

**THE PRESIDENT** (Hon. G. Shenton): Before putting the question I should like to say a few words. Firstly, as to the congratulations which I have received on my elevation to the chair of this House, I can assure hon. members that I feel the responsibility of the position I now hold. I trust that they will extend to me their forbearance, and that those kindly feelings which existed when I was Colonial Secretary will be continued. I am aware that I have not the same intimate knowledge of Parliamentary practice as my predecessor had, but I hope, as time goes on, that I shall be able to overcome the difficulties that arise, and I trust that whenever I may have to rule against any hon. member he will feel that I am only endeavoring to carry out the duties of my position, maintain the dignity, and assert all the privileges of this House. Perhaps the difficulties which I find in the way now will soon be removed; and I hope that, as time goes on, I shall become more able and more capable of carrying out the duties appertaining to the office of President of this Council. I again thank you for your kind expressions.

Question—that the address be presented—put and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The Council at 4.35 p.m. adjourned until Friday, 11th November, at 3 o'clock p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 8th November, 1892.*

Presentation of the Address-in-Reply—Midland Railway Company: Fresh proposals—The Greenough farmers' losses by fires—Water supply at Gnarlbine goldfield—Correspondence with Dalgety & Co. re floating balance of loan—Return relating to Kattanning and other Agricultural Areas—Correspondence between the Government and the Midland Railway Company since March, 1892—Safety of Defences Bill: second reading—Treasury Bills Bill: second reading—Land Regulations (Rents) Amendment Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

The **SPEAKER** took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### PRESENTATION OF THE ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

At 45 minutes past two o'clock p.m., Mr. Speaker, accompanied by members of the House, proceeded to Government House to present the Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor, and having returned,

**MR. SPEAKER** reported that he had, with members of the House, waited upon His Excellency the Governor, and had presented to him the Address of the Legislative Assembly agreed to upon the 7th instant; and that His Excellency had been pleased to express his thanks for the same.

#### FRESH PROPOSALS FOR ASSISTANCE TO THE MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY.

**MR. TRAYLEN:** I beg to ask the hon. the Premier the question standing in my name—Whether the Midland Railway Company have made fresh proposals for assistance; and, if so, whether the Government intend to lay the new proposals before the House?

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the Company had not made any fresh proposals for assistance.

#### THE GREENOUGH FARMERS' LOSSES FROM FIRE.

**MR. TRAYLEN:** I beg to ask the Premier whether any representations have been made to him during the recess respecting the losses inflicted on Greenough farmers by sparks from passing engines? If so, by whom? And what action the

Government propose to take in reference thereto?

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that representations had been made to him by deputations at the Greenough and at Dongara, as to the great danger of fires from the locomotives, and he had made inquiry on the subject. It appeared that spark-arresters of the most improved type were used, and the Company stated that all was done that was possible in the matter. It was to be hoped that, with care, the Company would be as successful in preventing fires from locomotives as the Government had been on their railways.

#### WATER SUPPLY FOR GNARLBINE GOLDFIND.

**MR. SIMPSON**: With the permission of the House, without notice, I should like to ask the Director of Public Works what steps, if any, the Government have taken to provide water on the road to, and at, the Gnarlbine goldfind?

**THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS** (Hon. H. W. Venn): In reply I may say that Mr. Raeside left Southern Cross yesterday with the intention of visiting Gnarlbine and ascertaining what steps may be necessary to provide a water supply there, and also on the road. A report will be furnished to me by Mr. Raeside as soon as he can, and in the meantime he will undertake such works as he thinks necessary to provide a water supply.

#### CORRESPONDENCE WITH DALGETY & CO., LIMITED, AS TO FLOATING THE BALANCE OF THE LOAN OF 1891.

**MR. MONGER**: I beg to move the motion standing in my name, That there be placed on the table of the House all the correspondence that has passed between Messrs. Dalgety & Co., Limited, and the Government, with reference to an offer made by that company to at once float a further portion of the authorised Loan, and subsequently the balance?

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I do not know what object the hon. member can have in moving for these papers. They are not voluminous—I can tell him that—they consist, I believe, of a telegram from the company and my

reply; but I could not promise to lay these papers on the table except with the concurrence of Dalgety & Co., because I do not think they would care to have a merely contingent offer, made in certain events, to do something—but which came to nothing—laid on the table of the House. I cannot see, myself, that any good could come out of the production of these papers. There was nothing very definite or tangible about the offer—I can tell the House that—and my reply was that I was unable to do anything in the matter at present. I do not think it is wise, nor a good thing for anyone concerned, that negotiations with reference to the floating of a Loan, when those negotiations have come to nothing, should be made public. I do not think Dalgety & Co. themselves would care for it; nor do I think it would be in their interest, or in the interest of the public or anybody else, that this correspondence should be laid on the table. However, if the House chooses to pass this motion, and Dalgety & Co. have no objection, I shall feel it my duty to place the papers on the table. As I have said, the negotiations have not come to anything at present. If, when the matter has been consummated, the House wishes to know what has taken place, or there should be some reason for asking for the information, there can be no objection to furnishing that information. But, as no result has occurred from the offer made, it seems to me it would be unwise to make public any private negotiations between the Government and a private firm with reference to financial matters. Having said this much, I leave the matter in the hands of the House.

**MR. R. F. SHOLL**: In view of the proposal of the Government to issue Treasury bills, and as there is a report current that a very favorable offer has been made by this firm to float the balance of the Loan, I think the information asked for should be supplied to members. I suppose the hon. member who has moved for this correspondence wishes for some information,—

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): For what object?

**MR. R. F. SHOLL**: I do not know what his object may be; but I think that the members of this House are entitled to this information being supplied to

them, or any other information connected with the floating of a Loan.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): When negotiations are still pending, and not completed?

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I don't know whether these negotiations are completed or not. I understood from the Premier that his reply to the company was that he could do nothing in the matter now, and that the Government could not accept their offer. Therefore, I should say the matter was closed, and the negotiations ended. If so, I cannot see what harm can be done by supplying the information asked for.

