

it through. He believed that very little would be heard of any further trouble. The staff would, in a few months, have better opportunities of proving worthy the position they occupied. The officers, as a whole, were a very deserving class of men. The enormous increase in the business of the postal department ought to be remembered, whenever there arose some cause of complaint; and, as an example, he might mention that the mail contractor between Southern Cross to Coolgardie, in applying for a remission upon a water rate, stated that whereas he had taken the contract upon the basis of carrying hundredweights of mail matter, he now had tons to carry. A great reason for the miscarriage of letters and newspapers was the very illegible and imperfect way in which many of them were directed. It was a matter of surprise that so few packets went astray in the post, considering the carelessness of the senders in addressing them. He believed that if managers for the post and telegraph departments were brought to this colony from other parts of the world, they would not be more efficient than the officers now in charge. The equipment of the service having now been so much improved, he had no doubt these officers were able to give general satisfaction to the public, in the performance of their duties.

MR. A. FORREST expressed the hope that, when the new mail contract to Northern ports was let, a faster and larger boat than the steamer Albany would be employed in running between Fremantle and Wyndham.

On the motion of the Premier, progress was reported at this stage, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 10 o'clock, p.m., until Tuesday, 15th September; the week's adjournment being for the convenience of members attending the opening of the railway extension to Kalgoorlie.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 15th September, 1896.

Post Office Savings Bank Bill: Legislative Council's amendments; in committee—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: returned from Legislative Council; Message, and irregularity of procedure—Customs Duties Repeal Bill: second reading—Annual Estimates, 1896-7: further considered in Committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

The Legislative Council having made amendments in this Bill, the Council's message was now considered, the amendments being as follow:—

No. 1.—On page 1, Clause 2, line 1—Strike out "shall be" and insert "is" in lieu thereof.

No. 2.—On page 1, Clause 2, line 3—Strike out "shall be" and insert "is" in lieu thereof.

IN COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the foregoing verbal amendments were agreed to.

Ordered, that a message be sent to the Legislative Council accordingly.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

RETURNED FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MESSAGE, AND IRREGULARITY OF PROCEDURE.

The Legislative Council having amended this Bill by inserting a new clause, the Council's message was now considered, the new clause being as follows:—

To stand as Clause 6.—"Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 8 of the Amendment Act, the seats of the members elected at the first election of members for the North-East Province (which seats would, by the said section, be vacated on the completion of a period of two years from the date of election, and each succeeding period of two years) shall be vacated on the 21st day of May

in the years 1898, 1900, and 1902, according to seniority, to be determined as provided in such section."

THE SPEAKER: Before the House goes into committee, I may say this message came from the Legislative Council, containing an amendment made by the Council in the Constitution Act Amendment Bill, which is now before the Legislature; and being a Bill which, under the Constitution, must originate in the Legislative Assembly by message from the Governor, it was not competent for the Legislative Council to make an amendment in that Bill. In returning the Bill to this Assembly, we may take it that the Legislative Council merely suggests to us that this is an amendment which we should make in the Bill in this Assembly. Therefore, I propose that we should take the new clause as a suggested amendment, and make the amendment in the Bill ourselves. This is a very important Bill, and as it is not desirable that we should have a conflict with the other House, I think the course I have mentioned will be the best way of getting over the difficulty, if that course is agreeable to the House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I would suggest that we should not consider the Council's message at all; because, if we consider the Council's amendment, it will place us in a difficult position. We can allow the Council's message to lapse, and can recommit the Bill for the purpose of amending it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I have a motion to propose, in committee, which will meet the difficulty.

IN COMMITTEE.

The House having resolved itself into committee,

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the following reply to the foregoing message be adopted:—"The Legislative Assembly acquaints the Legislative Council, in reply to Message No. 18, that the Act to further amend the Constitution Act, 1889, and to amend the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1893, required, in accordance with Section 66 of the Constitution Act, that it should originate in the Legislative Assembly; and in such case, in accordance with Section 23 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act,

"1893, the Legislative Council may, by Message, submit proposed amendments for the approval of the Legislative Assembly, who can make the amendments, or any of them, with or without modification. The Legislative Assembly informs the Legislative Council that it has made the amendment proposed by the Legislative Council, and returns the Bill amended accordingly." He said it appeared to have been a mere inadvertence on the part of the Legislative Council, in having made an amendment in this Bill, which they were not by law enabled to make in the Upper House. It was, in fact, an omission on their part to take notice of Clause 23 of the Constitution Act when they were dealing with this amendment. The clause in the Bill to which the Council's amendment related had been inserted by the Government while the Bill was passing through the Legislative Assembly, in order to carry out the requirements of the Bill; and it was during the passage of the Bill through committee of this House that a division occurred with regard to the retirement of the new members for the East Province, and on further consideration it was found that an additional clause would be necessary in order to regulate the retirement of the members for that province by providing that they should retire at the same time as the members for the other provinces. The Minister representing the Government in the Upper House accordingly moved the adoption of this new clause, for carrying out the intention of the Bill more completely; but, in doing so, it was not noted that this Bill was one which must, according to the Constitution Act, originate in this Assembly by message from the Governor. If the Assembly now passed this motion, and thereby treated the amendment made by the Council as a suggestion made under Clause 23 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1893, that procedure would, he thought, meet the difficulty; and the Upper House would doubtless agree to this course, as the irregularity of the course previously taken, by inadvertence, had probably become known already to members of the Council.

Question put and passed.

THE PREMIER (upon the suggestion of Sir J. G. Lee Steere) further moved

that the new clause be added to the Bill, to stand as Clause No. 6.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he looked upon this proceeding as being distinctly irregular. He would like the fact recorded in *Hansard* that a protest was made against the procedure itself, and that it should not be looked upon in times to come as a precedent. The circumstance itself was perhaps not likely to lead to any difficulty or any divergence of opinion; but the same procedure might be sought to be used on a future occasion, in which the rights of this House might be very materially involved. He therefore believed it his duty, without urging any strong protest, to say so much with regard to this procedure, before the motion was passed.

Question put and passed, and the new clause added to the Bill.

Ordered, that a message be transmitted to the Legislative Council, informing them that the new clause had been added to the Bill.

CUSTOMS DUTIES REPEAL BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading, said: I have much pleasure in asking the House to approve of the second reading of this Bill. Hon. members will notice there is not a very large number of articles and things proposed by the Government to be placed on the free list; but I may point out that, in placing these articles on the free list, we are not proposing to reduce the particular duties, but to abolish them entirely. I have no doubt hon. members who are in favour of what is termed free-trade will find some little cause for satisfaction in the fact that we are proposing to abolish and not reduce these duties. I think it is a matter for congratulation to every member of this House, and every person in the colony, that during the time we have had what is termed Responsible Government, now nearly six years, there has been no increase made by this House in the taxation of the country, but there has been some decrease. I do not wish to say too much about the decrease of taxation, for I am aware it is not very considerable; but, for all that, I expect it is equal to something like 10 or 12 per cent. of the

revenue derived from Customs duties. Looking at the large public works which we have inaugurated, and the large amount of money we have been compelled to borrow, and looking generally at the change that has taken place in the colony during the last six years, I think it is a matter for congratulation to all of us, and especially to members of this House, that we have been enabled to carry on the Government of the colony, and to form all these works, without placing any extra burden on the people. Last year the Government proposed, and this House approved, the abolition of certain Customs duties, amongst them being tea and sugar, which are articles used by everyone. I do not know that there is any place in the colonies of Australia where tea and sugar are absolutely free of duty, and I do not think, even in the mother country, the home of free-trade, tea and sugar are free of duty.

