Auditor General has satisfied himself the money has been properly expended. We have a proposal before us from the board that they should be allowed to obtain from the Government a further sum of £250,000; and we hear my friend, the member for West Perth (Mr. Wood), telling us here that the Government are responsible now for supplying the citizens with water, and asking us what we are going to do, what are our views about it, and saying we must provide a sufficient supply. When we consider the whole matter, we find the board want £250,000 more.

MR. A. FORREST: You ought to have left the management to the City Council.

THE PREMIER: If we comply with this request from the board, we shall have advanced £600,000 for the Perth water supply; and we hear some hon. members asking also that the deep-sewerage scheme, of all things, must go on, and this would involve another £300,000, bringing up the total to £900,000. We also know the Mayor of Perth wants to increase the borrowing powers of the City Council for raising £250,000, making £1,150,000 altogether. I do not know whether the citizens of Perth realise that they are going in a path which will land them in a debt of £1,150,000. I say that, under present conditions, the Government are not prepared to find all this money for the city of Perth. The Government want money for the Coolgardie goldfields water supply,

as hon. members know; and we have difficulty in obtaining, at a suitable rate of interest, all the money we require in regard to that scheme. Still, we are asked whether we intend to provide £250,000 for the water supply of Perth in addition to what has been provided by the Government already. We are also asked to provide £400,000 for the deep sewerage of Perth, with a further sum required for the deep sewerage of Fremantle. All these calls upon us would absorb all the borrowing resources of the Government to supply the requirements of these two towns. In regard to extending the water supply of Perth, my opinion is that it is not an urgent matter at the present moment. The Engineer-in-Chief showed me to-day an analysis of the artesian water obtained from the bore in Perth; and, in regard to it, the analytical chemist says the water is quite fit for human consumption. Still, some people in Perth think it is not, and they want to obtain an expensive supply from some other source. In fact, they want a palace, when they ought to be content with a nice house. There are a million of gallons of water from the artesian bore at Midland Junction, running away ready to be enclosed in pipes, and coming from some height in the Darling Range. That is good water, and it seems to me ridiculous for people to say that artesian water is not good enough for human consumption, when we have not got money to obtain a better supply. I am not going to involve this country in financial difficulties, because some people in Perth think the water supply obtained from a depth of 800ft. is not good enough for human consumption, when we have analyses to prove that it is good enough. We are all interested in Perth, and we must really be careful or we shall have a debt upon us which is not justified in the present condition of the city of Perth, and which will perhaps be a burden for all time. Fremantle has gone along more carefully in regard to water supply, being satisfied with the subterranean supply, not artesian; indeed, I believe it is a better supply, and they get it at a less cost. I think we must try to put the Fremantle water supply under some local control; but that controlling body must not be in a position to come to the Government and demand money. If they

must have money for increasing or extending the supply, they must get money in some other way. All the borrowing powers of the Government are wanted for other projects, which are intimately wrapped up with the future of this colony. With regard to the Coolgardie water scheme, hon. members will see a very small sum on the Loan Estimates. We could have put a larger sum on for this year, but we have put on such a sum as we consider sufficient for the requirements of this work during the remainder of this financial year. If hon. members will turn to page 53, they will see it is proposed that £50,000 shall be spent in commencing the Coolgardie goldfields water supply, principally for the construction of the reservoir. The Engineer-in-Chief has himself put down this amount, and he says that, even if instructed at once to go on with the work, he cannot well spend more than this amount between the present time and the end of June next, seeing that this money is required in connection with the reservoir. It will be observed also that for the development of goldfields there is the large sum of £177,928 estimated to be expended during the financial year, and a portion of that has already been spent. In regard to the last item, "Miscellaneous, including charges and expenses of raising loans," that amount has, of course, been absorbed, owing to the price which the last loan realised, namely, 95 per cent., and, being below par, it took all this amount, and a little more, to make up the difference to par. I do not consider the price realised for the last loan is low, taking it in connection with the value of securities generally. Referring to the Loan Estimates generally, if hon. members look at pages 18 to 25, they will see a short account of the unexpended balances on the 30th June, 1897; and the estimated outstanding liabilities with the estimated expenditure and the estimated balances on the 30th June, 1898. They will also see, in column 6, the progress made in the expenditure, as well as the progress that is anticipated to be made by the end of June, 1898; and these figures will give an idea of the state of the loan works of the colony at the beginning of the financial year, and also the state in which they are expected to be at the end of the financial year. As mem-

bers who have been some time in this House will be aware, these Estimates do not bring before hon. members anything new, as all the works here provided for have been authorised by statute. These Loan Estimates show the number of officers employed, with the salaries to be paid; and they show the progress proposed to be made during this financial year in the works which this House has approved of. I beg to move the first item in Class 1.

Votes 1 to 12, inclusive, put *seriatim*, and passed without debate.

The Loan Estimates being completed, the resolutions of the committee were reported, and the report was adopted.

PAPERS (PLANS) PRESENTED.

By the DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS:

1. Plan showing Bunbury Racecourse Railway route. 2. Plan showing Collie Quarry Railway route. 3. Plan showing Kalgoorlie-Gnamballa Lake and Boulder Railway route. 4. Plan showing Owen's Anchorage Railway route.

Ordered to lie on the table.

HOMESTEADS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, and read a first time.

SECOND READING (MOVED).

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell), in moving the second reading, said: The object of the Bill is to give the Government power to deal with the homestead blocks in the South-Western part of the colony. At the present time we cannot deal with homestead farms unless situated in a declared agricultural area. Outside that area, selectors cannot take up land under the Homesteads Act; and we find it desirable to allow them to select homestead farms in any part of the country. The object of the Bill is simply to give that power.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I would like to explain, further, that the Homesteads Act, when it was passed, provided that land should be selected only within the declared agricultural areas—that is, the free homestead farms might be selected from any land set apart for the purpose in declared agricultural areas. It has been found, as I am informed by the Commissioner, that this provision somewhat retards

settlement. Although he is desirous that the system under the Act should continue to be the general way in which land is selected, still there are occasions when freer selection is desirable. In fact, the Minister wants to catch every fish that is about, and bring it into his net. If there is a man who wants a farm, the Commissioner wishes to be in a position to give him that farm, whether it is within an agricultural area or not.

A MEMBER: What about the mining areas?

THE PREMIER: The Bill will not enlarge the provisions of the mining law. It only deals with the South-Western district of the colony, and will allow free selection instead of keeping it to restricted areas. The Commissioner informs me that the confining of selections to a certain area does not work well; in fact, people have complained of it. They say: "You advertise that 160 acres of land can be selected in any part of the colony, and then you make us go to such and such a place. But we want to go here, and not there." Then the department says: "We have not laid out any lands here: therefore, you cannot select." So that my friend, the Commissioner, wants to have the power to say, if he thinks it is all right: "Very well; you can go there." The effect of the Bill will be to make the regulations a little wider than was originally intended when we passed the Act. It was then proposed that no land should be given as a homestead farm unless it had first been surveyed. I recognise there may be some inconvenience in that provision, for hitherto the system has been survey before selection, and now the Commissioner wishes to have selection before survey, in some cases. I do not think the change will do any harm, although I am very much in favour of survey before selection. Still, I am not the head of the department at the present time, and when I find a Minister is desirous of developing the country and of promoting settlement, I must consider his wishes and try to fall in with them.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I regret that this Bill was not brought before the House at an earlier stage of the session. It seems to me that the Premier touched the keynote, a moment ago, when he said it would practically alter the whole scheme of the Homesteads Act as originally pro-

posed, which was that there should be survey before selection.

MR. A. FORREST: He is altering it in the right direction.

MR. LEAKE: I am very glad to hear it. But it is brought in at so late an hour in the session that it is hardly right to ask the House to alter the principle of the measure known as the Homesteads Act. Of course this is a matter which affects the agriculturists more than anybody else, and I throw this out as a suggestion. Personally, I do not feel disposed to support the second reading. Surely it is a matter which could fairly well wait for the few months we shall be in recess. We ought not, I think, to pass such a material alteration without due consideration. If the Government are going to abandon the principle of survey before selection, well and good.

THE PREMIER: It is only in one particular case. Free selection is allowed under all the land regulations except this Act.

MR. LEAKE: This Bill deals with the South-Western district.

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. LEAKE: The object of the provision for survey before selection was to prevent people picking out the eyes of the country, and perhaps rendering a district unfit for the very purposes of the Homesteads Act. If two or three people combine to pick out the eyes of a district, it is useless to attempt to bring that district within the scope of the Homesteads Act. We cannot shut our eyes to the fact that the good land is patchy.

THE PREMIER: The principle of free selection obtains all over the country, except in the South-Western district.