MR. DEHAMEL: This motion is merely that the papers be laid on the table; not that they be printed. When we get the information asked for, there may be no necessity for its being printed or made public.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I believe that papers become public if placed on the table of the House.

MR. MONGER: I do not know Dalgety & Co. in this matter at all, but I was led to understand that they had offered to at once float between £300,000 and £400,000 of the Loan on more satisfactory bases than the last portion of the Loan was floated in London. [THE PREMIER: No.] I was led to understand that they had made such an offer, conditionally upon their having the right to float the remainder of the Loan within a period of three months. If I am wrong, the papers I have asked to be placed on the table will prove it; but, until I see the correspondence or telegrams that have taken place between the Government and company, I think I have a right to regard my information as correct. In any case, I think I have every right to ask that these papers be placed on the table of the House.

Motion—put and passed.

#### RETURNS RE AGRICULTURAL AREAS.

MR. LOTON: I rise to move the motion standing on the notice paper in my name,—“That a return showing the following particulars be laid upon the table:—(A.) The cost of survey of the Katanning Agricultural Area. The acreage of the said area. The number of the

locations in the said area. The number of the selectors in the said area. The total acreage selected. (B.) A similar return with regard to each other declared Agricultural Area.” In moving for these returns I do not think it is necessary for me to detain the House with many remarks. It is well known that under the present Land Regulations it was decided by the Government that it was desirable in the interests of settlement that certain areas should be declared and set apart for agricultural purposes; and, I believe a number of such areas have been so declared, mainly along or adjacent to lines of railways. My main object in asking for this information is to ascertain what progress has been made in the direction of settlement within the areas that have already been surveyed, and what prospect there is of further settlement in the same direction. I think it is only right, that as members representing the country, we should have this information, more especially as we are about to deal with the Land Regulations, and it may be found necessary to further amend the regulations in regard to these agricultural areas.

Motion—put and passed.

#### RECENT CORRESPONDENCE WITH THE MIDLAND RAILWAY COMPANY.

MR. LOTON: I rise to move that all correspondence and telegrams between the Government and the Midland Railway Company, subsequent to March 1st, 1892, be laid upon the table. In doing so, I do not think it is desirable or in any way necessary at the present time to go into any details, or criticisms, or arguments for or against the Government, or for or against the Company, in connection with the present position of affairs. I have no such intention on the present occasion; but I do think, after what transpired last session, and the poor results—if I may be allowed to term them so—that have accrued after the very hard fight and the struggle made by the Government and its supporters on behalf of the Midland Railway Company on that occasion—I do think it is well that we should know the full details, and that the country should know the full details, of any negotiations that have taken place between the Government and the Com-

pany in the interim. We have heard just now that no further proposals have emanated from this Company to the Government for further assistance, but we have seen a number of reports in the newspapers—whether they are reliable or not, I am not prepared to say; and I think it is very desirable that this House should be placed in possession of all the facts, and of any correspondence that has taken place between the parties, so that we may be in a position hereafter—if any further steps are taken—to give the matter our fullest consideration, and be prepared to deal with it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : I shall have much pleasure in having the correspondence printed and laid on the table.

Motion—put and passed.

#### SAFETY OF DEFENCES BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : I beg to move the second reading of this Bill,—an Act to prevent the unauthorised disclosure of information relating to the defences of the colony. The Government have brought forward this Bill in response to a communication from the Imperial Government conveyed in a circular despatch to this colony, in common with all the other colonies. Similar legislation has been introduced and passed (I think I am right in saying) in all the other colonies of Australia; and it is in order that the fortifications of our own colony—we have only one at the present moment, but we hope to have more—may be protected like those of our neighbors that the Government have introduced this Bill. It will be noticed that the first clause makes it unlawful for any person to make any sketch, drawing, or photograph of any fort or other military work of defence in the colony, without having previously obtained lawful permission to do so. I think all will agree that this is a very proper and salutary provision, that these forts, which are constructed at great expense for the defence of the colony, should not be visited and inspected and sketched by persons who may be hostile to us, with the view of giving information to other Powers. I believe the same law exists in all civilised countries, and is not

peculiar to British dependencies. Clause 2 deals with the penalty for offending against this provision, which hon. members will see is pretty severe, and, I think, rightly so. The penalty is by fine, not exceeding £100, or, at the discretion of the justices, imprisonment for any period not exceeding six months; and a forfeiture of all the sketches and materials found in the possession of the offender. Clause 3 provides that any person found in or near any fort, or battery, or fortification, with sketching or drawing materials in his possession, shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £50, and any sketching materials found on him are to be forfeited to the Crown. Clause 4 provides a penalty in the case of trespassers, who may be summarily arrested, without warrant, if found trespassing on any fortification. That may be considered by some people as being somewhat harsh and severe; at the same time, it must be borne in mind, that in dealing with such matters as the defences of the country, we must make the law stringent and severe. It will be seen that the penalties mentioned are the maximum penalties, and discretion is given to the justices to mitigate the punishment, should the circumstances warrant it; so that I do not think any undue hardship will occur. Clause 5 deals with officers or members of the Defence Forces of the colony, and with officers of the Civil Service, communicating information respecting the colony's defences, for which a heavy penalty is provided. I think everyone will agree that is a proper provision. Anyone found guilty under this clause will render himself liable to imprisonment for any term not exceeding three years, and not less than one year, and also to a fine not exceeding £200, and not less than £50. I need hardly point out that it would be a grave breach of trust for any military officer or any officer of the Civil Service to furnish any alien Power with information relating to the defences of the colony, and I think it is only right that such a grave breach of trust should be severely punished. Section 6 of the Bill deals with the proceedings to be taken under the Act before the justices; and section 7 provides that this Act shall not exempt any person from any proceeding for an offence which is punishable at common

law, or by military or naval law, or under any other Act; provided that no person shall be punished twice for the same offence. These are the main provisions of the Bill. I think all hon. members will agree that the Bill is a necessary one. As I have said, it is a measure that has already found its place in the statute books of all the other colonies; and it is now considered necessary by the Imperial Government, and also by this Government, in order to protect our own defences in the same way as their fortifications are protected in all other parts of the British Empire. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. TRAYLEN: I only rise to point out what appears to me a very serious defect in the Bill, and that is the allowing of permission to be granted to persons to inspect and to make sketches of the colony's defences, as provided in the first clause of the Bill. This, however, I presume, can be dealt with in committee.