MR. RANDELL: I do not think there is a duty on sugar.

THE PREMIER: There is on tea. [MR. LORON: And a big one.] We have already abolished the duty on kerosene, coffee, cocoa, arrowroot, and all farinaceous foods, also molasses. We have abolished the duty on bags, sacks, and wool bales, and on galvanised iron, this last being an article used throughout the colony at present; we have abolished the duty on explosives, which are used largely in mining; also the duty on lead is abolished, and the duty on iron of all kinds, including fencing wire, also on tin and zinc. We propose now to abolish the duty on horticultural, agricultural, and mining machinery of all kinds, and the duty on materials used in manufactures—on candlemakers' materials, cart and carriage builders' materials, furniture makers' materials, shoemakers' and saddlers' materials, and tanners' materials. We also propose to abolish the duty on all kinds of tools used in the colony. Generally we propose, in this Bill, to abolish the duties on all machinery and things required to carry on production and which are not produced in the colony. I think this is a very good list of additional free imports. It has been said in the Press that this list is a very hard lot, and no doubt that is so; but these articles will be a relief to all

engaged in manufacturing or producing, whether they be agricultural, horticultural, or mining producers, or whether they be producers of manufactured articles. I think this free list will give some relief, and, at any rate, that is the object the Government have in view. We desire increased production, and we think that the tools by which production is carried on should be as cheap as possible; therefore, with that object in view we propose, in this Bill, to abolish the duties on all those articles which are required in production. During the time we have been in office, and since we have had Responsible Government, the object of Parliament has been to try in every way to encourage production and assist the producer. We have reduced the land rents to some extent, and given free grants of land, in some instances, under the Homesteads Act. We have reduced the price of the miner's right, and also the duty on many things used by miners; and what pleases me most is that we have not increased the people's burdens, while doing our best to relieve the producer. We have not increased in any way the burdens upon the people, though we have given great facilities to producers throughout the colony. We have increased the facilities of transit by railways all over the country, and we have large public works going on, giving employment to thousands of people; and that policy, which has been pursued with the support of this House, has increased the population at a rapid rate. We have brought the colony into great prominence, and, in order to keep pace with the requirements, a large revenue is necessary. I do not see how we can keep this country in the position we desire it to be in unless we have a considerable revenue to do so. There is no doubt that, if we desired, we could do away with a large amount of the taxation derived through the Customs; but would we then be able to keep pace with the times? I have no hesitation in saying we would not. I expect the abolition of the duties contained in this Bill for the current year will affect the revenue to the extent of £20,000 to £25,000; and when we also consider what was abolished last year, I think I am safe in saying that, if this Bill passes, Parliament will have approved of a reduction in the revenue for

the current year of something like £100,000. So that from a revenue of £900,000 we have taken one-ninth, which is 11 per cent. of the revenue derived from Customs for the year. I can only hope that, as we progress, we shall be able to go on reducing our taxation through the Customs; but I have no hesitation in advising hon. members and my fellow colonists to be careful as to the reduction of the Customs duties, and to do it gradually, because it is not of much use reducing the Customs to-day and having to reimpose duties to-morrow. That would be a policy I should not like to lend myself to. We should try to reduce the duties in directions likely to be permanent, as nothing so unsettles the people, by interfering with commerce and trade, as continually tinkering at the tariff. I would rather we go slowly, in this matter, and not reduce or interfere with the duties unless there is a likelihood of the reduction lasting for a considerable time, at any rate; but the present remissions are intended to assist the agricultural, mining, and manufacturing industries. I should like to make a few observations with regard to another matter, upon which, no doubt, some members feel strongly, and that is the reduction of the duty on the products of the colony. The Government do not feel justified, at present, in reducing the duty on the productions of the colony, and the reason is this. I am not so strongly wedded to the system of protecting native industries as to desire that we should go on protecting them forever, as that would be unreasonable, and the producers cannot expect that the people for all time are to be taxed for the producers' benefit; but I do say the producers of the colony, under existing circumstances—and I suppose we all desire that industries should flourish and be stimulated in every possible way—should be allowed some time in order to give them an opportunity of competing with other countries which have had advantages for a long time, that we are only now beginning to have. The view I take is that, in a country such as ours, which has had no means of internal communication, or scarcely any, for a long time, and where the inducements for the cultivation of the land have been small, it is unreasonable to

expect the producers to be able, all at once, to bring the land into subjection and produce crops, and to be able to compete with countries alongside of us, which have long had facilities of transit and have had large areas under cultivation, with the advantage of markets for their produce, and where the producing industries have been stimulated in many ways. For these reasons I am averse to taking the duties off these products of the colony. It seems to me that if we wish this country to be a wilderness and unoccupied, the best way to do it will be to give no protection or inducement whatever to those settlers who are cultivating the soil, but that we should leave them to be swamped by the productions imported from outside. As a result of that policy the land would not only be unoccupied, but would soon go back to a state of nature. I do not believe that is the wish of the colony, nor do I believe the working man, who is so often brought up before us, is anxious for that state of things to be brought about. As far as I know the political tenets of the working man in other parts of Australia, he is a great protectionist, and he wants protection not only for local manufactures, but for himself and his labour; therefore when he comes to this country as a settler, if he becomes a chameleon here and changes altogether, then I can only retort that his principles are not very deep, or that he merely acts on the spur of the moment as he happens to feel on a particular question. I hope that is not the case, and I do not believe it is; therefore I believe the view entertained by the Government, that for some time to come it will be well to do our best to encourage the producers of the colony, whether they be miners or farmers or engaged in any other industry, is more likely to meet with acceptance than a policy of taking away the Customs duties from those articles which can be produced locally, and making them a little cheaper by importation, though not much, and at the same time injuring that great industry, the cultivation of the land, which everyone who has a scintilla of patriotism in him should try and support. The best policy to pursue, at the present time, is not to be out-and-out free-traders or protectionists, but to take the middle course, which will be found the best and

most profitable. I therefore hope the House will not attempt to alter the schedule of this Bill. If the House desires to alter this schedule, it will altogether upset the financial calculations of the Government. The Government have, generally, a considerable majority in this House on all important questions, and the House has given most generous support to the Government, not only during this session, but during many sessions; therefore I do not think that, after passing the great financial proposals of the Government, this House would desire to interfere, or be justified to any large extent in interfering, with the tariff, and thus upsetting the financial proposals of the Government. After all, we are not the only colony which imposes import duties on food. Hon. members are aware that our nearest neighbours, South Australia and Victoria, have higher duties as a rule than we have; and if the duties are so bad for us, how is it that those colonies are enduring them. They endured them in their days of prosperity; they endure them in their days of adversity now. When the hon. member for Nannine was in Victoria, I dare say he was a supporter of protection. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: So he is now.] Let us give support then to the greatest industry of all—the cultivation of the land. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Gold mining.] There has been no great demand throughout this colony for interference in the tariff. The Government have been quite as anxious to abolish duties as any other class of people in the colony, and the abolition of Customs duties last year, with the proposed abolition now, has been proposed by the Government without any great amount of pressure from outside. There is no doubt that the cost of living in the towns, in Perth and Fremantle especially, is high; but I submit it is not higher than it has been for the last half-dozen years with regard to articles of food, though it is higher in the matter of house rent. I pity the poor people with regard to the rents they have to pay, and I cannot see how they can possibly pay them; but we should not make that the excuse for saying it is because of the duty on food that living is so dear. People, six years ago, were taxed more than now through the Customs, and food is not dearer now

than it was then, taking it altogether, but house rent is so much higher that it is almost impossible for poor men with wives and families to pay such rents. There are other means by which that can be altered; but if we reduced all the Customs duties to-morrow, a man living on his weekly wages would not be much better off. If we could do something to reduce the rent by about 75 per cent., which would bring it to what it used to be, we might do good service; and my hon. friend opposite, who is a philanthropic person, might turn his attention to that matter, and see how he can reduce rents. If he can do that, he will be doing good.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Will you sell your land cheap?