MR. LEAKE: But the leading principle of the Homesteads Act was survey before selection; and you, by this Bill, are defeating the very object you had in view.

THE PREMIER: It is making free selection a little wider.

MR. LEAKE: If the homesteads scheme will not work, then it is time to repeal the Homesteads Act. In order to give the Government an opportunity of explaining this more fully to the House, I beg to move that this Bill be considered a fortnight hence.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): I rise to support this Bill, because when

the Homesteads Act was introduced in this House, it was known, I think to a great many members, and certainly to those connected in any way with agricultural pursuits in this country, that land settlement could never be properly effected unless there was free selection. I know this colony well, and I say at once that, even in the agricultural areas, this system of survey before selection is to all intents and purposes unworkable except in certain portions of the colony. This Homesteads Act restricts the areas in which homestead blocks can be taken up; but most people who have travelled about this colony know that it is impossible to place all the people who want homestead blocks in agricultural areas. I would give a man land in any part of the colony where he liked to select it. That is what we want to do. We do not want to have the land locked up. I like men to squat down upon it and improve it, and make it produce something. I am very pleased indeed to have the opportunity of supporting the Commissioner of Crown Lands in the direction in which he is moving, namely, to make our land laws a little more liberal. I cannot sit down without saying that I think the Lands Department have shown no energy whatever in bringing this Bill before the House at such a late period of the session, instead of introducing it a month or six weeks ago. I can see no reason why a Bill so important to the colony should not have been introduced in good time. The people of the colony are fully alive to the importance of this Land Bill, and of the Timber Bill. Why have they not been brought down before? Many small and, I may say, useless Bills have been introduced; but the important ones which the colony is looking forward to have not been brought down. I say the Commissioner of Lands has not shown that energy which he generally exhibits in the administration of his department in, thus neglecting to comply with the wishes of a large portion of the community. However, we must accept small things and be satisfied; and I am sure that in this little Bill which he has brought before the House, he is moving in the right direction. I am certain that the House will go with him, as it has been stated by the Premier

that a Land Bill will not be introduced this session.

THE PREMIER: It is on the table.

MR. A. FORREST: What is the good of its being on the table if it is not introduced? It might as well be in the hands of the Printer or the Commissioner. However, I am pleased to have an opportunity of voting for this Bill because I consider we should do all we can to promote the interests of agriculture.

MR. MITCHELL (the Murchison): I hope the Government will see their way to postpone consideration of this Bill till the next session of Parliament.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I think the Government have not considered what is involved in this Bill. Personally, I am strongly in favour of the principle of free selection before survey.

THE PREMIER: You are getting it here.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, we are; but this Bill applies to what is known as homestead farms; that is to cases where the Government give away 160 acres of land on certain conditions. I venture to say that this change of principle in connection with these lands involves a very large question, and necessitates a very long debate, which it would be impossible for this House, in justice to the question, to deal with in the time that remains at the disposal of this Parliament. If this Bill were passed, it would be possible for certain speculators to go into a particular district and, with the aid of one or two friends, pick out the eyes of that district, and maintain and hold the blocks against all comers. [A MEMBER: It would not pay well enough.] It is all very well for the hon. member to say that; but the time is coming when it will pay; when it may pay to do this for the sake of the timber, for all we know, and for other reasons. It might be possible to pick out the points of vantage in a certain district and completely blockade thousands of acres of land, which would otherwise fall into the hands of the class of people we intend to benefit by this Bill. Such a measure ought not to be rushed through the House at the close of the session.

THE PREMIER: I am not in accord with the hon. member who has just spoken on the matter of free selection. It is the curse of any country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You are going in for it here in its worst form.

THE PREMIER: Well, I am singular in that respect. Most people here think otherwise. At the same time, unless you give selectors a start, you will retard settlement. I have always been an advocate of free selection after survey, for in that case roads, reserves, town sites, and other provisions can be made during the survey; whereas the other system, by which people are allowed to go about spoiling the country, is no good. You get the eyes taken out of the country and only the worst of it left. But I am not here to advocate my own views. The Lands Department seem to think that free selection is better. I know it is a popular idea. We have had experience of free selection in this colony, and it has worked badly. Go over the colony and see the best waterholes picked out everywhere. While I do not believe in the principle, the Lands Department and the Minister think it a very good thing, and therefore bring in the Bill.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): It seems to me, apart from the danger pointed out by hon. members, that this Bill is open to another objection arising from the way in which it has been framed. The first clause of the Bill sets forth that:

The second section of the Homesteads Act Amendment Act, 1894, is hereby amended by inserting the following words between the words "colony" and "which," in the second line: "including any lands or any portions thereof;" and in sub-section two of the second section aforesaid, striking out the following words in the second line: "surveyed into sections and."

The first of these amendments is a material one; and I have copied out the second section of the Homesteads Act Amendment Act of 1894, which reads as follows:—

2. (1.) The Governor may, from time to time, order that any Crown lands in the South-West Division of the colony, which have been or may be set apart under the Land Regulations as Agricultural Areas, and also any Crown Lands in the Eastern or Eucla Divisions of the colony, situate within 40 miles of a railway, and also any lands that have been or may be set apart under the Land Regulations as Special Areas, situate within the said Eastern or Eucla Divisions, shall be available for free farm land, called "Homestead Farms."

(2.) No selection shall be allowed until the lands have been surveyed into sections and notified in the *Government Gazette* as open for selection.

(3.) Provided that nothing in this section shall prevent any Crown lands in an agricultural or special area, which have been surveyed into blocks, being also disposed of by conditional purchase under the Land Regulations and the Homesteads Act, 1893.

I am quite in accord with the principle of this amending Bill. I think that the idea of doing everything to extend the area of settlement in this colony is a good one, but a serious danger might arise from this. It might be possible to take up a homestead farm on a goldfield, and the land might prove to be auriferous. I could not be a party to land on the goldfields being taken up in the way proposed, without entering my protest against it.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): There is a danger, as stated by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie, in permitting this Bill to apply to the goldfields. If this restriction is withdrawn, land on the goldfields will be available for selection, as pointed out by him. I do not see much danger from allowing free selection to apply to timber lands, as the member for Central Murchison stated, because the Minister has a right to reject any application.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Nine out of ten would not know anything about it.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I have seen the opening up of agricultural areas throughout the length and breadth of this country. I have seen the way in which the country has been settled, and I have seen a large amount of money wasted in surveying the land for agricultural areas. Out of 100,000 acres selected, not 25 per cent. was afterwards taken up. Much of it was entirely unfit for agriculture. It really means that to-day there are hundreds of these blocks of land which have cost the country a good deal of money for surveying, and which will never be taken up. The only way to encourage the settlement of the land is to make the land laws as liberal as possible, with certain restrictions. I certainly believe that free selection should be permitted, and also that the applications should be subject to the approval of the Minister, who would, in granting an

application, give a portion of second and third-class land in addition to the first-class land. A great deal is required to induce people to go on to the land. We must remember, too, that land has been selected in the past principally to obtain water. There are not many water-holes left to select; therefore, this inducement for free selection cannot be offered now as formerly. I think very little harm would result provided the proper restrictions were enforced, if the Minister had it in his power to refuse applications under certain conditions. Outside of the goldfields, I would not bar free selection. Agricultural areas were marked off in the past frequently by men who knew nothing about the land. They made their selections without experience, and much of the land is utterly unfit for the purposes for which it was selected.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): I totally disagree with the opinions of the hon. member who has just sat down, and I am more in accord with those expressed by the Premier. I do not think that, at this stage of the colony's history, it would be well to revert to free selection for this particular class of land. I am satisfied it would lead to trouble, and that it would lead to no end of future expenditure on the part of the Government for roads in all sorts of out-of-the-way places. It would be a source of great annoyance to the holders of Government lands. The principle as applied to the South-Western lands is not a good one, at this stage of our history. It will be a wise step on the part of the Government to withdraw this Bill till our June sitting, when we will be able to consider this Bill together with the Land Bill. I am sure it will excite a good deal of discussion, and the more we discuss it the better it will be for the colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (in reply): I am sorry I did not make my meaning clear. I did not expect any opposition to the Bill, the introduction of which I considered essential in the interests of land settlement. We find ourselves hampered by the present Act, which prevents us from granting free farms outside agricultural areas unless smaller selections are taken up alongside of them. We want to be able to grant a free farm outside the agricultural area as well as inside. The

other day eighteen adults applied for free homestead farms outside an agricultural area, and they could not get these farms without being compelled to take up an additional amount of land. I will withdraw this Bill till the Land Bill is brought forward. I have been reproached with not having been energetic enough in bringing the measure forward. I plead guilty. I desired to bring it forward, but was unable to do so. It is a very important Bill, and there has been a great rush, and I did not think it desirable that an important Bill should be rushed through the House. I beg leave to withdraw the motion for the second reading.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

CITY OF PERTH TRAMWAYS BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS, and read a first time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

Resolutions passed in Committee of Supply, granting supplies amounting to £1,707,434 12s. 3d., in addition to the amount of £1,250,000 already appropriated by Supply Bills, were reported, and the report was adopted.