Motion—put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### TREASURY BILLS BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): In rising to move the second reading of this Bill—to provide for the raising of a sum not exceeding £500,000 by the issue of Treasury bills—I may say what I believe I said last evening, that the object the Government have in view in introducing the Bill is to give the Government power to provide a tangible and negotiable security for any money they may require to raise, pending the issue of a loan. Hon. members are aware that this power is given to the Governments of, I believe, all the other colonies of Australia—not only for the purpose of raising money required for works already authorised by Parliament, but also in many cases in order to provide for deficiencies that may occur in general revenue. Whether this House would give this Government that power or not, I do not think it will object to giving us power to raise money—if it should be found necessary—by the issue of Treasury bills, for a short period, for the purpose of carrying out works which this House has already approved of. If members will look at

the 13th clause of the Bill they will find that all sums of money as shall be raised by Treasury bills under the authority of this Act shall be applied towards the works and services enumerated in the Loan Act, 1891. All the Government ask for in this Bill is to be able, if they desire, and if they should require to do so, to raise money temporarily, by means of Treasury bills, for carrying out certain public works already authorised by Parliament, and, subsequently, when the occasion is opportune, to go into the loan market and raise the money in the ordinary way by loan. Members will notice that any money raised by means of these Treasury bills, in the first instance, is to be chargeable upon and paid out of the moneys to be raised under the Loan Act of 1891. I said last evening, and I say again to-day, that, in my opinion, it is very unlikely indeed—I think it is most unlikely—that the Government will have any occasion to use the power they are asking the House to give them in this Bill. I believe that when we desire, or when we find it necessary, to obtain more money for the prosecution of these works, we shall be able to raise it by loan in the usual way. But, should anything occur, and our financial advisers in London advise us that it would be preferable at the moment not to raise the money by loan, we think it is very desirable that we should have this power to raise it, for a short time—say for one, two, or three years (which is the longest period provided)—by means of these Treasury bills, which would provide a tangible and negotiable security to investors. It appears to me that this is a very wise provision to make. For instance, if we wished to raise say £100,000 or £200,000 for a short period, from any of the financial institutions in our own colony—and I feel sure they would be very anxious to assist the Government in this way—these institutions, in their turn having to provide money for other purposes, would naturally be glad to have some negotiable security which they could use, should they require it, for raising money for those purposes. Members can well understand that those who lent money to the Government would desire to have some tangible and negotiable security which they in their turn could, if necessary, convert into money before what

they advanced to the Government is repaid. That is just the position we are seeking by this Bill. It will be seen by the 5th clause that the principal sum for which any Treasury bills may be issued shall be chargeable upon and paid out of the moneys yet to be raised under the Loan Act of last year. The clause further provides that, "so far as funds for the payment of any such principal sum shall, on the maturing of such Bill, not have become available under the operation of the said Act"—that is the Loan Act—"every such sum shall be chargeable upon and paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund." And "such last-mentioned fund shall, in respect of every such payment, be reimbursed out of moneys to be raised under the said Act as soon as the same are available." That is, of course, as it ought to be, and reasonable. If, when the Treasury bills mature, and there should be no Loan money available at the moment to redeem it—a contingency which I hope will not occur—the bills as they become due are to be paid out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund; but, as soon as the Loan money becomes available the Consolidated Revenue is to be recouped. Members will notice that by the 9th section of the Bill these Treasury bills may be negotiated, or sold, or disposed of by the Colonial Treasurer—which of course means the Government—who may fix a limit of price below which they shall not be so negotiated, sold, or disposed of. It will also be seen from the 10th clause that the Governor in Council may authorise the sale or disposal of these bills beyond the limits of the colony, and may appoint any agent or agents to negotiate such sale on behalf of the Government. Of course the keynote of the whole Bill is to be found, as I mentioned before, in the 13th section, which provides that all the money raised by means of these Treasury bills shall be devoted only for the purpose of carrying out the public works that have been already approved of by this House under the provisions of the Loan Act, 1891. Some hon. members have said that they think it is undesirable to grant this power of raising money by Treasury bills, and that it looks as if the Government find themselves in some financial straits or difficulties when they

have to ask for such a power. I can only say it is not so. We intended to introduce this very Bill last year; it was all prepared, because we wished to have the same power then as we do now; but, for some reason or the other,—adverse criticism at the time in London was, I think, the principal reason—we did not proceed with the Bill then. But we are convinced now that this is a power which the Government should have. Notwithstanding any adverse criticism that has taken place in London, we feel that it is in the interests of the colony that the Government should have a negotiable security to offer in the event of their requiring to borrow money for a short period, should the condition of the loan market in London not be as favorable as we hope it may be, when we require to raise another instalment of our loan. Although the value of our loan securities in the English market at the present time is altogether satisfactory, because our last loan which realised a little over £99 is now quoted, according to our latest advices from our Agent General, at from £104 10s. to £105—and I find from the newspapers it is quoted at even a higher figure; although, as I say, our securities in the London market at the present time are satisfactorily appreciated, at the same time we cannot tell what may happen at any time to affect the money market; and the same difficulties and the same stringency as have existed in the London market as regards Australian loans generally during the last year or two, may again, for aught we know in this remote part of the world, have to be faced; and it might be very useful for us to be armed beforehand with this power to give security for any money we may require to raise temporarily. Therefore, I have no hesitation in asking hon. members to approve of this Bill. It cannot be to the disadvantage of the colony, and virtually it is not giving the Government any power they do not already possess, for, as I have already pointed out, it is only allowing us to raise this money for purposes which we have already been authorised by this House to raise it—by loan. I think there is ample justification for the action of the Government in wishing to be armed with this power, which, while it may