THE PREMIER: I have only a little bit. The greatest difficulty among poor people, and also those with incomes of several hundreds a year, is house rent; and I know persons with £500 a year who have to pay a fifth of their income in house rent. That is not an unmixed evil, as it is caused by the increased prosperity of the country, and will encourage the building of houses, so that the matter in time will work its own cure. I am glad to say that if the cost has increased with regard to house rent, wages have increased also, but whether sufficiently to meet the other great increase I am not able to say. I have said all I intend to say in introducing this Bill, and I only hope members will support the Government, and not seek to increase the number of items on the free list, thereby interfering with the financial arrangements of the Government. The general election is close by, and it is better to wait awhile rather than place on the list a number of articles which the Government do not desire shall be placed there at present, and which might have to be transferred back later on. I feel sure that, under existing circumstances, the views of the country will be against troubling about the tariff to any large extent at the present time. The electors can express an opinion on the matter shortly; therefore let us carry on the public works we have on hand, and do all we can to try and conserve the interests of the country by giving increased facilities of transit, by proceeding with public works, and by providing employment as far as we possibly can for

the large number of people who are seeking to make their homes in this country. I beg to move the second reading.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have very great pleasure in supporting this Bill, because it is a strictly protectionist Bill, based upon the first principles of protectionist policy. It proposes to remove the duties from all those articles which enter into manufactures and trades, so as to encourage native industries and the production of the articles we require within our own borders. If I know anything of the policy which the Premier takes sometimes a delight in making light of, it is that where it is necessary to place duties or to collect revenue through the Custom House, those duties should be placed as far as possible upon goods which can be manufactured in the colony, with a view to encouraging our native manufactures; and there is the strong argument that taxation should assist our own producers. I am bound to admit there is force in that argument, though, in some respects, I would like to see a modification. Our industries at present consist first of gold, second of what is known as the squatting industry, and third of the agricultural industry. I regret, in some respects, that this should be the order, though I do not know there is much to regret; but I would like to see the agricultural interest in a more flourishing condition than it is in to-day. I believe the agricultural interest is in a better condition than it has ever been since the colony was founded, and it is because now the producers have the benefit of a local market. I am aware that in the other colonies some leading articles, such as flour, are heavily taxed; but hon. members who take the trouble to look up the result of that taxation will find the result is *nil*, as the flour tax, though standing on the statute book, is absolutely ineffective because the countries referred to have been able to produce all they require within themselves; consequently, though the tax exists, it is not a burden upon the people to the same extent. As a representative of a mining constituency, and, I think, being acquainted pretty well with the views of the men on the gold-fields, I do not think it is the desire of that large class of people to deal harshly with, or throw anything in the way of the

advancement of, the great agricultural interest. These two things must go side by side. We want cheap food, and we ought to be able to get the food near our own door. It ought to be, and I have no doubt it will be, in this country, as in every other country, that the local producer will not only find his best market on the goldfields, but that the goldfields people will find their cheapest means of supply from the natural products of the soil of the country where the gold is found. I desire to make these remarks because there appears to be an assumption by those on the Treasury benches that the members who sit for goldfields constituencies have some inherent and deep-seated aversion to those measures proposed to encourage the agricultural industry. Speaking for myself, I have no such feeling. Speaking for my constituents, as far as I am able to express their views, they have no such feelings. All that is desired is that this colony shall be enabled to proceed on its way with those mutual advantages which arise from the possibilities of the land industry as well as the other industries. But I contend that, in view of the increasing population of the colony, there is no prospect of producing sufficient food in the country at a price that can reasonably compare with that of the other colonies. One thing is somewhat peculiar—we have a disciple of Cobden, a free-trader, in the Ministry, and I am inclined to think this Bill may possibly be satisfactory to him. It is one of those peculiar kind of Bills that may be satisfactory to everyone—everyone is given something all round. I am not surprised that the Bill should have satisfied the Premier, as a strong protectionist, but I am surprised that it should have satisfied the Attorney General, who is a strong free-trader. Still I presume that, upon the principle of free-trade, the abolition of any duty falls in with the lines of that school of politics to which the hon. gentleman belongs. We have got from the Premier the policy upon which this taxation question proceeds. It is one of those neither cold nor hot policies, but a sort of go-as-you-please policy. It goes as far as the Attorney General will allow the Government to go on the lines of protection, and as far as they will permit him to go on the lines of free-trade; but

the remissions of duty will please my friends on this (the Opposition) side of the House, while they will also please the Attorney General. The Bill will also please those who are looking, as a basis, at the principle of protection, and who see in these remissions the giving of assistance to those industries which we hope to see established in this country as time goes on. We have already some industries. Soap and candle works have been started, and this taxation will help them as well as a few other industries. I am pleased to welcome this Bill; I am prepared to strongly support it; and I should like to know whether the Government are prepared to come into line on this subject, and support the productive industries of the country. I want to know whether, in their desire to promote the productive industries of the colony, the Government are prepared to remit the duty on tinned meat. They cannot claim that the canning of meat is a local industry which belongs to the great agricultural interest; they cannot say that the duty on tinned meat will help either the squatting or the agricultural interest, for meat is not canned here, and consequently the tax cannot help the producing interest. The Premier knows well—perhaps no man in this House knows better—that although the tax on tinned meat may be a small matter as regards the raising of revenue, yet the increase it makes in the cost of tinned meat presses hardly upon the class of people who are trying to develop the goldfields.

MR. A. FORREST: How much a pound is the duty?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not the question. When I hear that argument from the hon. member for West Kimberley, I am reminded of what a lady said on one occasion, on being appealed to for helping charities because people were starving: "Starving!" she exclaimed, "and tarts only a penny each!" The trouble was to get the penny. Now a man who goes out fossicking has often as much as he can do to get the penny, and does not have much to spare after he has bought his rations.

MR. A. FORREST: Those who go out for syndicates get plenty.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, and when a man works for syndicates, they get

plenty too—they take all sorts of care of that. It is a very small proportion that falls to the lot of the unfortunate prospector. I am not interested in the syndicates, which are well able to look after themselves. If we go to another point I desire to deal with in this Bill, it seems to me simply atrocious that in this country there should be a duty of three-halfpence a pound on fresh meat. This duty does not come into the question of protecting either the agricultural or the squatting interest. Are we likely to affect our market in the smallest degree, or to injure our squatting or agricultural interest, by removing this duty from fresh meat? [MR. A. FORREST: Certainly we are.] Certainly we are? Well, then, who is protected by this duty of three-halfpence a pound being kept on? [MR. A. FORREST: The squatter.] Fortunately, I have been sitting upon the select committee which recently has been enquiring into the subject of meat supply, and the evidence goes to show that the duty does not go to the squatter; that it goes to the butcher, and not to the squatter. I can quite understand the hon. member for West Kimberley, who has both runs and butchers' shops, feeling this question pretty deeply; but I do think the time has come when chilled meat should be admitted into this country free of duty. I am prepared to go a step further and say that under the conditions of the colony, where so much food is required for our greatest industry on the goldfields, the evidence goes to show that neither the North nor the South of the colony is able to supply our present requirements in meat. Consequently, I say that, in putting a tax on meat, you are putting a tax on the principal industry established in this country. I would very much like to see the Government bold and fearless enough to propose to remove the duty on tinned meat. I have no doubt they will do that. I think no argument can be advanced in favour of retaining that duty. It is not a very large item, and I think it is quite possible that the Government will be prepared to yield that far. I hope they will go further, and that when the Bill is in committee they will also be prepared to deal with the question of remitting the duty on fresh meat, and on sheep and cattle. One argument used by the

Premier struck me as being new. He informed us that to strike off duties, other than those named in the Bill, would interfere with the revenue, and with the calculations of the Government. The sum in question is about £25,000, and the Premier tells us that if the House interferes with the list of remissions, the House will be interfering with the financial calculations of the Government. Well, a Government that cannot tell what revenue they are going to derive within £400,000 out of £2,000,000, are not going to be affected very much in that way. A Treasurer who, for three years in succession, has not been able to estimate the revenue to within one-fifth of what it amounted to, and who has not done it this year, will not find the loss of £25,000 amount to much.