IN COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.

Resolution was passed, giving effect to the votes of supply already agreed to by granting the required amount out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund.

Resolution reported, and report adopted.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

LADY BROOME ANNUITY BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved the second reading of the Bill, without comment.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Passed through committee without debate or amendment.

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

SHARKS BAY PEARLSHELL FISHERY ACT, 1892, AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading,

said: The object of this short Bill is to extend the provisions of the Sharks Bay Pearlshell Fishery Act to other places along the North-West coast, where the pearlshell oyster may be cultivated. In 1892 the original Act was passed, providing for the cultivation of pearlshell in the waters of Sharks Bay, exactly as we now desire to do for other places along the North-West coast. There are persons who wish to propagate the mother-of-pearlshell oyster in places which are now barren, having been denuded of the pearlshell oyster that formerly grew on reefs or in the inlets and bays along the coast; and the persons who desire to do this have represented that they cannot cultivate these oysters successfully unless they are allowed an exclusive right extending over a certain area. In the case of the Sharks Bay waters, we provided that a license might issue giving an exclusive right for the cultivation of pearlshell oysters within a specified area, and in no other locality; and the Act provided that any area included in a license should not be more than six square miles, and should be for a period not extending beyond fourteen years, the annual rental being chargeable and payable in advance. We now propose to make the same provisions apply to other places where there are reefs in the inlets or bays along the coast or adjacent islands, and where these oysters cannot now be profitably cultivated. I may mention that the Abrolhos Islands have been reported on recently by Mr. Saville Kent, the Inspector of Fisheries, as being a locality where the mother-of-pearlshell may be established successfully; and a few days ago I received a letter from him, stating that a company had been formed in England for the purpose of cultivating these oysters on the Abrolhos Islands. This Bill will enable the Governor to proclaim any areas as suitable for the cultivation of the pearlshell oyster, and to which the regulations of the original Act may apply, under the same system of licensing as in the Act. If we can plant the mother-of-pearlshell oysters on the numerous reefs of the Abrolhos Islands, an industry may grow up there which will be of incalculable value. Mr. Saville Kent has informed us that the waters there are warmer than in other places along the coast, and that

the reefs are most extensive and suitable for the purpose. The reason for bringing in this Bill is that my friend the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill) has been approached by persons interested in the pearlshell fisheries on the North-West coast; and those persons say there are plenty of inlets and bays where these oysters can be cultivated successfully, but that this cannot be done without an exclusive right being given by license, for a term of years, to persons who will plant the oyster in the areas to be licensed. It is desirable that this industry should be extended on the North-West coast, where the mother-of-pearlshell is no longer obtainable in shallow places, but only by deep-sea diving; and if we can resuscitate this industry in places where the oysters have been denuded by being excessively worked, or in places favourable to their cultivation, a great benefit will result to the colony. I have no hesitation in recommending the provisions of this Bill to the approval of hon. members. I had much to do with framing the original Act; and I cannot understand now why I did not make its application general along the North-West coast; and it does seem to me now that the provision which is proposed in this Bill ought to have been in the original Act. I have pleasure in moving the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Passed through committee without debate or amendment.

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

BUNBURY RACECOURSE RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse), in moving the second reading, said: Hon. members will recollect that, when the Estimates were before us last session, an amount was placed upon them for the construction of this railway. The reason for constructing the railway and for the course it would take were then fully explained; but an enabling Bill was not passed, and I therefore find it necessary this year to apply to the House for such an Act. The railway, I may say, has already been constructed and opened for traffic; and we are coming rather late in the day to

ask the House to approve of it; but I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

THE SPEAKER, in putting the question, said he noticed that, according to the statute, the plans of this railway had been laid on the table.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Passed through committee without debate or amendment.

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

COLLIE QUARRY RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): In rising to move the second reading of this Bill, I may state that it is only for a short line of railway which has been constructed from the South-Western Railway to the Collie quarries, for the purpose of conveying stone from the quarries to Bunbury, the line being a little over a mile in length. The Bill is required to enable the Government to carry passengers upon the line, and to deal with it in the ordinary way as a railway.

THE SPEAKER, in putting the question, said the plans of the railway had been laid on the table of the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Passed through committee without debate or amendment.

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

KALGOORLIE-GNAMBALLA LAKE AND BOULDER TOWNSHIP LOOP RAILWAYS BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse), in moving the second reading, said: The first railway mentioned here is from Kalgoorlie to Gnamballa Lake; and a loop line has been constructed from the mines towards what is commonly known as Hannan's Lake. Although it is late in the day to apply for a Bill to construct this railway, I think hon. members know the reason why the work was put in hand during the recess and carried out. The railway is now in working order; but it was built under the mining regulations as a tramway, and it has since been found

necessary to bring in a Bill to give the Government power to treat it as a railway under the Act. This Bill is the outcome of the desire of the Government, and I beg to move its second reading.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I should like to ask the Commissioner, if he has a hard-and-fast rule that nothing under 20 to 35 tons of stuff shall be carried on this line? Have you a minimum below which you will not go?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: As soon as this line has been fully equipped, it will be conducted like all other lines of railway in the colony, and will carry all goods forwarded to it. There may at present be some restriction on the traffic, though I have no knowledge of it; but as soon as arrangements have been completed for dealing with the large traffic we anticipate, all necessary steps will be taken to facilitate business.

THE SPEAKER, in putting the question, said the plans of this railway had been laid on the table, in accordance with statute.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Passed through committee without debate or amendment.

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

POINT OF PROCEDURE RE RAILWAY BILLS.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): Before the Speaker leaves the Chair, I should like to ask, with regard to the construction of these railways, what power is given to the Commissioner to declare these lines open and fit for traffic under the Railways Act, when there has been no Bill before this House agreeing to the construction of such works? I am of course aware that, according to the Act, no line of railway can be opened without a certificate from the Commissioner of Railways, to the effect that it is thoroughly equipped and in working order; but, when this House has given no authority for the construction of the particular line, I should like to know whether that certificate can issue.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): This opens up a legal question. When any such line has been completed, a certificate is given

that it is in a fit condition to carry passengers; but I do not know whether the statute gives us the right to do this. I think it must do so, otherwise we should not have been advised to take this course. I am very glad to see the point raised.

HON. H. W. VENN: I simply raised the point because it seems to me that, if there is no authority under the Act for the opening of lines under circumstances similar to this one, and if the practice continues to be indulged in, the Government, in the event of a railway accident, may find themselves cast in heavy damages.

PUBLIC EDUCATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): I regret that there are not more members present while I proceed to move the second reading of this Bill, and to explain its provisions. I may preface my remarks by stating that, in the Governor's Speech at the opening of this session of Parliament, the Government announced that they proposed to introduce legislation with the object of providing free education in State schools. It was considered that this step was justified, and that it would remove many difficulties which must exist where some pupils pay fees, and others are excused, for various reasons, from so doing. The Government, therefore, have decided to introduce free education; and, whilst amending the Act for the purpose of introducing this new departure, I desire to consolidate the old Acts, and, at the same time, to add clauses to the Bill which I feel quite certain will assist very materially in the administration of this department. At this stage of our history, I do not think there is any necessity for me to enter into heroics on the subject of education. I think it is a recognised axiom in these days that education should be extended as widely as possible, and made as efficient as possible. The number of children in the schools of this colony is largely increasing. They are increasing daily: and for that reason I feel that it would be of much assistance if the new clauses which are added to this Bill were now brought into force. It may be interesting to hon. members to know that the children enrolled in the State schools of

this colony increased during the first nine months of this year by over 3,000; in fact, during no similar period in the history of this colony have the children in the schools increased in the same ratio. This points to the fact that there are children coming to this colony at the present day, and that men are bringing their wives and families over with them. In 1896, the children in our schools increased by a little over 3,000; and during the first nine months of this year they increased by 3,172, showing that the increase of work in the schools and in the department is very material; because, taking the number of teachers as one to every 50 children, it means that, to render these schools efficient, we ought to add 60 new teachers to the list. The introductory clauses of this Bill have for their object the consolidation of the existing Acts. The old statutes relating to elementary education are spread over a number of Acts; and there is really nothing new in this one up to Clause 27. The provisions in the preceding clauses are old provisions, and are well known to members of this House. The alteration made by Clause 27 is merely a provision that

Members of a district board who are absent from two-thirds of its meetings, or have failed to pay three visits to a school within the district during a whole year, shall cease to be members, and the Governor shall have the power of appointing other members in their room.