possibly be of some service—I do not know that it be actually needed—but cannot possibly do us any harm. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. CANNING: I think it must be admitted that the reasons given by the Premier in favor of this Bill are, from his point of view, convincing, and very strong indeed. He has, however—although he implied that there may be a reason for not making use of the Bill—not given us that reason. I think it is generally known that in the money market the issuing of Treasury bills by Colonial Governments is not looked upon with favor, inasmuch as such securities come into competition with stock, and for that reason financiers in England do not look with favor upon them. It strikes me that the power that is sought by this Bill is a somewhat large one; at the same time it would not be desirable, possibly, to cripple the Government in any way; and with the assurance that the Premier has given us, that these Treasury bills will not be issued unless there should be absolute necessity for making an issue, I do not think we should be justified in opposing the Bill. But I trust it will be kept in mind that the Premier has given the House a distinct assurance that it will only be in case of emergency that these bills will be resorted to. I also trust that the Government will bear in mind that their issue cannot fail to operate prejudicially upon the prospects of floating our Loan in the London market.

MR. SOLOMON: I rise to support the Government in this Bill, for I think that, in the position in which they are placed, this Assembly should have full confidence in what they may do, if this power is granted. As has been said by the Premier, it is not actually giving them more power than they already have with regard to borrowing this money; and I think, sir, we may have quite sufficient confidence in the Government, after the assurance they have already given us that the power will only be exercised in the best interests of the community, that they will not go beyond their promises. I therefore support the second reading of this measure.

MR. LOTON: I do not rise, sir, to oppose this Bill, seeing that it is only intended by the Government to exercise

this power of issuing Treasury bills, should it be found necessary, in lieu of a loan, for works already authorised by this House. But I regret, at the same time, very much that the circumstances of the Government at the present time should be such that they should feel it requisite to come to this House with a measure of this kind. We have been told by the Premier that our securities in the London market at the present moment are considered very good—which no doubt is quite correct—our last loan, which was floated considerably under par, being now quoted at a premium of 4 or 5 per cent. I am sorry that a considerable portion of this premium cannot find its way into the pockets of Western Australians, instead of into the pockets of financiers at the other side of the world. To my mind, there is something radically wrong at the other end in the way in which these loans are placed before the public. It is time there should be some uniformity of action with regard to Australian borrowing, so that we may in the future do away to a certain extent with the profits—or, at any rate, combat in a very strong way the actions—of these gentlemen of the Stock Exchange, who take such a monstrous advantage of these colonies at the present time in this matter of our loans. A few words of mine on an occasion of this kind will have very little effect on these gentlemen, I have no doubt; still, sometimes, expressions of this kind give rise to thoughts in the minds of other people. As I have said, there is no reason to my mind why these Australian colonies should not act unitedly with regard to their future loans, and that at a very near day. I do hope it will only be as a very last resource that the Government will attempt to issue these Treasury bills, instead of resorting to a loan; for I cannot help feeling certain in my own mind that if the British public are approached in a proper way, and are given a little more notice when a loan is about to be placed in the market, what money we require will be subscribed. If an advertisement were inserted in the *Times* for two or three days, announcing that so many hundred thousands, or a million or two, were required, I feel certain that lots of people would be glad to take up scrip. The way things are managed now the general public really do not

have time to consider and make up their minds whether to invest or not; and these loans are generally raised beforehand by syndicates of the Stock Exchange, who pocket all the profits, and clear their 4 or 5 per cent. out of the Governments of these colonies. It is high time that the Australian Governments should rise in a body against such concerted action on the part of these smart financial people of the Old Country. With regard to the present Bill, as I said before, I only hope it will only be as a very last resource that the Government will make use of the power which they are seeking, after the discussion that has taken place, and seeing the feeling there is against the issuing of these Treasury bills, and bearing in mind that these bills must hereafter be redeemed out of loan money, which in reality amounts to doing the same thing twice over. I therefore hope the Government will make a very strong fight to obtain a loan in the first instance, rather than issue any Treasury bills.

Motion—put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### LAND REGULATIONS (RENTS) AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Sir, I regret very much to have to ask the House to approve of this Bill. I feel certain that most of the members I see before me never expected, a few years ago, to see the Government coming to the House to ask them to agree to a Bill of this kind. I remember very well, when the present Land Regulations were framed, we had a great discussion in this House as to the best means of protecting the land revenues of the colony—the country at that time, so far as pastoral pursuits were concerned, being in a most flourishing condition; and in many persons' minds—in the minds, too, of many members of this House at the time, and some of whom are in the House at the present time—there was a feeling that the rents fixed by those Land Regulations were not high enough. I myself had a considerable amount to do with the passing of those Regulations, and I can certainly say that I thought the rents that were fixed upon at the time were

fair and reasonable, and that those who occupied the land under those Regulations would not find it at all difficult or hard to pay the rents then agreed upon. The opinion that was formed then by myself and by others was fully justified at the time by the condition and prospects of the pastoral industry at the North, and by the position of the pastoral tenants at that time. Those who were engaged in pastoral pursuits in these Northern districts were, as a rule, doing fairly well, and had succeeded fairly well, from very small beginnings, in increasing their stock to considerable numbers; and their prospects were, on the whole, rather encouraging. In fact, so much were pastoral pursuits in favor, that it was almost considered a certainty that if one were willing to engage in them and to take the risk of investing money in acquiring and stocking a run, he had good hopes, very favorable hopes in fact, of being able to reap a fair reward for his enterprise. That was the position of the pastoral industry at the North when these Land Regulations were framed, and the rents fixed under them on an increasing scale. But, as hon. members all know, the experience of the last year or two has altogether changed the estimation in which squatting in our Northern districts is held. I may point out, too, that the value of station properties has decreased to a considerable extent since that time. In those days, persons who held pastoral leases and possessed stock had no difficulty whatever in going to the Banks and other financial institutions and obtaining large advances for improving their runs, by fencing and obtaining water, and improving their stock, in order that they might reap the just reward of their enterprise. But, as hon. members are well aware, all that has changed, to a very considerable extent. The value of station property at the North has decreased to an alarming extent, and those financial institutions who were so anxious a few years ago to do business with these pastoral lessees, and to lend them money, are at the present time not only anxious to get back what money they advanced, but will not lend them another sixpence on any consideration. The losses lately sustained by these pastoral tenants in the Northern parts of the colony have been very great indeed. I do not wish to make a long