THE PREMIER: It is better to be on the right side.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: When this Bill is in committee, I hope the duty on tinned and fresh meat, and on sheep and cattle, will be added to the list of remissions. There are a number of other things which I think should be added to the list in the interest of the great mining industry. But I agree with the Premier, and I have expressed the same view in my own district, that the people of this country would rather see public works extended and carried on than that taxation should be materially interfered with. That is my conviction; but there are a few duties which, without fostering the agricultural or squatting interests, press so heavily upon the community that the injury they do is ten times more evil than the money we get from those taxes can possibly do good. I have great pleasure in supporting this Bill, and hope the Government will allow it to be added to in committee in the direction I have indicated.

MR. A. FORREST: I hope that the House will mark and inwardly digest the speech of the hon. member for Nannine. The hon. member comes from a colony where everything, including cattle and sheep, is protected, and yet he desires to remove the protection of the grower in this colony. The hon. member knows that a great deal of the meat supply of Victoria comes from Queensland and New South Wales, and that it is subject to a heavy duty. The hon. member says

he would protect local industry, and he gulps down the Bill at one swallow, so that the machinery of the miners and the capitalist may come in free, because he knows this will suit the district he represents; and, as it is not a pastoral district, he wants to take the duty off meat as well. I have told the hon. member that as soon as the other colonies go in for free-trade all round I will be prepared to follow suit, but until that time arrives I think the people who are depending upon pastoral pursuits for a living—and it is not a very big living—are entitled to the stock tax. At present I am not prepared to go in for free-trade. I do not think hon. members on this side of the House are prepared to go in the direction which the hon. member has suggested.

MR. ILLINOWORTH: I do not suppose you are. I never expected you were.

MR. GEORGE: I am in a dilemma as to the object of this Bill, as I am sorry to say I did not hear the speech of the Premier in moving the second reading; but if I were permitted to say so, I should say this Bill is an iniquitous attempt to smash a very deserving trade. Perhaps the hon. member for West Kimberley, or some other member who follows the lead of the Government, will tell us what the Bill means. Is it a step towards universal free-trade, or towards mollifying some interests and crushing others? Is it protection in disguise, or what is it? If it is protection, I ask why some industries should be singled out for protection, while the miserable 5 per cent. duty is taken off mining machinery to the detriment of the local iron trade? How can any country progress, when the last vestige of protection is taken away from its manufacturing industries? I am quite prepared for the reply of the Premier, that I have said that 5 per cent. duty was not sufficient on mining machinery; but that does not justify the taking off the 5 per cent. If you are going to pick articles out of the tariff, and remove the duty for the sake of mollifying certain interests, and strike a blow at a particular trade, then I say you are doing an unfair, an iniquitous, an unrighteous thing. If you are going in for a protectionist policy, why not follow the lead of the other colonies and put a duty of 25 per cent.

on machinery, as is done in Victoria? And, if the policy of free-trade is to be adopted, why not take the duty off everything else, as well as machinery? For instance, last session, when the hon. member for Nannine proposed to take the duty off ingot tin as well as block tin, the Government would not have it.

THE PREMIER: We don't mind taking it off.

MR. GEORGE: So far as the stock tax is concerned, if there is any prospect of a canning industry being established in this country, I do not object to the tax; but otherwise I think the tax should come off. I presume that, in committee, the Premier will allow additions to be made to the free list; but I suppose the Government majority will carry the Bill in any form the Government may wish.

MR. RANDELL: I find that a great many of the articles on which it is proposed to remit the duty are those which I advocated last year should be placed in the free list, and I think the Bill is a step in the right direction.

THE PREMIER: We are following your advice.

MR. RANDELL: The Bill will relieve the tariff from a great many anomalies, and of course it is intended to do that. I should like to draw attention to the fact that the latest edition of the "Year Book of Western Australia, 1894-5," which gives information to the world as to the condition of the colony, does not contain the remissions of duty which were passed last year; and as this book was not published until the year 1896, I think that at least a foot-note might have been added, in order to place the true state of the tariff before the world, if the new law was passed too late to allow of the insertion of the revised tariff in the body of the work. In looking over the list of imports last year, I noticed that in some of the articles on which it is proposed to remit the duty, the value of the imports of agricultural machinery amounted to £11,831, and the duty to £123 3s. The value of quartz-crushing machinery brought in during the same period was £139,925, and the duty was £6,911; while there were also consignments of tools to the value of £31,726, the duty upon which was £1,718. I think I must plead guilty to the charge which the hon. member for Nannine

made against the Government, as I am in favour of a tariff for revenue purposes only, that at any rate they are neither hot nor cold on the subject of altering the tariff. A 20 per cent. duty is high enough for any protection. [MR. GEORGE: Put it on machinery.] Although I would like to see some other duties removed, yet I do not fail to remember that taxes must be imposed for revenue purposes. I should give my vote for the remission of the duty on wheat, because at the present time we cannot grow enough for our own requirements. Last year the millers paid a considerable sum for duty upon wheat. I heartily support the member for Nannine when he advocates the removal of the duty on tinned meats. I think it would be only an act of justice to the consuming classes of the colony if that duty were removed. In removing the duty we should bear in mind that only a small number, comparatively speaking, of the population are engaged in agriculture. I have not looked up the statistics, but I do not suppose the number is more than 2,000.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is far more than that.

MR. RANDELL: Well, I am not speaking from memory of any figures I have seen; I am only making a guess. At any rate, whatever the number of the people engaged in agriculture, it is entirely out of proportion to the number of the consumers, which amount, I suppose, to about 115,000. There is room, therefore, for very careful consideration, on the part of the Government, of those questions which bear on the food supplies of the people. The member for Nannine has pointed out that we are becoming to a very large extent a mining country, and we all desire, and the Government as much as any of us, to do what is possible to be done for the promotion of that industry. A great deal is being done now by the giving of railways and other facilities to the goldfields; but, at the same time, we might go a step further, and give this further concession at an early date. Then, again, I think the country will be well advised to reduce the duties on wheat and flour. I would like to ask what is meant by the item "bellows," in the schedule. Does that include bellows used in the household?

THE PREMIER: It refers to blacksmiths' bellows.