I think that is a good provision, and I do not anticipate that hon. members will object to it; for, when gentlemen take these positions, they should carry out the work entrusted to them; and this addition to the clause is merely brought in to secure the efficiency of boards. It is the rule in London, and other places. Clause 29 provides that:

Where a district has not been constituted, the Governor may appoint not more than three persons to represent any school or district, and to be correspondents or a board of advice for the said school or district, and who shall hold office for three years, or such less time as the Governor shall decide.

The Governor may also appoint persons to fill vacancies on boards, and the boards appointed under this clause shall have the same powers as ordinary district boards. This proviso has been introduced to meet the cases of goldfields and similar districts where the population is very scattered and shifting, and some

local supervision is needed for each school. The machinery brought to bear for the election of school boards is somewhat unwieldy; and in many districts on the goldfields I consider that our object will be attained by the appointment of boards of advice, which will have the same power as district boards. These gentlemen will be a great assistance, not only to the people of the district, but to the Minister in advising him with regard to local matters concerning the school. Clause 31 provides, among other things, that the Governor shall have power to establish and maintain training schools for the education of teachers engaged in carrying out the provisions of the Act. There is a great need in this colony now for training colleges for the teachers. The necessity of having new teachers appointed is springing up daily, and we consider that in this colony the efficiency of education will be very much improved if we have training schools established for the education of the teachers. In all other countries they have them, and it is a very necessary thing for this colony. Sub-section 5 of Clause 31 provides that the Governor may establish and maintain high schools, in which instruction shall be given in one or more languages, history, music, the elements of mathematics and physical science, together with such other subjects as are prescribed by regulations. This, too, is somewhat of a new departure, but I feel certain that it will meet with the approval of this House. There may not be any immediate intention on the part of the Government to establish schools of this kind, but so soon as the necessity arises the Government will have power to do so, not only for boys, but also for girls. Some day it will be advisable to start schools of this kind, which are very much wanted in this colony. Sub-section 6 of the same clause provides for the establishment of technical, agricultural, truant, or other schools as the Minister may decide. The Bill simply gives the Government power to establish these different schools when the Government feel that it is desirable the schools should be established, or whenever the Government have distinct instructions from Parliament that members wish these schools to be established. At present the Act gives no power to establish these schools. With

Clause 32 we commence the most important changes in the old Act. This clause provides for the establishment of free education. It provides that no fee shall be paid by or for children between six and fourteen, attending State or provisional schools. This Bill does not provide for free education in the evening schools or in the high schools, but simply for free education in State or provisional schools, the ordinary public schools of the colony. Clause 37 is the next clause which contains anything very new. It provides for the hours of instruction at which religious education is to be given. In the old Act it was provided that a child could be given religious instruction by a clergyman of the particular denomination to which the child belonged, or by a person appointed to do so, for one half-hour in any day of the week. We now provide under this Bill that in every Government school, four hours during each school day shall be devoted to secular instruction exclusively, and a portion of each day not exceeding three-quarters of an hour shall be set apart when the children of any one religious persuasion may be instructed by clergymen or other religious teachers of such persuasion, subject to certain conditions. This alteration has been made because most of the school time-table is based on 40 minutes rather than half-hour lessons, and that is the chief reason why the time for religious instruction is changed to three-quarters of an hour. This clause also differs from the old Act in that it provides that the lessons shall be given three days a week, instead of having the school upset every day in the week. This clause further provides, in sub-section 4, that where two or more clergymen or other religious teachers of different persuasions desire to give religious instruction at any Government school, the children of each such different persuasion shall be instructed on different days, unless separate rooms can be provided. No provision for separate rooms was made in the old Act, but it is considered essential that this provision should be made. It is a very bad thing to have the lessons in schools broken into. It is much better for the efficiency of the school that clergymen should go at the same time and teach all the children in separate rooms at one time during the day. At the end of the

clause there is a proviso that this special instruction shall not be given to the same children more than three times a week. Clauses 38 and 39 are simply repetitions of the clauses in the present Act. Clause 40 provides that every Government school shall be open to inspection at all reasonable times by an inspector of schools, who shall examine the children on the roll of such school in secular instruction only. Clause 41 is a new clause entirely. This clause, I think, is a very useful one. It finds place in the South Australian Act. It provides that the proprietor, headmaster, or principal teacher of any school, not being a State or other school established under this Act, may apply to the Minister in writing to have his school found efficient for the purposes of this Bill, and upon such application being made the Minister shall forthwith cause such school to be inspected by an inspector of schools, and if, upon inspection, such school is found to be efficient as to discipline and means of imparting education as required by this Bill, the Minister shall cause such school to be included in the list of schools which have been inspected and found efficient. Every child under the age of 14 must attend an "efficient" school of some kind. To show that the proprietors of some of our principal educational private establishments do not object to this clause being inserted in the Bill, I would like to just quote the remarks of Mr. Briggs, the proprietor of the Fremantle school, on a recent occasion. He said he was of opinion that private schools ought to be registered. It would be wise of the Government, he said, to bring in a Registration Bill to show that the teachers who opened these private schools are competent to teach, and that the buildings fairly comply with obvious rules of sanitary science. These are the views of a gentleman who owns one of the leading educational private establishments in the colony. Some proprietors of schools have asked that their establishments should be inspected by the officers of the Education Department. The South Australian Act provides for this, and in Queensland it is also done, the object being to enable the Government to know how these schools are conducted.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is not done in Victoria.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION : I do not think that all the good things are in Victoria. We are trying to go one better in Western Australia. I can give instances throughout the colonies where private school proprietors have asked that their schools should be inspected. The efficiency of the education of children in this colony has been very much lessened owing to this not having been done. As it is now, a parent may say that his child is attending a private school. It may not be a school in the proper sense of the word at all, but we cannot compel the parent to send his child to one of our schools so long as he is sending it to a private one. Clause 42 deals with compulsory attendance. This is perhaps one of the most important changes in the Act. It provides for compulsory attendance every time the school is opened. Under our present law, provision is made for a child to attend for 35 whole days or 70 half-days during the quarter. People ask that education should be made compulsory. I therefore consider that, if they have free education and ask that it should be compulsory, it should be the duty of the Minister to see that the children do really go to school. The old Act provided that they should only attend 35 whole days or 70 half days in the quarter. There are about 50 full days in the quarter, so that a child could really be absent 15 days out of the quarter, and you could not get at him till the quarter was over; because before you could take proceedings against the parent you had to prove that the child had not attended 35 days in the quarter. You had to wait till the quarter was over, till the returns were made and the schedules handed in, before you could summon the parent for not having sent his child to school during the previous quarter. Under this Bill the child must attend school every day when the school is opened, unless a reasonable excuse is provided. Any of the following reasons shall be deemed a reasonable excuse, namely:—(1) That the child is under efficient instruction at home or elsewhere; and whether such instruction is efficient or not shall be a matter for the decision of the Minister, who may require the report of an inspector of schools thereon; (2) that the child has been prevented

from attending school by sickness, danger of infection, temporary or permanent infirmity, or any unavoidable causes. This system has been followed in European countries, in England, and on the Continent, and it has caused a very much better attendance. All parents who wish their children to attend school would send them every day if the children were well. This clause merely provides to compel parents who are lax in this respect to send their children to school. Sub-section 2 of Clause 42 provides that the parent of every child of not less than nine nor more than fourteen years of age shall, if there is a State, provisional, or other efficient school within three miles of such child's residence measured by the nearest road, cause such child to attend such school on such days as the school shall be open. Clause 44 is somewhat a novel one. It provides that the Minister may, at his discretion, excuse children who are required to help in the fields at harvest time, or other special periods of the year. I think this may be useful, especially in the country districts. I believe it has been adopted in some of the countries on the Continent, where they go in for agricultural pursuits, and where at certain periods of the year the parents want all the assistance they can get. Clause 45 provides that the officers appointed by the Education Department to enforce the attendance enjoined by this Bill shall be empowered to accost in the streets or other public places, and obtain the names and addresses of, children of school age who are apparently not in attendance at school. Clause 46 provides penalties for neglect. It is the same clause as that which appears in the present Act. It simply provides penalties for neglect, to be imposed on the parent who does not send his child to school without some reasonable excuse. There may be some difference of opinion with regard to that clause, but I think it is a useful one. Under our present law a child may be taken from school after it has passed the fifth standard; and as a quick child may pass the fifth standard at eleven years of age, and as those who pass it at that age are the brightest children in the school, it is a pity that such children should be taken away instead of continuing their education a little longer. The fifth standard is a compulsory one,