speech and go into the extent of those losses, because I do not see that any good purpose would be served. Members are as well aware as I am of the extent of those losses. When I say that they amount to at least one-half, if not more, of the whole of the stock in those Northern districts, I think it will be agreed that the losses sustained have been very severe indeed. In fact, nothing has ever happened, that I am aware of, in the history of the colony, so far as the pastoral industry is concerned, that has given such a shock to pastoral enterprise as the events of the last two or three years. It is a very fortunate thing for the colony that this lamentable calamity that has fallen on the pastoral industry in the Northern portion of the colony, and indirectly upon the whole colony, has been compensated by the discovery of gold; otherwise, I am sure that the effect of that calamity would have been much more far-reaching and disastrous. Last session this matter of affording some relief to these Northern settlers was dealt with by the House in several ways. It was proposed at one time to do very much what the Government are now asking the House to approve of, but that did not meet with much favor at the time, nor did it meet with much favor from the Government bench, because it was thought it would not be of any immediate use or benefit to those who were on the verge of bankruptcy. After a considerable amount of consideration, the Government proposed, in order to give immediate relief, to remit the rents altogether for this year; and, if it had not been that, just as the matter was being discussed, rains came, much to the relief of a considerable portion of the districts affected, I feel certain that that proposition of the Government would have been carried. But, just as we were proceeding with the matter, we had telegraphic news that a considerable quantity of rain had fallen over a considerable portion of the country; and it was then felt that this would not be the best way of dealing with the matter. The difficulty of deciding what was best to be done was so great at the time that the Government, after considerable consideration, decided to withdraw that proposition to remit the rents, and to provide, as a temporary relief, that the rents which became due

on the 1st March this year need not be paid until the 31st December. I think I said at the time, if this were done, it would give the Government plenty of time to consider the whole question before the next meeting of Parliament, and, in the meantime, those who had suffered would not be called upon to pay their rents until the end of the year. Well, the Government have considered the matter; they have taken the whole question into consideration as far as they have been able, and the result is this small Bill, which hon. members have now before them. The effect of this Bill, as will be at once seen, is that the rent to be paid in the future in the Gascoyne, the North-West, and the Kimberley divisions, shall remain the same as at present. As members are aware, the Land Regulations of 1887, which are still in existence, provided that, as regards the North-West division and the Kimberley division, the rent payable should be 10s. per thousand acres for the first seven years, 15s. for the second seven years, and 20s. for the third seven years. Instead of increasing the rents to 15s. and 20s. for the second and third terms, we propose they shall remain as they are at present—10s. for the whole term. In regard to the Gascoyne division, the rents payable under the Regulations of 1887 were 10s. for the first seven years, 12s. 6d. for the second term, and 15s. for the third seven years; instead of which we now propose that the rent during the whole term of 21 years shall remain at 10s., as at present. In regard to the Eucla division, the Government also propose that some alteration should be made in the rentals,—not, I think, because of any great drought that has visited that district, but in order that the country may be settled and occupied. As all members are aware, to the eastward of Point Culver there is a very large extent of very richly grassed country, but entirely destitute of surface water. The rents charged now for pastoral land in this part of the colony is 10s. per thousand acres for the first seven years, 12s. 6d. for the second seven years, and 15s. for the third term of seven years. Up to the present time those persons occupying that portion of our territory—I regret to say they are very few indeed; there are only

two or three settlers there altogether—although they have to pay, as I have said, 10s. for the first seven years, may, by reason of the stocking clause—clause 73 of the present Land Regulations—claim a reduction of one-half that rent if the conditions as to stocking have been complied with; so that those who live in the vicinity of Eucla have, under these conditions, actually only to pay 5s. per 1,000 acres, in the same way as the settlers in the Kimberley district do who take advantage of the stocking clause. The opinion of the Government is that 10s. is too much for the land to the eastward of Point Culver; at any rate, it has not tended to encourage the settlement of the land, and we think it would be beneficial to the colony to reduce the rental from 10s. to 5s. for the whole term of the lease. In order, however, that clause 73 of the Land Regulations—providing for a reduction of one-half the rental under the stocking clause—shall not apply here, we propose to exempt from the operation of that clause these lands to the eastward of Point Culver, so that there shall be no claim for any further reduction of the rent below 5s., which, as I have said, will be the rental for the whole term of the lease. Section 3 of the Bill provides that this Act shall apply to all leases already in existence, as well as to new leases to be applied for, in the districts to which the Act applies. Section 4 deals with clauses 50 and 53 of the Land Regulations, and clause 73 as amended by this Act. It will be seen on reference to the Regulations that under clause 50 holders of pastoral leases in the South-West division may, at any time within five years of the coming into operation of those Regulations, apply for a certain area of land within his lease, adjoining or contiguous to his homestead, under the conditional purchase clause; and clause 53 provides a somewhat similar concession in the case of pastoral leases in the Kimberley, North-West, Gascoyne, and Eucla divisions, so long as the application to purchase be made within five years of the coming into operation of the Land Regulations proclaimed on the 2nd March, 1887. It will be seen that this privilege expired on the 1st March of this year. The concession was very little availed of, owing, I think—so far as the