MR. RANDELL: I would like to know why pitch, which is necessary to boat-building and other manufactures, has never been added to the list of free goods. I find school slates were added to the free list last year, but slate pencils have to pay a duty of 15 per cent. Kindergarten material, which it is desirable to encourage the importation of in the interests of education, is charged as fancy goods at 20 per cent. These are heavy taxes on education, and I think these duties should be removed or reduced. Then I notice that engravings are charged 20 per cent., and I think if that duty were reduced or removed altogether it would encourage the beautifying of our people's homes. Another item to which I might refer is "prepared chalk, 15 per cent."—that is chalk used on the blackboards of the schools. There are several other anomalies in the schedules which might be removed to the advantage of the country. For instance cheap glass might be allowed to come in duty free, and there is a desire, I think, that green hides should be on the free list. Owing to the duty of 30s. per head on cattle, the importers bring in the heaviest animals they can get; with the result that the tanners find it difficult to obtain a lighter class of hide, which is useful in their manufactures. When the schedules come to be dealt with, there are several additions that might be made, all tending in the direction aimed at by the Government in this Bill. While we are engaging in large public works, involving large expenditure, it is satisfactory to find that the Government see their way clear to repeal the duties contained in the schedule of the Bill. I shall support the Bill, and hope that when in committee we shall be able to add a few more articles to the free list.

MR. JAMES: I hope that, in dealing with any Bill affecting questions of the tariff, the Government will not allow themselves to be led step by step into the abundant fallacies of free-trade. I think there is very great reason to fear that will be the consequence of there being members of the Cabinet who believe in the heresies of free-trade; and we can only hope that the Premier will not allow himself to be led away from the paths

of fiscal virtue. I am inclined to believe the Premier has not kept to the correct view in these matters, which is protection to native industries. We should endeavour, by means of the tariff, to promote the growth in our midst of various industries; but the whole of the legislation of the past two sessions, dealing with the tariff, has gone in the direction of free-trade. I have not been astonished that these measures have been brought forward, or that they have met with an enthusiastic reception from the member for Geraldton and the members for Perth and the DeGrey. I would ask hon. members to bear in mind, when they hear the enthusiastic "hear, hears" of the hon. gentlemen I have mentioned, that they are free-traders, and naturally hail with acclamation any step which leads in the direction of their desired end. I believe in the policy which is called protectionist, and I hope the Government will adopt that policy. In dealing with the present Bill, we should bear that principle of protection in mind. Let us face this question of free-trade or protection: there is no reason why we should shirk it. The Government should pin their colours either to free-trade or protection. If they go for free-trade, I shall have the utmost pleasure in opposing them; and if they go for protection, I shall have the utmost pleasure in supporting them. Bit by bit we are drifting into free-trade; but members, when they are told that, lift up their hands in holy horror and say, "Nothing of the kind; we are only making concessions." I cannot see that the Government have any good reason for placing mining machinery on the free list, in this Bill. Those who purchase machinery can afford to pay the small amount of taxation now levied upon it. If you go into the matter, you will find that those who purchase machinery are mostly wealthy companies which can well afford to contribute this 5 per cent. duty to the revenue of the colony. Who will get the benefit of this remission? If you ask the member for West Kimberley that question, he will no doubt tell you the 5 per cent. will go into the pockets of the promoters of the companies. I do not think that those who subscribe for the shares and find the working capital of the mines will get the least benefit from the remission of the 5 per cent.,

and rather than see a remission of 5 per cent. I would prefer an increase of 5 per cent. This duty of 5 per cent. is comparatively small, and the Premier, the Attorney General, and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, will see that it is not a protectionist tariff at all. It is simply a revenue tariff; therefore there is no reason why we should not retain the duty. I was glad to see that the Treasurer, when dealing with this matter, pointed out that it was a fallacy to suppose the country where living was cheap was therefore in a prosperous condition. In the same way, I do not think this country will be any the better off if you can get a 10-head stamper cheaper here than elsewhere. When dealing with this question of the tariff, we should ask ourselves the question whether this Bill is in the direction of free-trade or protection; and I think that, if we ask ourselves that question, we will be able to see that even on the basis of free-trade we could levy this 5 per cent. on machinery. This tax, as I have said, is a tax on the shoulders of those who can well afford to pay it; and in making this remission we would be simply listening to clamour which, if we listened to it on all possible occasions, would result in our taking the taxes off all our raw products. I say candidly that, while we have protection extended to those who carry on what I may call our town industries, I am prepared to extend my support to the giving of protection to the producers; but if we are going, bit by bit, into a system of free-trade, then we had better go into it consistently and take off the taxation all round. I am quite certain of this, that no colony in Australia would stand undoubted free-trade for 12 months, and if we are going to dabble in free-trade at all, we had better have undoubted free-trade for 12 months, and that, I think, would satisfy its supporters. Perhaps it might be better still to wait for a few months and see the result of the next New South Wales election, which will be decided on this question of free-trade or protection. In the meantime, and if we are not going to make up our minds on this important matter, we ought not to reduce our taxation without good reasons, especially where those who are paying taxation can well afford it. I agree with the member for West Kimberley when

he says we should admit raw material free; but I would go further and would like to see the Government bring forward a proposal to give a substantial subsidy to the first firm that turns out half-a-dozen batteries. We are spending millions upon the assumption that we have goldfields, and there is no reason why the machinery for those goldfields should not be manufactured within the colony. The Premier therefore would be doing a good thing if he brought in a proposal for the spending of a few thousands of pounds for the establishment of a factory for the manufacturing of mining machinery. Should he do that, I shall have pleasure in supporting him, and more pleasure still in supporting a Bill which will have for its object the increasing instead of the reducing of the taxation on machinery.

MR. SIMPSON: I must certainly congratulate the Government upon having brought in this Bill. I do not speak as a doctrinaire; I do not propose to give the result of an academic study of the questions arising out of the Bill; but I propose to deal with it in a practical light. I presume it will be admitted that this is a country of raw products, those products being gold, wool, timber, pearls. We import no pearls, no wool, and beyond soft timbers no timber, and, except for financial purposes, no gold. It is therefore, I think, a fair thing to say this is a country of raw products. I congratulate the Government on their endeavour to reduce the restrictions upon our natural industries. That word "protection" is a misnomer. The proper term is not "protection of native industries," but "restriction" is the proper term. I can understand a man taking the logical position of prohibition; but a half-and-half sort of thing is neither good for the man trying to work up local industries nor for the country. This cry of free-trade or protection has been a kind of fetish throughout the colonies, and especially so in the mother colony of New South Wales. For the last 20 years in that colony, the tariff has undergone a kind of see-saw, first protection under Sir John Robertson, and then free-trade under Sir Henry Parkes. The whole attention of the politicians there has been given to this fetish, to the neglect of local government and to the detriment

of the general administration of the affairs of the country. I do hope—and I speak from no party motive—that in this colony we may follow a wiser course, and may decide that it is a wise thing to remove every restriction likely to interfere with native industries, and to endeavour, in our fiscal arrangements, to secure to our people the easiest possible living, together with the greatest return for their labour. I congratulate the Government on the Bill; but when you look through the schedule, it is wonderful where all the items came from. I notice they have been carefully thought over, and that articles likely to create contention have been avoided. I can quite imagine the Cabinet having varied discussions on this schedule—the Premier speaking as a strong protectionist, the Attorney General as an intellectual free-trader, the Commissioner of Lands as a cultured free-trader, and the Commissioner of Railways as a gentleman who is not quite decided on which side he will throw his weight, and who almost occupies the position of the predominant partner holding the balance in his hands. There is one thing in connection with this Bill in which I shall seek the hearty support of the Commissioner of Railways, and it is a matter affecting almost every member of this House and their constituents. I refer to what I consider is a grave omission from this schedule—the omission of the item "wheat." There are strong reasons, I think, why wheat should be placed on the free list. Roller mills have been established at great expense in various parts of the colony, and we know these mills are lying idle owing to the simple fact that wheat to grind cannot be obtained, there being a prohibitive duty upon it. Mills have been started at Katanning and right through the country to Dongarra, and I have been told that any one of these mills could, in two months, grind all the wheat grown in the colony. If wheat were on the free list, and these mills could be kept going, a great deal of local employment would be given. Last year £4,924 was drawn from the pockets of the mill owners as duty on imported wheat, and I can see no good reason for having levied this taxation. Those who have built these mills have taken considerable risks, and incurred great obligations, and I say you