and there are two standards beyond that. It is considered that parents would, as a rule, be glad to keep their children at school after passing the fifth standard; and this clause provides, in effect, that parents shall not take the brightest and best children from the school before the age of fourteen years, because in some cases the effect would be to allow these bright children to get on the street, and perhaps apply their cleverness in directions that are not desirable. Clause 45 provides, with regard to truant children who are beyond the control of parents, that these children may be sent to what are called truant schools, and be there taught under compulsory detention for a period. It is considered better that truant children should not be herded with criminals, as they might be now if placed under a different kind of restraint, but that they should be put into truant schools provided for the purpose; and I may say this provision has been found to work very well in many places in England. The Bill also provides that, after detention for two months at a truant school, children may be given a license, but the license shall be conditional upon the children attending regularly some school named in the license, being a certified efficient school. The license may be revoked by the Minister whenever the child ceases to attend regularly; and the teacher in charge of the school to which the child is licensed shall notify to the department the attendances of the children. This clause works very well in England, and children are kept at truant schools at much less expense than at industrial schools. Clause 50 provides that the Minister may refuse admission to a State or provisional school in certain cases; and this is chiefly for towns, but is sometimes applicable to schools in country districts, so as to prevent one school from being overcrowded as a result of the temporary popularity of a teacher, and causing indirectly, perhaps, the closing of some other school in the neighbourhood. The object is to prevent undue overcrowding of one school to the detriment of another. If, for instance, there are two schools within a mile of each other, the parents shall not be allowed to send their children to one school which is the farthest away, but the children must be sent to the nearest school. If we

get 500 children in one school, I think that is a sufficient maximum. We have in the Perth boys' school 304 children at present, the number on the roll being 465; and in the girls' school the number attending is 391. I think that when we get up to 450 or 500 for one school, that is a sufficient number to be brought under one management. Clause 51 provides for grants-in-aid to orphanages, at the rate of £2 5s. per head for children attending, subject to regulations approved by the Governor. Clause 52 provides for the withdrawal of these grants for the irregular attendance of children at such school, for refusal or neglect by the manager or teacher to fill up forms, or refusal to allow inspection, and for the dilapidated or unhealthy state of the school building.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why cannot the children go to the nearest State school, instead of to an orphanage?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: This is exactly the same provision as is now in operation. Clause 53 provides that a census of school children may be taken, to enable the State to enforce compulsory attendance, to show the growth of various districts, and the need of further school accommodation; and this is the same provision as exists in South Australia, where it has been found of great assistance. Clause 54 provides that schools other than Government schools shall keep a register of attendance, and supply information that may be required. This is a clause which I think the managers of private schools will not object to; for if we are to compel children to go to school up to a certain age, we must ascertain whether these children are attending school or not, and whether they are attending regularly; therefore, unless a register be kept, we shall not be able to ascertain whether they are attending regularly. The same clause is in the South Australian Act. Clause 55 provides for the framing of regulations, and is the same provision as in the present Act. Clause 58 provides a penalty in the case of any person wilfully disturbing any State or other school established under this Bill; and this is a provision we have not got in the present Act, but I think it is a useful one. The same provision is in the South Australian Act; and, as to the new clauses generally,

I may say that hon. members will find them in the Education Acts of other countries. Having gone through the clauses, I commend the Bill to the consideration of hon. members. My sole desire is to render our elementary school education as efficient as possible; and I have taken considerable trouble in framing the Bill with that object. I may say that new regulations will be framed under this Bill when it comes into operation, and many of the old regulations will thereby be altered. I believe the effect will be, not only beneficial to the children, but also advantageous to the teachers. This Bill will certainly place the teachers in a better position than they are in at present. As to the existing regulations, it is not proposed to interfere with them until this Bill comes into operation. I am sure the Bill will make it much easier for me to fulfil the difficult task allotted to me as Minister in charge of public education; and I have pleasure in moving that the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): Before speaking on the Bill, I wish to know whether it is the intention of the Minister to attempt to pass this Bill during the present session, seeing how near we are to the end of it, or whether the Bill is simply put before us for our consideration with a view to action in the next session?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: It was my intention to endeavour to get this Bill through the House this session. I do not think there is much in the Bill that requires lengthy discussion. Its whole object is to secure the greater efficiency of our schools; and there is nothing novel in the Bill, as all the new provisions will be found in the Education Acts of other countries. In fact, I believe that in this Bill we have culled the best provisions from the many Education Acts of different countries.

MR. LEAKE: I do not see how this Bill can possibly go through in two days. I see one or two clauses that are fruitful of debate, and I am certain hon. members would not pass a Bill like this without comment. We have had the Bill before us, but have not had the Ministerial explanation; and I would remind hon. members of one clause alone which will give rise to considerable discussion—I mean Clause 51.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: That is the same provision as we have now.

MR. LEAKE: That does not alter the statement I make, that there is a great deal of debatable matter in that clause, because it is foreign to the principle which was settled some short time ago, when we dealt with the withdrawal of State aid from sectarian institutions. It will be noticed that this clause says:—

Schools in connection with orphanages excepted from the operation of the Act of the 59th year of Her Majesty, number 27, shall receive a grant-in-aid not exceeding £2 5s. per head, subject to regulations approved by the Governor, who shall have power to make, alter, and revoke regulations for the conduct or payment of orphanages.

We know of two orphanages at present which are under the control chiefly of two religious bodies; and we do not want these religious bodies to come into conflict, nor do we want this trouble about religious education raised again; and certainly if that clause is persisted in by the Government when in committee, I can see a long debate will be inevitable, and it will reopen the whole question of assisted schools. I do not express any opinion on the clause at present, but I throw this out as one instance of the debatable matter which appears in the Bill. No one can say that such a question will not raise a debate; and if it does not raise a debate in this House, it may do so in another place. Then we have the compulsory attendance clause. All these are matters which are new to our educational system, and which hon. members, I take it, are not prepared to pass without discussion, not necessarily of an adverse nature, but with a view to elucidating points and principles. If this Bill were of that importance which the Minister seems to think it is, why should it not have been brought in much earlier in the session, instead of bringing it in now, when the Notice Paper is over-weighted with business at this late hour of the session? I am satisfied that, since this Bill has been tabled in the House, the majority of members have not been able to study it, or to give it that amount of consideration which such a measure deserves. Possibly there are some who have not read it all through. For my own part, I am bound to say that, if the Bill goes into committee, I shall feel impelled to watch every clause, and no doubt to ask for many explana-

tions. I cannot think that Ministers have had a due regard to the importance of this measure, or have considered the amount of discussion it may possibly raise. If we are to discuss this Bill, we cannot possibly go into committee upon it to-night. We have other business upon the paper which will, perhaps, prevent our reaching it to-morrow; and then we shall only have Thursday, and it would be impossible, on Thursday, to pass it through the Legislative Council. I therefore suggest to the Minister, after having heard his explanation, that, if he has any desire to pass the other measures of importance which are before us, he should not press this Bill at the present moment. I certainly will not oppose the second reading—I will be candid there; but I for one, cannot undertake that there will not be discussion. This is not a party measure. It is not one on which I could in any way attempt to control or even advise members who sit upon this side of the House. It is a matter upon which we all have individual notions, peculiar and otherwise; and it is impossible to suppose that a Bill of 59 clauses, of such an important character, can go through committee without discussion. One of the greatest faults we have to complain of is this hasty legislation on important subjects. We pass measures, perhaps at the end of one session, and find ourselves compelled, during the next ensuing session, to bring in amending Bills to correct the mistakes which have been made, owing to the fact that members have, from want of time, failed to make themselves familiar with the principles of the measures in question. I think we have already passed one or two measures which, owing to pressure of work, we have been unable to discuss as fully as many of us would have liked; and I have heard members express an opinion that some of the measures already passed are defective in one or two particulars. I assure hon. members that I have no intention this evening of raising any objection to the Bill. I shall support the second reading, and shall be glad to see the principle which the Bill embodies recognised as the law of the land; but we are legislating on a subject which ought, when once approved, to remain untouched for some time. One of the most dangerous subjects we can