cerned—to the disastrous drought, and the Government think it is advisable in the interests of pastoral tenants, both in the South-Western division and the Northern parts of the colony, that this period of five years should be extended to fourteen years; and this is provided for in the 4th clause of the Bill, the effect of which will be that the pastoral tenants will now be able to avail themselves of this right of purchase for a period of 14 years from March, 1887, instead of five years. We also propose that clause 53, giving this right of conditional purchase to lessees in the Kimberley, North-West, Gascoyne, and Eucla divisions, shall also apply in the same manner to the Eastern division. For some reason, which I am unable to explain myself—I think it was partly an oversight—that clause was not made applicable to pastoral tenants in the Eastern division of the colony under the existing Land Regulations, so that persons holding pastoral leases to the eastward of York, or Northam, and Yilgarn way were not able to acquire land under that clause. But we now propose to give these lessees the same privilege as the lessees in the other divisions which I have named. I hope I have now sufficiently explained to the satisfaction of members what the effect of this small Bill will be. If not, I shall be very glad, when the Bill goes into committee, to afford any further information that members may require. It is a very simple Bill; and if members will compare clauses 1 and 2 with clauses 67, 68, 69, and 71 of the Land Regulations, they will at once see the scope of the Bill and its effect. As I said in the beginning, it is with very much regret that I have to ask members to give their consideration to this Bill, as regards the reduction of rentals of pastoral leases. I should have much preferred to have asked members to consider the desirability of increasing the pastoral rents rather than decreasing them, because it must strike everyone—and especially those who do not know much about the colony—that the land revenue of the colony is not commensurate with its enormous area. When we recollect that we are generally accredited with possessing—and actually do possess—a million square miles of territory, it is hardly credible, especially

to outsiders, that the land revenue from this immense territory should not realise more than £100,000 a year. But those who are acquainted with the colony know that it is only the fringe of this enormous area that is settled and partially occupied. They also know the great difficulties that have been encountered by those engaged in occupying and developing this immense area. No doubt, as time goes on, and greater facilities are given for transit—which the present Government is doing its best to provide—lands which we now consider of little value will be utilised and become much more valuable than they are at present. In the meantime we have to deal with an enormous territory, with very poor means of transit. When we remember that, in many parts of the colony, those who are engaged in pastoral pursuits have to cart their supplies 200 or 300 miles, and also the wool they produce, I think anyone who will take the matter into fair consideration will find that, unless with very good management and great care and economy, no great amount of profit can be made. In good times and with good seasons, of course, things are brighter; but when a terrible disaster in the shape of a prolonged drought comes upon you, and you find your flocks, if not decimated, lessened to a very large extent, as has been the case recently at the North, and you find the labor of years swept away in a very short space of time, it is rather disheartening. I very much regret, as said before, the necessity for bringing forward this Bill; but it has been forced upon the Government. We feel it is only what is right and just to those persons who are engaged in developing the pastoral interests of this great country; and I can only express a hope that the measures which the Government now submit to the House will not only meet with the approval of hon. members, but also be acceptable to the country and to the pastoral community.

MR. LEFROY: Mr. Speaker, I must offer my congratulations to the Government upon their bringing forward this Bill at such an early period of the session. I feel sure it will pass this House, and, when it has done so, pastoralists in the outlying districts of the colony will know what their position is likely to be in the future. I am sure that their

position during the last few years, and more especially during the last twelve months, has been a most anxious one to them. These people, living as they do a hard life in these far outlying districts, are entitled, I think, to practical sympathy of this kind in the dire distress that has overtaken them. These people, hon. members must recollect, have not only put up with much hardship but have also spent a great deal of capital in this colony,—considerably more perhaps than many persons would imagine. They have also produced a considerable amount of wool, and this wool has gone out of the colony and come back here in hard cash and been spent here by these settlers. They have not kept it hoarded up, but have expended it in the colony, and a great part of it finds its way to the merchants and others in our towns. Therefore, I think that the sympathy, not only of country members but also of town members, should be extended to these people in their distress. I feel much pleasure, myself, in being able to rise for the first time in this House to give an expression of approval as to the action which the Government are taking in this matter. I observe that clause 4 of the Bill provides for the extension of the provisions of the 50th clause of the Land Regulations, as to the right of selection and conditional purchase by pastoral tenants, making the period fourteen years instead of five. I consider this is very just, and I think it was very thoughtful on the part of the Government to place this clause in the Bill, and so extend the time within which this privilege may be exercised. My reason for saying so is this: those persons in the South-West portion of the colony, who have come within the area which has been conceded for selection in the case of the Midland Railway concession, have been debarred from selecting the land during the last five years, which they would otherwise have been entitled to under the present Regulations. The Midland Railway, I hope, is not quite defunct—though I am sorry to say it seems to be in a very poor state just now—and we do not know what may be the position hereafter. I am therefore very pleased to see that in the event of the Midland Railway not going through,—I hope it will go through, but, in case

it should not so come about, I am very pleased to think that the Government in this Bill have made a provision which will enable leaseholders within this area to exercise their right of selection at once—a right which they have been debarred from exercising, under the Land Regulations of 1887, during the last five years. I have much pleasure, sir, in offering my congratulations and my support to the Government in the matter of this Bill.

MR. DEHAMEL: Before this Bill is read a second time I would call the attention of the House to this portion of it,—that it provides that these pastoral rents shall remain as they now are, for the entire period of the lease, a term of twenty-one years. The present Land Regulations, under which these rents were fixed, were made in the year 1887, and we have not yet got to the end of the first seven years of these leases. These leases are practically as good as freeholds, and they are held at the present time at an undoubtedly low rent. People who have visited this colony from the other colonies invariably say that our Land Regulations, in regard to the amounts paid for leases, are the most liberal of those in any of the colonies. What they may be in the other colonies I know not, but this is the statement which is made by nearly every squatter who visits this colony from the other Australian colonies, as regards the terms upon which our pastoral lands are held.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Why don't they take them up then?