would do these people a great good, and also the people throughout the country a great good, if we abolished the duty on wheat. If it would strengthen the hands of the Premier, and I can assure him, from representations made to me, that I could have a deputation wait upon him at his convenience, which would satisfy him as far as this particular industry is concerned that a remission of duty is desirable. Here we have, I think, to go into details, and I wish to allude to the item "bacon." You would scarcely believe it, but it is true that last year the people were taxed to the extent of 50 per cent. on bacon; the total importation being £41,600, and the total duty levied £20,039. Surely it cannot be a wise thing, or in the interests of the country, that this duty should be levied. The Premier and also the member for West Kimberley were explorers in their early days, and have no doubt lived on bacon; bacon doubtless being their stand-by, and possibly having saved them from leaving their bones in the wilderness; and here we find that last year we taxed the bacon of the people to the extent of £20,039. [MR. A. FOREST: We must get revenue.] I agree with that remark of the member for West Kimberley, and I am ready to support the Treasurer in insisting upon a revenue tariff. A year ago it came as an absolute surprise to me to find that tea and sugar were made absolutely free, for it is generally accepted that it is reasonable for them to bear a share of the taxation. With regard to bacon, however, it will be admitted by the Premier that £20,000 is an excessive amount to raise on this item alone, being a tax of 50 per cent. We might have a tax on bacon, but it should be a reasonable one. We next come to the item "cheese," and although I do not suppose £500 worth of cheese is made in the colony, it is taxed to the extent of 60 per cent; the value of the cheese imported into the colony last year having been £16,700, and the duty collected £9,500. Surely an excessive duty like that cannot be in the interest of the country. These duties on articles of food might well be transferred to luxuries, taking the burden from the great bulk of the people, and putting it upon those able to purchase luxuries. The Premier is a fair-minded

man, and I do not believe the facts to which I have made reference have come within his cognisance; but I am sure there are many ways more equitable, and more in the interest of the country, for the raising of revenue than the duties to which I have made reference.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS:
What can you tax higher?

MR. SIMPSON: There is nothing in the world you can tax higher than 60 per cent; but for one thing I would enlarge the system of licenses. You can easily increase the revenue by enlarging the system of issuing licenses. Next we come to candles. You are taking the duty off mining machinery, and yet one of the most important of the articles used in mining is the candle, because men are now working down below. I am glad to see the hon. gentlemen who recently visited the fields have returned quite safely; I am glad they have survived; and I may say they have had an opportunity of realising the important function the candle performs in the mining operations; and yet on a total importation of candles of the value of £13,500, nearly £6,000, or about 50 per cent., was collected in duty.

At 6:30 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair.

At 7:30 p.m. the SPEAKER resumed the chair.

MR. SIMPSON: In resuming my remarks on the Bill, I now wish to draw the attention of the Ministry to other items. I am perfectly satisfied that the idea of the Ministry is only to secure the good of the country; therefore perhaps a little aid, even from this side of the House, will not be unacceptable. Going down the list we come to one of the necessities of life not touched by this Bill—the item, butter. I suppose the Director of Public Works and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, as authorities on agriculture, will admit the manufacture of butter has not assumed, in this colony, very large dimensions; yet we find that last year over twenty thousand sovereigns were drawn from the pockets of the people to pay the tax on imported butter; that out of £100,000 paid for butter imported last year,

£20,000 was paid for duty on that one necessary of life. Surely we can reasonably ask for a reduction on this item. I have never sought the abolition of any duty, and I say we have a right to look to a revenue tariff for aiding the Treasury; yet here I say we have a very reasonable ground for asking the Government to reduce the duty on butter. Another item which the Government do not propose to put on the free list is condensed milk. We make no condensed milk in this colony, yet we know that condensed milk is used on the back-blocks, and particularly on the goldfields, as a necessary of life. I notice from the utterances of Ministers, as reported in the press—which reports may be correct or incorrect—that there seemed to be a note sounded by the Premier, echoed by the Commissioner of Railways, and responded to by the Minister of Mines, that they are desirous of assisting the development of the great mining industry of this colony. Surely if that is so, it will be admitted by them that condensed milk is an absolute requirement on our back-blocks, and particularly on our goldfields; for, in the present condition of life on those fields, dairies cannot be established there, and as fresh milk cannot be obtained in the ordinary way at present, condensed milk is an indispensable requirement. Last year we drew nearly £6,000 from the pockets of the people on our back-blocks for imported condensed milk. The articles I am pointing out are particularly those that do not in any way touch our manufacturing industries, and therefore are articles which should especially be dealt with when reducing the revenue tariff. I am perfectly sure that many members know that condensed milk is a necessary of life, for they have to use it themselves; and seeing that the Government are drawing a revenue of about 16 per cent. from condensed milk, I am sure members will say this proportion of duty is unjustifiable, and that a reduction should be made. We come to another item that does not appear in this proposed list of free articles, and for overlooking which there can be, to my mind, no possible excuse, and that is the item of cement, which is largely used on our goldfields in setting machinery, and used largely also in all building operations.

THE PREMIER: Not used on the goldfields much.

MR. SIMPSON: Well, I know that I and others have had to pay pretty nearly £15 a cask for cement delivered on the goldfields. If the Ministry are stuck for an odd £20,000, they will find every little helps, and perhaps the revenue they get from imported cement may be considered necessary to the Government, though I cannot see that it is. I do not say we should do without a revenue from these imported articles, for surely we have got beyond the silly talk in this House that ameliorating the import duties does not affect the revenue. I should imagine the illustration I have given will show that when an additional pound gets put on to £14, it becomes very oppressive, as in the case of cement when it has to be used on goldfields. I use that illustration because the Premier says that, when cement comes to £15 a cask, the duty does not affect the price much. The total value of the cement imported last year is stated in this return at £6,954, and the amount of duty paid on that is stated at £1,835; therefore that is over 25 per cent. of duty on the value of the cement. We do not produce any cement in this colony, nor have we made any discovery which leads us to believe we can produce it; and surely the cost of erecting batteries on the goldfields is expensive enough without adding to it by this heavy duty on cement. If I also point out that dried fruits are articles particularly used on the goldfields and the back-blocks, I shall be telling a commonplace to men who know the conditions of life there. Taking the items of currants and raisins, these are largely used in our back country, where the people can get no fresh fruit. The total value of currants imported last year was £2,492, and the duty on that was nearly £3,500; so that the amount of the duty was actually more than the original cost of the article—over 100 per cent. duty charged on currants!—and yet this is a Government that wishes to make the conditions of life easy! wishes to take the duty off tools as being necessary appliances for working people, and yet is content to go on charging a duty of over 100 per cent. on currants as one of the necessities of life. Raisins are largely used, and they are taxed also in excessive proportion. Then we come to tinned