tinker with is the education question; and, whilst the House and the country are in the proper frame of mind to quietly and deliberately consider this matter, the best thing that can be done is, now that we have the Bill in print, to withdraw the matter, so that not only Parliament but the public and the press may have an opportunity of expressing their opinion of its various provisions. Again I assure hon. members that I have no desire whatever to be obstructive, but to make an honest appeal to the Minister to allow the matter to be discussed in public.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): I think anyone who has studied the history of this session must be somewhat surprised at the contrast which is apparent between the earlier and the later part of it. During the first part of the present session there was scarcely sufficient business on the paper to keep the House employed. [A MEMBER: That is always the case.] It may be always the case, but it is a bad thing if it is so. During the first weeks of the present session of Parliament, about the only statute placed to our credit was the amendment to the Dog Act. Then we had various interesting discussions on noxious weeds, tick in sheep, etc. All those matters of reform promised by the Government during the last general election have been deferred until the eleventh hour; and, although I do not like to say so, it appears to me as if there were something of intention in all this. It appears to me as if the Government desire to bring about a general massacre of the innocents. The bringing in of Bills of this kind, and Bills like the present Land Act, so late in the session, places every member of the House in a cruelly embarrassing position. Nearly everyone of us is pledged to this and similar measures of reform, and would support them; but there seem to be some flaws in these measures which would require careful discussion and consideration to detect. Just now, in the Bill amending the Homesteads Act, it was by the merest accident that a fatal flaw was discovered. Here we have a Bill of 59 clauses, and another one on the table containing about 150; and it is altogether impossible, in the short space of time now at the disposal of Parliament, for these measures to be

adequately considered. And, although I give my support to the principle of the Bill itself, and am willing to do all I possibly can to co-operate with the Government in order to pass it, still I do not think it is fair to the country or to the House to have such important measures rushed through. It really appears to me that more time should be given for consideration, and that unless more time is given, we may be committing ourselves to a very dangerous principle indeed. I quite agree with the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) as to the absolute necessity of giving the public an opportunity of investigating the contents of this Bill; and, although we all agree on the point of free, secular, and compulsory education, it is not a problem that ought to be rushed through the House now: it can well wait until next June. The present system of education will last till that time; and it would be desirable, therefore, for the Minister in charge of the Bill to withdraw it.

MR. OLDFHAM (North Perth): While I agree with the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) that there seems to have been a considerable amount of business left to the far-end of the session which might have occupied the time of the House previously, there is one principle involved in this Bill which makes me say decidedly that I will support it, and that I hope the Minister of Education will not withdraw the Bill; and that principle is that education is going to be free in this colony.

MR. LEAKE: Nobody opposes that.

MR. OLDFHAM: Directly we get free education, there can be no denying the fact that, no matter what Government shall be in power, they will never go back to the old system; and it is quite sufficient for me to take all the risks in regard to the different clauses in this Bill if we get free education established in the country. There are one or two clauses I shall try to the best of my ability to alter; and there is one clause which I shall knock out of the Bill altogether if I can; that is Clause 51. It seems to me to raise all those contentious matters which have done so much harm to the various religious denominations in every part of the world. It reads:

Schools in connection with orphanages excepted from the operation of the Act of the

Fifty-ninth year of Her Majesty numbered twenty-seven, shall receive a grant-in-aid not exceeding Two pounds five shillings per head, subject to regulations approved by the Governor, who shall have power to make, alter, and revoke regulations for the conduct or payment of orphanages.

It goes without saying that schools attached to orphanages are schools connected with some religious denomination; and directly you commence to give a grant in aid of any school connected with an orphanage, you give a grant-in-aid of the religious denomination connected with that school. Now the principle, I think, was fought out in the country and in this House; and the country and the House went solid against any State aid to religious denominations. I mention these matters for the purpose of assuring the Minister of Education that the Bill has my entire support, with the exception of that one clause, which I hope he will see his way to withdraw.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The Government, in bringing forward this measure, are simply trying to keep faith with the country, by carrying out what they promised before the general election; that is, that they would introduce free education into the public schools of the colony. I think that, if we had not brought forward this measure, we perhaps might have been told that we merely talked, but that when it came to the point we did nothing.

MR. LILLEGWORTH: Is there any reason why it was not brought forward earlier?

THE PREMIER: It has been before the House a long time, and has been several times put off because other Bills of a financial character, which were more pressing, had to be dealt with; but I was not here when the objections were taken to it, though I gather that some objection is taken to the 51st Clause. It seems to me that there is very little in that. It is the practice now. We pay the Roman Catholic and Church of England Orphanages £2 5s. a head for each orphan. Hon. members have passed the Estimates already with the very words inserted, if I remember rightly—£2 5s. a head; that is half of what is paid to the public schools, namely, £4 10s.; and it seems to me that if we want these orphans educated, and permit religious denominations to have the custody of them, we must provide for their education.

MR. JAMES: You provide for them in the Estimates as orphans, not as scholars.

THE PREMIER: What do you call scholars?

MR. JAMES: You are providing for them here as scholars.

THE PREMIER: I take it that they must be orphans under the Orphanages Act, before the school is entitled to the grant of £2 5s. per head. I do not think there is much in this clause, after all, because we provide in the Estimates for orphanages at the rate of so much per head; and so long as we encourage or at any rate permit religious bodies to have the care of orphans, so long must we provide for their education; and it seems to me that it saves the State an immense amount of trouble to have the care and custody of these poor children entrusted to those religious denominations, rather than to put them into work-houses or other pauper establishments under the Government. If you can find willing persons to take charge of these children, it must be far better for them and for everyone to let them do so, rather than put them in a State institution—a sort of poor-house.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why cannot they attend the State schools?

THE PREMIER: I do not know how that would work. If you put them in an institution, they would be under its care, control, and custody, and it seems to me that it would not be convenient for them to attend the State schools. I cannot understand this objection. When we had a great controversy in regard to assisted schools a year or two ago, orphanages were specially exempted from the operation of the Act in regard to assistance, because everyone knows very well that, unless the State is prepared to take the custody of the orphans in a State institution, we must provide for their education by those who are willing to take all the care and trouble of looking after them. I consider that, rather than do anything to discourage charitable and religious effort, we should try to promote it. What can be better for any child left without parents or guardians than that a religious denomination to which its parents belonged should take charge of it? It is the very thing we want. The State wants to be relieved of the responsibility of caring for

these children. We know the State is not competent to do what religious denominations can do for children left in a destitute condition; and why we should object to such a moderate sum being devoted to this purpose is more than I can understand. When we remember that the religious institution has to find its own house, its own school, and everything else, I really think that we are acting very injudiciously when we say that we will not allow any religious denomination—I do not care which it be, for the Act provides for any—which has an orphanage, to receive payment for children in its charge.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: So you create the same difficulties you have already done away with.

THE PREMIER: Not at all. We are not all orphans, in this world. It is only those who are left destitute or uncared for to whom this provision applies. I know there is a difficulty at the present time in asking the House to pass anything of a controversial nature; and therefore the Government can only act towards hon. members in the way in which we expect them to act towards us; that is, when we come to matters of controversy, we must not press them too hard. At the same time, the Bill would perhaps be very good even with that clause omitted. If that is the only point objected to, my friend the Minister might consider whether this clause is all-important in the Bill, or whether he could not for the future provide this grant out of the Estimates, as we do at the present time, and let the Bill go through without it. I merely throw out the hint. I am not in charge of the Bill, and I shall be glad to have the views of the Minister.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I have a very strong desire to see a Bill passed which will settle this education question practically for all time. I am certain this Bill will not fulfil this condition. Only to-day I have been waited on by persons interested in this Bill, not in reference to Clause 51, not by any religious class of persons, but concerning other matters of a debatable character which are in the Bill. I do not think we shall be doing justice to this great question—because it is a great question, one of the greatest questions

we have to deal with as a Legislature—by passing this Bill through Parliament in a thin House with a bare quorum—if indeed there is a quorum. In the hurried conditions under which it would have to be passed, the Bill would be valueless. It would have to be brought up again, owing to the hurry with which it would be placed on the statute book, if it were passed under these conditions. A good part of the legislation of this session is practically valueless, on account of the want of consideration given to the measures placed before the House. I do not want such action to be taken in connection with a Bill of such vast importance as this. I deeply regret that this Bill should have been delayed till this time of the session. I look upon it as one of the first Bills that should have been placed on the table.

THE PREMIER: It has been a fortnight on the table.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: In the early part of the session there was practically no business. Day after day we were adjourned without anything to do.

THE PREMIER: That was on account of the no-confidence motion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am very sorry indeed that this Bill should be brought forward under such hurried conditions. I see no prospect of its passing this session.

THE PREMIER: Then we shall have the revenue from the fees.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Much good may it do you. If the Government were sincere, they could easily do away with the fees.

THE PREMIER: We cannot do that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You can do a lot of things without authority, if you want to, but you do not want to in this case. It is a matter of very great regret that this Bill cannot pass. I am quite willing to give it every attention, but I see no prospect of its being placed on the statute book in such a form as will be satisfactory and permanent. Under these circumstances, I am afraid we shall have to accept the position, and wait till next session to have the question properly placed before us. I do not oppose the second reading. I simply see no prospect of the Bill passing.