MR. DEHAMEL: Yet we find now that the Government is going, by this Bill, to continue the present rate of rent for the whole term of 21 years. I do feel, myself, that these Northern squatters, after the drought of the last season, do require and are entitled to some assistance at our hands; but I should like to see the Government limit this Bill, not to the whole term of the leases, but say to the 31st December, 1900. In other words, we should then give the lessees their land for the second term of seven years at the same rent as they are paying now. If during that time the lands at the North were still found not to pay, and the squatters found they were not sufficiently prosperous to pay an increased rent, then our successors in seven years'

time might bring in another Bill to continue this remission for another period of seven years. It seems to me that we are bound to go to the country within the next twelve months, and that, under the circumstances, this House would be doing wrong in making this Bill apply, hard and fast, for the next 14 years, and depriving the next Assembly of the right of dealing with this rent question. I do not think anyone could find fault for giving the present lessees a remission for the next seven years, but I do think we are taking too much on ourselves altogether, on the eve of a General Election, to remit these extra rents for the whole period of 14 years from now. I notice, on looking up the debates that took place in this House on the last occasion when this question was before us, last session—the question then being whether there should not be a total remission of rent for the last 12 months—that these were the words of the present Colonial Secretary (Mr. Parker): "I would also ask hon. members to bear in mind that this House has been elected on a £10 franchise. The whole of the population of the colony is not represented here, and do not let us have these people, who are not represented, saying, 'Look at that Squatter House voting this money to themselves; it never could have occurred if we had had a vote.'" Those were the words, twelve months ago, of the present Colonial Secretary in our present Government. I do think, if the Government, instead of making this provision for the whole unexpired period of the leases, would limit it to the second term, terminating on the 31st December, 1900, it would confer equal benefit upon the squatters, and would at all events save the members of this House from having the country imagining that we are uselessly and needlessly throwing away a portion of the public revenue, which may be very much needed in the future.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I congratulate the Government on bringing forward this measure during this session. I had the honor of being a member of this House when the present Land Regulations were passed, in 1887; and at that time, I feel sure, no member of the House ever dreamt that pastoral properties at the North would have been reduced in value to such an extent as they have done within the

last few years. At that time wool was fetching nearly double what it is fetching now; and such a thing as a drought in the Northern areas was never dreamt of. Flocks and herds were increasing at a rapid rate, and the outlook generally was a bright one; and it was anticipated by the members of the House at the time that, after seven years had elapsed, the pastoral tenants would be in a position to well afford to pay this increased rent. But what is the position now? The position is this: that owing to a severe and disastrous drought more than half of the sheep on these Northern areas have died, and the pastoral lessees are really not capable of bearing this burden of an additional rent, as they were when the Land Regulations were framed. If the late drought had occurred about the time when those Regulations were discussed in this House, instead of calling upon these pastoralists to pay 10s., it is more likely the rent would have been fixed at not more than 5s. It is all very well for some people to say that the concession which this Bill proposes is not deserved; but I think, myself, that every consideration should be given to people who have the courage to go into these far-away Northern districts to try and develop the country's resources. We all know that they have sufficient trials and hardships to put up with; and they now find themselves, after years and years of toil and privation, reduced almost to the state in which they were in when they first started. The pastoral interest has done its duty, during the period of its prosperity, to help the colony along, and I think the least the Government and this House can do now in return, while other industries which have since been discovered are now prosperous, is to show some consideration towards these pastoral tenants, and deal with them justly and fairly in this matter of rent. It will take some years before these pastoral districts of the colony are in the position they were in seven years ago. I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill.

MR. CANNING: I may remark that those who are interested in pastoral pursuits may be fairly presumed to have a more intimate knowledge of the circumstances and conditions under which they are carried on than others; therefore, there is sufficient reason to justify those

who are interested in pastoral pursuits in making some observations upon this Bill. I do not think it is a measure that ought to pass too hastily through this House. I think it ought to have the fullest consideration, and be looked at in all its bearings and discussed from every point of view, if only to meet the uncalled for cry and unfounded remarks that have been made with regard to those who are interested in pastoral pursuits, and who are also members of this House. I may remind hon. members, in the first place, that something was said last session both about this being a "squatter House" and about members dealing with a question in which they were directly interested. Observations have been made, both in the House and outside the House, to that effect. Now, I think that any cry of the kind in this colony is most strongly to be deprecated. There is no reason whatsoever for such a cry; and, until last session, I never heard it. I never heard any allusion to squatters in this colony as a class apart from the rest of the community, from the time of my first arrival in Western Australia, until last year. I may go further and say there is not the slightest reason why they should be so regarded. Such was not the case in some of the other Australian colonies, when the lands were monopolised by the squatters. As members are aware, the greater portion of the land in Queensland and New South Wales were in the hands of pastoralists—squatters as they were called—in the earlier days of those colonies; and those lands were held under such a tenure that they were practically freeholds, because no one else could possibly obtain possession of these lands if the squatters chose to hold it. The only way in which a poor man could obtain land held under pastoral lease was by having it put up for sale by auction at so much an acre; but the squatter had always the right to come in and bid for the land, and consequently he would always take care to secure the land for himself, rather than that the poor selector should obtain it. A great change was brought about in that state of things by the introduction of a measure providing for free selection, which gave any man the right to go on land held under a pastoral lease and select a certain portion of it. It will be readily understood