meat. In discussing this subject in this House a year ago, the Premier suggested that we might wait before reducing the duty on tinned meat, and said he would gladly welcome the day when the duty on tinned meat could be reduced. As has been already pointed out, no one buys tinned meat if fresh meat can be got; and, as far as I know, the people who are compelled to live on tinned meat do not particularly enjoy it, but use it because it is an absolute necessity in their circumstances. I would point out that tinned meat is an indispensable necessity to the class of heroic people who are opening up our back country—I mean the prospectors, the men who go right away back, who cannot possibly get fresh meat, and are absolutely dependent on tinned meat for their existence. The prospector may take a little bacon—and I suppose the member for Plantagenet would admit that a change of diet is desirable sometimes, even if it is a change from bacon to tinned meat. If the Premier were to help us by reducing the duty on these necessities of life, there are, as compensation, lots of other ways in which we could help him to get back the revenue represented by these heavy duties. In advocating their reduction, the only object we seek is to make the incidence of taxation more equal, and to take the taxation off those industries which are making the country, particularly gold-mining, timber, and wool; and our desire is to distribute the taxation more evenly over the whole of the population of the colony. That is what I contend for. In making these few brief suggestions, I am conscious that I have not done justice to the facts of which I am cognisant; but I do suggest them for the consideration of Ministers in no invidious sense, because this moribund Parliament, which I believe is imbued with a desire to do its duty to the country, has an opportunity to-night, in connection with this Bill, to assist every industry in this country. I do not wish to endeavour, even had I the power, to beguile any member of this House from his conviction or his conclusion; but I say to-night, having carefully looked into this matter, we have an opportunity of distinctly doing good to every industry in this country, and we have to

bear in mind that every industry in this country is alive. I regret to observe there has been growing up a spirit of trying to set a country party against a goldfields party, and I say it is a crime on the part of the men who promulgate that spirit. I appeal to the Premier to-night, I appeal to the Ministry, composed as it is of gentlemen who look at the fiscal question from different points of view—I appeal to them to get away from the particular doctrinaire treatment which applies to their own class, and to deal with this question in a practical sense. As you take the duty off the tools of trade, so I say you should take the duties from the absolute necessities of life. Take the duty off wheat and assist the miller, and you will have larger capital sunk in mills. I appeal to the Ministry to say, is our milling industry in a satisfactory condition? We have a huge capital sunk in that industry, and yet we are not growing wheat enough to keep the mills going, but are growing hay to cut for chaff; and I say that, in order to encourage the milling and other industries, you should take the duty off wheat, bacon, cheese, and all necessities of life. Take it also off candles, one of the absolute requirements of life.

THE PREMIER: We can make good candles here.

MR. SIMPSON: You can make good candles to use in your study, but not good candles to use down a hole in a mine, as I know from men who have to use them. I say, reduce the duty on these things—do not take it off entirely. There is not a man in this House who can stand up and conscientiously defend the duty on cheese. Take the duty off that, and make the incidence of taxation more equal, more regular. I submit my views to the House, and I do ask the Ministry and the House to take into consideration the facts I have quoted from this return of the imports into this colony for the year ended 30th June last. In asking the House to adopt this Bill, which takes the duty off some items for which not a fraction of revenue has ever been collected; which expends the great intellectual talent of the Ministry on determining whether they shall take the duty off asbestos or not, for which they have never collected any duty, and goes on to boiler fluid,

cotton waste, and crucibles; I ask, can the Government seriously expect this House and the country to accept this list of free articles as being a sufficient relief from the burden of taxation, when the Government at the same time will not take the duties off the necessities of life? I must express my deep disappointment that the Government have brought in this figment of a Bill, instead of reducing the duties on the necessities of life.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson): I do not wish to say much on the Bill, because we are not engaged in revising the tariff at all, and I hope hon. members will not lose sight of that. We have only brought in a Bill to take the duties off certain articles, and not to revise the tariff by reducing duties. The whole question we have to consider is what revenue we require for carrying on the Government of the country. Do we require two millions or three millions or less, for that purpose? Because, when we have settled the amount, the question of knocking off duties will be a very simple one. It seems to be lost sight of that, if you decide you require a certain revenue for necessary purposes, then if you knock the duty off one article you must put it on another for making up the required amount of revenue. It is nearly as long as it is broad to say that if a working man, whether a miner, or labourer, or agriculturist, gains a pound by remission of duty on one article and spends it on another article, for the result comes pretty nearly to the same thing, and I cannot see that he is worse off by the duty not being taken off one particular article, if he gets the advantage by a remission of duty on other articles. The hon. member for Geraldton has told us a rather touching story of the tremendous number of sovereigns that all these articles take out of the pockets of the people.

MR. SIMPSON: I rise to make a correction. I made no touching story. I quoted from a Parliamentary return.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: The hon. member told us the number of sovereigns it took to pay the duty on imported tinned meat and some other things. We have to collect the duty on these imports because we must have a revenue,

and it must come out of the pockets of the people. The only question involved, in what the hon. member has been talking about, is the question of the amount of taxation, and as to whether the incidence falls on the shoulders that are best able to bear it. In dealing with that, you come back to the further question as to whether the necessities of life are to be taxed less or taxed more; and, in stating his view of that question, it would have been well if the hon. member had indicated to the House on what articles he would increase the duties so as to make up the necessary total of revenue, and then we should have known the hon. member's view distinctly. We might knock the duties off a large number of articles, the knocking off being the simplest thing in the world; but that is not the whole question, for we must have a revenue sufficient for necessary purposes.

MR. SIMPSON: We on this side cannot add to the taxation.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: I am aware of that. It is a simple process, that of knocking the duty off articles; but when you have done that, you are *minus* so much revenue; therefore, that revenue has to be obtained from some other source, or you will not have a revenue to spend for necessary purposes. I may mention that the Government had it in contemplation to reduce the duty on a considerable number of articles more than appear on this list; but when the annual Estimates came to be considered, and we had to deal with the enormous number of demands for all sorts of works and conveniences in every part of the colony, and had to face the pressure that was brought to bear from all quarters for increased expenditure on public works and other necessities, it was found impracticable to take off a number of duties which would seriously decrease the revenue, and we found that we could not do with less revenue from Customs duties than is now proposed.

MR. SIMPSON: Leave out the Bunbury harbour works, and you can do the lot.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: You can do without various public works, no doubt; but the question is, will the people be satisfied to do without them? I would ask hon. members seriously to consider whether

we require the revenue we are now expending, and the increased revenue that we propose to expend; because, if we do not require so much revenue, the question of knocking off the duty here and there will be the simplest thing in the world. If the Government are counselled to take the duty off one article which yields a considerable revenue, then something should be indicated that will produce a revenue to make up the difference.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We cannot do that. It is not for members to propose an increase of revenue.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: You can suggest how the revenue may be raised. It was proposed, a little while ago, to put more duty on beer, and it might be well to propose an increased duty on tobacco or on champagne, or on wine. [MR. SIMPSON: Hear, hear.] But if you attempt to increase the duty on beer or on tobacco, there may and probably will be a cry that you are taxing the poor man's beer or his tobacco. Nothing would give the Government more pleasure than to be able to knock the duty off a considerable number of articles more than they propose to deal with in this list. I should like to see the duty taken off cheese and off building cement, as suggested, also various other articles; but you must first settle whether it is desirable to curtail the usefulness of the revenue for promoting public works and conveniences, especially railways and the means of cheap transit all over the colony, or whether you will compel the people to do without these things because you will not collect sufficient revenue. I am inclined to think that, if members would look at the question in this way, they would find that the duty on the necessities of life is not particularly heavy. I do not think these articles are very much dearer in this colony than in other parts of Australia, except under a few particular heads. The Premier has mentioned house rent, and I may mention that the cost of butter is a little dearer, as also the price of bacon. If you make up a whole list of what it takes a family to live on, in ordinary circumstances, reckoning only the necessities of life, you will find that on the largest number of articles they use there is not particularly heavy tax-

tion; and when we know also that there is a considerable number of articles imported free, such as tea and sugar and kerosene, it will be seen that the duties on the necessities of life are not particularly heavy.

THE PREMIER: Cocoa and coffee also are free.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: I maintain that if we ease the duty on the articles alluded to by the hon. member for Geraldton, which duty he does not ask to be taken off entirely, and if we put that duty on other articles, some people might be made happy, but nobody would really feel much difference in the result.