MR. LYALL HALL (Perth): I congratulate the Minister of Education on

bringing forward these new clauses; but there are one or two others in the Bill which I think need consideration, and therefore I would ask that the consideration of this Bill be postponed until the next session. There is one clause which—although it is a step in the right direction—does not, I think, go far enough. I refer to Clause 41, under which the proprietor of a private school may apply to the Minister to have his school found “efficient.” Now I think that does not go far enough. We do not want to leave it with the teacher as to whether he shall have his school found “efficient,” but with the Government. I say that all private schools should be examined by the ordinary public school inspector, and a certificate issued; and, further than that, I would go so far as to say that the teachers of private schools should be also certified. They should all pass an examination, and a certificate should be issued to them if they are competent to teach children. We know that there are many private schools, particularly those conducted by ladies, which are not really competent. These ladies simply conduct a nursery, but they do not educate the children. The clause also provides that a list of those schools which are found to be efficient shall be published in the *Government Gazette*. Who sees the *Government Gazette*? If we are going to adopt this clause, let us advertise in the daily papers, not in the *Government Gazette*. Let the people know what schools are “efficient” and what are not. I would leave this clause out altogether, because it will not be necessary, if we can examine teachers in the schools. Another clause requiring consideration is Clause 42, which provides that the parent of every child not less than six nor more than nine shall, if there is a public school within two miles, cause such child to attend that school, and no other. I do not see the necessity for that. If there is a school four miles away from my house, and I think that a child of mine would receive better education at that school than at the one nearer, I see no reason why I should be prevented from sending my child to the more distant school. Just looking cursorily down the list, these are two or three of the items which, to my mind, need amendment; and therefore I

must support the suggestion of the member for Albany, that this Bill be not considered this session.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (in reply): Reference has been made to Clause 51, which deals with orphanages. These orphanages are now under 59 Victoria, No. 27. We simply want to extend the principle still further than is done under that Act. We want to provide that schools in connection with orphanages, exempted from the operations of the Act named, shall receive a grant in aid not exceeding £2 5s. per head, subject to regulations approved by the Governor, who shall have power to make, alter, and revoke regulations for the conduct or appointment of orphanages. That is to be provided by regulations, and the regulations will be laid before the House, when hon. members will have an opportunity of considering them. One hon. member pointed out that he thought it should be compulsory that all schools should be examined. The Bill provides that a child shall be attending an efficient school. If a child goes to a school that is not certified as efficient, the child will not have attended school. The schools will have to be examined, or the Minister will have to pass them as efficient. There are some schools in the city that would not require to be examined. If the Minister thinks a school is not efficient, he can cause that school to be examined. Hon. members have taken exception to Clause 42. I did not explain that clause when moving the second reading of the Bill: I thought it might be explained, if necessary, in committee. I would like to point out that Sub-clause 1 of Clause 42 contains nothing that is really new in this colony. As a matter of fact, under the old Central Board system, power was given to the board to frame regulations, and the two chief boards in the colony—those at Fremantle and Perth—passed a regulation which contained conditions similar to those in Sub-clause 1 of Clause 42 of the Bill. The measure has had a good deal of consideration, and I think it is a good one. I have been twitted with not bringing in this Bill earlier in the session. This department has only been under my administration for a short period, and a question such as free education is a matter of Government policy, and could

not be initiated by the Minister in charge of the department without submitting it to the Premier. And hon. members know that the Premier was away from the colony for a good time this year, and did not return until September. I did not know whether it was the intention of the Government to bring forward this Education Bill this session, and I did not start to frame the Bill until two months ago. Then the measure had to go to the Parliamentary draftsman, and after that it had to be printed. It takes a lot of time to get a Bill like this one in hand. I can assure hon. members I have no desire to force the Bill, or attempt to force it through the House. Some hon. members seemed to think I was trying to force the Bill forward. I ask hon. members to allow the measure to be taken up to the committee stage, and then the Government can consider what is best to be done.

MR. WOOD (West Perth): I think the Government have redeemed their pledge by bringing forward this Bill. Some hon. members have complained that sufficient time has not been given to Bills. I think that if less time were given to abstract motions and useless talk, we should be able to give more time to the consideration of Bills. I entirely acquit the Minister of any attempt to rush the Bill through the House, but I think the Government would be acting wisely if they were to withdraw the Bill and bring it forward again next session. I do not think it is possible for us to get through the Bill and send it to the other place, so that it can become law next Thursday morning. I think it is quite impossible.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

The following schedule of amendments made by the Legislative Council was now considered:—

No. 1.—On page 2, Clause 2, paragraph 6.—Strike out all words after "employed" in the said paragraph.

No. 2.—Page 4, Clause 9, line 5.—Strike out "electoral" and insert "statistical."

No. 3.—Page 4, Clause 10, line 5.—Strike out "at a" and insert "by letter or otherwise to the nearest."

No. 4.—Page 5, Clause 10, Sub-clause (2), line 1.—Strike out "February" and insert "March."

No. 5.—Page 5, Clause 11, Sub-clause (3), line 1.—Between “concerning” and “such” insert “the labour engaged in connection therewith and.”

No. 6.—Page 6, Clause 13.—Strike out Sub-clause (4).

No. 7.—Page 6, Clause 15.—Add the following words to the clause:—“Provided that any person to whom forms have not been delivered, and who has applied for or posted a letter in pursuance of, and within the time limited by, Section 10, s.s. 1, demanding a form or forms, and has not received the same, and also any person who shall have posted the returns within the time limited by Section 10, s.s. 2, shall be deemed to have complied with the requirements of this Act in that behalf, and shall not be liable to the above penalty.”

No. 8.—Page 7, Clause 19, line 1.—Strike out “electoral” and insert “statistical.”

IN COMMITTEE.

Amendment No. 1:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): The object of the amendment was to get rid of any returns being made in connection with mines, quarries, or other industrial establishments of that character. If the amendment were allowed, one very important portion of the statistical information would be wanting. He moved that the amendment be disagreed to.

MR. VOSPER: The reason for desiring to exempt mines was that mines were already provided for in the matter of supplying statistical information. The effect of the Bill, without the amendment, would be to compel mine-owners to duplicate returns at needless expense and trouble.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There was no statutory obligation to forward to the Registrar General the returns now made to the Mines Department. This Bill was on the same lines as legislation in other colonies, and uniformity in this respect was desirable.

MR. VOSPER: No doubt there would shortly be a new Goldfields Act, as the result of the Mining Commission's labours, and it might be possible to provide that the mining returns now made should be available for the Registrar General.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was late in the session, and he felt inclined to let the amendment go for fear of losing the Bill altogether. But if the Bill were allowed to pass with the amendment, it would be out of line with the Acts in other colonies,

MR. VOSPER: That could be made up for in a new Goldfields Bill.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Registrar required exact information from all sources, and the mining was our largest industry. Returns had to be made only once a year, and very little additional work or cost would be necessary to give the Registrar the information desired.

Amendment disagreed to.

Amendment No. 2:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: This was the very thing this measure was wanted for. Every hon. member was acquainted with the electoral boundaries, and, generally speaking, the public were too. A healthy rivalry would be created between electorates. He moved that the amendment be disagreed to.

Amendment disagreed to.

Amendments Nos. 3 to 5, inclusive—agreed to.

Amendment No. 6:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said he did not see why the capital embarked in business should not be stated in the return. This was information which would be useful. He moved that the amendment be disagreed to.

Amendment disagreed to.

Amendment No. 7—agreed to.

Amendment No. 8:

MR. VOSPER: On whom did the onus of proof rest in the case of returns not being sent or received?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If a return were lost in the office, the sender must not be held responsible.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly not. That would be too severe. He moved that this amendment be disagreed to.

MR. VOSPER: Would it not be as well to say “registered letter” in this case? It could then be easily traced.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member would see the difficulty of sending a registered letter to places very remote, in scattered districts where the post-office consisted of a box on a tree or something of that sort. No one would seek to enforce the penalty, if it was not fairly brought to the knowledge of the offending party that he was at fault.

Put and passed, and the amendment disagreed to.

Resolutions reported, and report adopted.

On the motion of the ATTORNEY GENERAL, Mr. Illingworth, Mr. Vosper, and the mover were appointed a committee to draw up reasons for disagreeing to certain of the amendments.

Reasons presented and adopted, and a Message in accordance with the resolutions was transmitted to the Legislative Council, with the reasons for not agreeing to certain of the amendments.

IMPORTED LABOUR REGISTRY BILL.
LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

A Message from the Legislative Council, with a schedule of amendments made in the Bill, was considered in committee.

Amendment No. 1 (Clause 2):

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Although not much in accord with the alterations made by the Legislative Council, it seemed to him that, as the Bill was a great improvement on the existing Act, it would be better to accept them, or nearly all of them, rather than imperil the passage of the Bill by refusing. The first amendment made by the Council merely said that the 27th instead of the 26th parallel of latitude should be the dividing line. He did not think this was of much importance. There were no ports or landing places south of Sharks Bay, in that district.