that, under the state of things I have just glanced at, when the squatters were masters of the situation, there should have existed a strong feeling of antagonism between the bulk of the working classes and the squatters; and there was good reason for it. That reason, however, has been removed, and the old cry of, "Down with the squatters"—which I have heard myself—has long ceased. Moreover, as regards this colony, it must be borne in mind that in Perth, Fremantle, and nearly all the principal towns of the colony, every man—nearly everyone in business—is more or less interested in the pastoral industry, either directly or indirectly; so that we cannot separate the pastoralists from the other classes of the community. They are not to be regarded—and that is what I should like to call attention to, the importance of bearing this in mind—that they are not to be regarded as a small class apart from the rest of the community, who have special immunities and special privileges. On the contrary, their interests are so closely blended and interwoven with the interests of the rest of the community that what affects them affects everyone of us, more or less, no matter what his calling may be. When the pastoralists are prosperous, then those who are directly interested profit by it; and those who are indirectly interested—manufacturers, merchants, and traders in the cities or towns—benefit by the prosperity of the squatter, and they suffer by his reverses. With regard to the terms upon which these pastoral lands are held, let anyone point out in what way the land can be turned to more profitable account, and then it will be the duty of the Government, and it will be the duty of this House, at once to say to the pastoral tenant, "We cannot let you have this land; we can utilise it for other purposes that will bring in a better revenue to the country." But no one can say that at the present time. If this land were not occupied for pastoral purposes it would be utterly unproductive; it would not bring in a shilling to the revenue in any other way. Probably the time will come, with an increasing population and the development of the country's resources, when this land may be made more productive than at present; and, when that time does come, the

pastoralist must give way. In fact, leases are granted on such terms now that the pastoral industry must yield at any time to any other kind of industry that can make better use of the land. It has been remarked that visitors from the Eastern colonies express surprise at the liberal terms upon which our pastoral leases are held; but I cannot help thinking that those who express this surprise can only have looked very superficially at the question. If they consider the surrounding conditions of the pastoral industry here, and compare them with the conditions under which the same industry is carried on in the other colonies, I do not think they will express much surprise at the terms upon which our pastoral leases are held. When these people express their surprise they lose sight of the fact that the conditions existing in the other colonies have always been very different from those we have had to deal with in this colony. Before fencing runs became the general practice in New South Wales, it was considered that good pastoral country would only carry a sheep to three acres; but now fenced-in runs will carry a sheep to the acre in those very districts. But I do not think there is much country in the Northern districts of this colony—and these are our principal pastoral districts—that will even carry one sheep to five acres. So that, if these gentlemen who express surprise at the liberality of the conditions under which leases are obtained here, were acquainted with all the circumstances and conditions under which the pastoral industry is carried on in this colony, their surprise would be very considerably lessened, I think. I heard one hon. member say that these pastoral leases are almost as good to the tenant as if they were freeholds. I think if the hon. member who said that were to read the Land Regulations carefully, his opinion would alter very much. I do not see in what respect these leases can be considered as freeholds. The lessees cannot certainly make use of them, or deal with their lands, for the purpose of raising money, as they would if they were freeholds. Nor can they sell or dispose of any portion of their runs as they could dispose of freehold properties; and they are at any moment liable to have their land taken away from

them, for almost any other conceivable purpose of utility. I have made these observations, Mr. Speaker, in order to meet what might possibly be said, and what has been said on a former occasion, that this a squatter House, dealing with matters concerning its own interests. I have endeavored to show, but I am afraid very imperfectly, that this is not a question that interests only a single class, but a question that more or less affects the interests of the whole colony.

MR. SIMPSON: As one who is fortunate in not having a shilling invested in the pastoral industry, and who has travelled a good deal lately among those who are engaged in that industry, and who generally travels with his eyes open, I would fain offer my heartiest congratulations to the Government upon their action in introducing this Bill, to in some measure show the practical sympathy felt in this colony with the Northern pastoralists in their extreme distress and the disastrous losses they have recently suffered. I have had occasion during the last few years of moving about various parts of this colony, and of witnessing the conditions under which pastoral pursuits are carried on here, and I am perfectly satisfied that the average squatter's life in Western Australia (to use a common phrase) is not a happy one. It is not a luxurious life, by any means; it is made up in a great measure of mutton and damper (and not too much of that), with scab and drought by way of variety; and, although possibly, at Christmas time, some of those who are gay and festively inclined may live at the rate of, say, £30,000 a year for about twenty minutes or so, it is only to fall back again for the rest of the year upon the same old fare,—mutton and damper, and scab and drought. As to any enormous fortunes being accumulated in this colony from squatting, pure and simple, probably the best source to obtain information upon that point would be the Banks; and I am afraid if we went to that source for our information we should find that these enormous fortunes are either *in nubibus* or in the very dim and distant future. I do not know a single man in this colony who has absolutely accumulated even what might be called a very sound competency from pastoral pursuits alone,

without having put his money in other occupations. I do not regard this Bill as a measure for assisting the squatters: I look upon it as an honest effort to assist an important industry, which constitutes one of the great factors that will help to make a prosperous colony of the country we are living in. For this reason I do object to differentiating one particular industry from the general welfare of the country. As has already been said, if the squatting industry is prosperous, that prosperity affects and reacts upon the whole colony; and, if that industry suffers reverses, the whole colony suffers. I think the wish of this House and of the country is that practical assistance be given to our native industries in every legitimate way, in accordance with sound principles; and I think the assistance contemplated by the Government in the Bill now before this House is reasonable, honest, and well-intentioned, and I do really believe it fairly represents the practical sympathy of the bulk of the community. I have very much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Motion—put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

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### Legislative Assembly, Thursday, 10th November, 1892.

Petition: Perth Gas Company's Act Amendment (Private) Bill—Completion of Section of Midland Railway—Prevention of Scab Infection from Travelling Sheep—Water Supply, Gnarlbin Goldfind—Extinction of "Stinkwort" in Kojonup District—Leave of Absence to Member for East Kimberley—Return showing Perth Lands Resumed for Railway purposes, and Compensation, &c., for same—Home-steads Bill: first reading—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Appointment of Chairman of Committees—Safety of Defences Bill: in Committee—Treasury Bills Bill: in Committee—Lighting of the Chamber—Land Regulations Amendment (Rents) Bill: in Committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7.30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION: PERTH GAS COMPANY'S ACT AMENDMENT (PRIVATE) BILL.

MR. CANNING presented a petition from the Perth Gas Company, Limited,