MR. VOSPER: Did it not include the Murchison goldfields?

THE PREMIER: It included Peak Hill, but these coloured labourers would not be allowed to work on the mines. He moved that the first amendment be agreed to.

Put and passed.

THE PREMIER moved that the second amendment (Clause 4) be agreed to, as the point involved in it "went without saying."

Put and passed.

Amendment No. 3—Page 2, Clause 5, last line—After "Archipelago" insert, "but this section shall not apply to any labourer who shall have, at the time of the passing of this Act, entered into an agreement with any such person."

THE PREMIER said he could not agree to the third amendment, which seemed absurd. It would mean that if a Chinaman had an agreement with a coloured labourer to bring him over to this colony before the passing of this Bill, the labourer could be permitted to land—one for every

500 tons. He believed the law now was that an alien could not import a coloured labourer. At any rate he could not import a Chinaman. According to the Council's amendment, if a coloured labourer was on his way out under agreement with some one here, he should be allowed to land. We need not suppose there was much chance of there being many on the way. He had telegraphed to Singapore the other day that we were passing very stringent regulations for the restriction of aliens, and that would doubtless have an effect in preventing some from coming.

MR. VOSPER: It was well known that certain firms in Singapore and elsewhere were willing to supply coloured labourers wholesale. If the Council's amendment were accepted, private persons here might wire to those firms to have as many coloured labourers sent over as possible before the passing of the Bill, whereas if the amendment were rejected and the clause passed in its original form, this could not be done. He was quite in accord with the right hon. gentleman.

MR. HUBBLE: The coloured labourers were not engaged till they were about to be shipped.

MR. VOSPER: That was incorrect.

MR. HUBBLE: No agreement was entered into with these labourers till they were actually shipped. It cost £30 or £40 to get one of these men down here at the present time.

MR. VOSPER: There were firms in Singapore, Hong Kong, and other places, which kept labourers ready to be shipped at a moment's notice. There were crimping houses at these places where men were secured, and immediately they were wanted they were placed on board ship and sent away to the port of destination.

MR. HUBBLE: A coloured labourer's engagement did not commence until he started on his voyage. Chinese labourers could not be kept in readiness to be shipped at a moment's notice. Chinese were imported through European firms, such as Guthrie & Co.

MR. VOSPER: A firm advertising from Colombo—a Cingalese firm—stated that it was prepared to send 500 men to Australia to-morrow, if they were wanted.

MR. KENNY: Twelve months ago, 12 Chinese arrived at Fremantle. They had been imported by another Chinaman, but he disappeared. It was not known what became of these men. When he (Mr. Kenny) was in business, he regularly received circulars from Cingalese firms in Singapore, and on these circulars was quoted Coolie labour in the same list as sugar, sandalwood, and articles of commerce.

THE PREMIER formally moved that amendment No. 3 be disagreed to.

Put, and the amendment disagreed to.

Amendments Nos. 4 and 5 — agreed to.

THE PREMIER moved that amendment No. 6 be disagreed to. This amendment would allow coloured labourers to be employed on the goldfields northward of parallel 27, but not southward of that parallel.

Put, and the amendment disagreed to.

THE PREMIER: Amendments Nos. 7 and 8 (Clause 35) provided that the exceptions in regard to pearlshell fisheries should also apply to persons on the Abrolhos Islands. He would rather have had all the guano islands included—the Lacepede and Monte Bello Islands. He moved that amendments Nos. 7 and 8 be agreed to.

MR. VOSPER: Was not power given to the Governor to make regulations?

THE PREMIER: That was in reference to the mainland.

MR. VOSPER: The nearest port to the Abrolhos Islands was Geraldton and this might be a serious matter for people up there.

THE PREMIER: There was no danger about it.

MR. VOSPER: Care would have to be taken that none of the labourers from the islands got to Geraldton.

THE PREMIER: Great care would be taken. The labourers would not be allowed to come on to the mainland at all.

MR. KENNY: It would be well to make the exceptions apply to all the guano islands. When the Abrolhos Islands were first being worked, Mr. Broadhurst's father imported three batches of Chinese, a great number in all. These men struck work several times and were

imprisoned. Ultimately they were turned loose on the mainland at Geraldton. He thought Geraldton ought to be protected.

THE PREMIER: The pearlshell labourers were not restricted to one island, but they were not supposed to come on to the mainland at all. They could go ashore to mend their boats and get water, but that was all.

MR. VOSPER: The pearlshell labourers would be able to come ashore under the Immigration Restriction Bill, which exempted them from the operations of this Bill.

THE PREMIER: They could only come ashore under the regulations. He thought it would be better to include all the guano islands, and not only the Abrolhos Islands.

MR. VOSPER: Guano might be found at Esperance or Albany, and there was no desire to extend black labour.

THE PREMIER said he did not like the amendment at all. Suppose those people became obstreperous or mutinous, what could be done with them?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The amendment had better be disagreed to.

THE PREMIER: Then the Bill would be lost.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Better let the Bill go.

THE PREMIER: The Bill could not be allowed to go.

Motion put and passed, and the two last amendments agreed to.

Resolutions reported, and report adopted.

The following members were appointed a committee to draw up reasons for not agreeing to certain amendments made by the Legislative Council:—The Premier, the Attorney General, and Mr. Illingworth.

THE PREMIER, on behalf of the Committee, brought up the following reasons for not agreeing to amendments Nos. 3 and 6:—

No. 3. It is undesirable that coloured persons should be importers of Asiatic or African labour.

No. 6. The employment of coloured labour in goldfields townships is at the present time practically prohibited, and, in the interests of the labourers themselves, it is not advisable to encourage it.

Reasons adopted, and a Message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 12:10 o'clock midnight, until Tuesday afternoon.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 21st December, 1897.

Petition: Early Closing Bill—Motion: Postponement—
Motion: Perth Water Supply—Motion: Metropolitan
Waterworks Board; to Disallow By-law No. 14;
division (negatived)—Motion: Charges against
Metropolitan Waterworks Board (negatived)—
Streets and Roads Closure Bill: in committee—
Early Closing Bill: second reading (moved); division
(amendment passed)—Message: Aborigines Bill
(reserved)—Cemeteries Bill: in committee: re-
committal—Colliery Quarry Railway Bill: second
reading: in committee; third reading—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at
3 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION—EARLY CLOSING BILL.

HON. G. RANDELL presented a petition from certain merchants and shopkeepers in Perth and Fremantle, praying for the passing of the Early Closing Bill.
Petition received and read.

MOTION—POSTPONEMENT.

HON. A. P. MATHESON, on behalf of Hon. R. S. Haynes, moved that the consideration of the following notice of motion be postponed until the next day:

To move, that the answers given by the Hon. the Minister of Mines to questions asked by the Hon. R. S. Haynes, on the 16th December, not being sufficient, a Select Committee of this Honourable House be appointed to inquire further into the matter of such answers, and that leave be given to the Committee to send for persons and papers.

HON. G. RANDELL said he believed this matter had been satisfactorily settled. It had been discovered where the missing paper was. The motion referred to that matter, did it not?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: That was what the motion referred to.

HON. G. RANDELL: The paper that was supposed to be lost had been found attached to a brief.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Was the hon. member (Mr. Randell) answering for the Minister of Mines?

HON. G. RANDELL said he did not know whether the Minister was acquainted with the facts. If not, he (Mr. Randell) was.

Put and passed.

MOTION—PERTH WATER SUPPLY.

HON. A. P. MATHESON, in accordance with notice, moved

That the Minister of Mines be requested to lay on the table of the House a return showing the last measurement taken by the Public Works Department of the actual water contents of the Victoria reservoir.

He said: The other day I made a statement that, so far as the statistics at my disposal were concerned, it was clear the Victoria reservoir would be empty by the end of April, provided the Metropolitan Board continued to draw from that reservoir one million gallons per diem. Since then I have been informed that the Public Works Department occasionally take measurements of the water in the reservoir, quite apart from the Metropolitan Board. This is not a motion that will entail trouble to anybody, simply meaning, as it does, the copying of a return which, I understand, already exists. It is extremely important the public should realise the position in which the water supply now is. No steps have been taken by the board to increase the immediate supply, and I cannot gather that any steps are proposed to be taken.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): Whilst I have no objection whatever to affording the information the hon. member asks for, I would point out that it is proposed that Parliament should rise in two days' time, so that very little time is given for making such a return. If I cannot get the return asked for, the hon. member must blame the shortness of time, but he may rest assured I will obtain the information, if possible. At this advanced stage of the session, it is hardly wise to ask for returns which may take some little time to prepare.