MR. SIMPSON: If the principle is correct, the incidence is a mere detail.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: It puts out very much the same, in the end. I ask members to consider whether they are prepared to counsel the Government to relieve taxation and have less revenue, or go on as at present and increase the facilities and give conveniences to the whole community, in the way of transit, which tends to develop our country and send it ahead. These are the questions, rather than the mere simple process of knocking off duty here and there and losing £10,000 or £20,000 of revenue.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): Reference was made to-night by some hon. members to the agricultural industry, and I was rather surprised to hear the hon. member for Perth mention, in giving comparisons to show why the miner should not be taxed to support the agriculturist, that he thought about 2,000 persons were engaged in agriculture. Probably he has no knowledge of what is going on in the country; but if he will refer to the census returns for 1891—

MR. RANDELL: If you knew at the time, you should have corrected the figures.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I did not know for certain, at the time, but I have looked up the figures since. I was going to say 25,000, but I thought it better to ascertain the figures. The number of agriculturists in 1891 was 8,746.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They have all gone to the diggings since then.

MR. SIMPSON: That total includes "pastoral, mineral, and other industries." I challenge you on your own figures. I have them here.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We can take it that 8,746 persons were engaged in agriculture then, and as the population since has increased about 75 per cent., we may put down the increase in the agricultural industry at about 12,000.

MR. SIMPSON: They have not increased in the same proportion as the population.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I think 20,000 is about the number engaged in agricultural pursuits to-day. The raising of this question gives me an opportunity of bringing before the House the necessity which arises for members who reside in towns to visit the country districts and see what is going on; for, if they did so, they would find much food for thought, in seeing the great work going on in the agricultural districts. If members do not go off the railway lines, probably they will not be impressed with the advance the agricultural industry is making. The development appertaining to agriculture is generally of a permanent character, and, though I do not deprecate the wonderful mining industry, to which, no doubt, we must attribute the success of the colony, still no one can deny that the agricultural industry also deserves some consideration; and when we find men going into the agricultural industry, which does not offer such inducements for getting wealth rapidly as the goldfields do, we must admire them, for if it were not for these men we would not see the wonderful change coming over the country in our agricultural districts. Though I know those who have visited the goldfields have been pleased to see the developments taking place there, they must be as pleased to see the wonderful developments in the country districts; for the clearing that is going on shows us that people in the colony are turning their attention to the agricultural industry, which is second undoubtedly to the mining industry. The member for Geraldton referred to the setting of the agricultural against the mining industry; but I do not think there is any of that spirit in the House now. No doubt in the early days, when

we felt jealous that the mining industry was receiving such attention, some very unkind things were said; but that spirit has gone out long ago, and all parties are working together. The people are not suffering so much under the burden of duties, as wages are high and living is not so high as formerly, outside of house rent, which is really the cause of the high cost of living, especially in the city of Perth. As to some of the articles mentioned, I do not think it would affect the miner very much if the duty on condensed milk were remitted. The wholesale cost is 4s. 1d. per dozen, and the duty is 8d. per dozen, so that the miner has to pay a duty of three-farthings per tin, which will not overweight him. On cement the duty is 2s. per cask, which is not a very large amount.

MR. SIMPSON: £18,000 duty was collected on cement last year.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We have heard these statements about high living, and I am showing that some of them are erroneous.

MR. SIMPSON: The return I moved for, and which was laid on the table of the House on July 4th, shows that cement was imported to the value of £6,954 during twelve months ended July 1st, 1895, and on that the duty was £1,835.

THE PREMIER: You said £18,000.

MR. SIMPSON: No, no. You must have misunderstood it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: In a letter appearing the other day in one of the newspapers I saw that statement, but the writer was unaware of the facts, as he said the high cost of living was attributable to the cost of articles in daily use, whereas, if he had inquired, he would have found that tea and other articles in daily use are free. The writer also said the shipping freights would be increased, which would make house building dearer; but on a ton of iron, which would go a long way in building, the high freights would only mean 15s., which is not a very considerable item in proportion to the cost of the article. The arguments of the writer were fallacious in a great measure, and they raise a cry which cannot be supported. No doubt meat is high in price, but no higher than it was a few years back; and even if the import duty were

taken off, it would not reduce the cost of meat very much, as the difficulty is that there is no place to feed stock near the main centres of population. Many of these things, unless they are explained, probably lead people to believe they are paying too much, and that is why I mention the letter in a newspaper. No doubt these duties, if taken off, might benefit the people in a measure; but the Government must have revenue. In regard to wheat, though a miller myself, I would rather see the duty remain, because if the duty were taken off, we would take away from our agriculturists the inducement to continue to produce. I pointed out last year that I hoped we would catch up this year with the chaff supply; and I say now we have almost caught up to it, as we have only commenced to import during the last month. In November next we shall begin to have our own chaff again, and consequently we are only importing for two months in this year; so that next year we will probably not import a single ton of chaff into West Australia, unless it be simply out of the love of importing, as we shall produce every bit of chaff wanted in the colony, and more besides. From this time onward we begin to produce wheat, and in three years we shall be up to the consumption of wheat, and shall not need to import one ounce of wheat. [MR. SIMPSON: Conjectures.] I know what is going on, and I am as sure as I stand here that, with the present rate of progress made by our agriculturists, there will be no need, taking into consideration the increased population, to import any wheat in three years time. I hope my words will be proved true. I told the House last year that we would need to import little chaff this year.

MR. SIMPSON: Why is it at £10 a ton, then?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will sell you 200 tons at £8.

MR. LOTON: I gather that the result of the proposals now before the House is to reduce taxation by about £20,000 or £25,000 during the year. It seems to me that the discussion is on the subject of the reduction of taxation, at the rate of about 4s. per head of the population, through the Custom House. In the first place, I think it unfortunate for any Government to be

continuously tampering with the tariff. I say "continuously," and I think I may fairly say so, for it was dealt with last session in a similar way, and the Premier himself admitted that frequent alterations of the tariff interfere very much with trade and commerce. I think it would have been wise of the Government on this occasion if they had left the tariff alone; because, as it is put before us, I am inclined to think we are going too far. It is admitted that, if we carry on the public works as proposed, we are not in a position to reduce taxation through the Customs to any great extent. I think we are not in a position to extend the free list to any great extent; and I believe even this small reduction of revenue it is proposed to make would have been more just if the whole tariff had been taken into consideration and reductions made upon a number of articles, reducing the other schedule by $2\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 per cent., and also reducing some of the articles in the first schedule of the tariff, in which some of the duties are really high. Cheese is an article we are not likely to produce in the colony for years, and the duty is very high. I would rather see the whole tariff considered, and duties reduced all round to a certain extent, than merely reduce a few articles, for it must be admitted that, by remitting the duty on certain articles, the benefit will be felt only by certain people in the country. It is to some extent legislation for certain industries, and I regret we are touching the Tariff Act at all, as if we had waited another year we might have managed very well to then reduce taxation considerably.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Generally I am in accord with the views expressed by the hon. member for the Swan, that it is very undesirable to be always altering the tariff, and that it might be better, under most circumstances, to deal with the tariff as a whole rather than to extend the free list in the way we are doing; but I am bound to point out that our recommendations are generally in reference to the 5 per cent. list in the Tariff Act of 1893. A Commission was appointed, some time in 1892, to consider the tariff question, and in 1893 we passed the Tariff Act, based to a large extent on the recommendations of that Commission. I have it from

members of that Commission that they placed on the 5 per cent. list all those articles which they would have liked to place on the free list, if it had been then possible. If it had not been for the financial aspect of the matter, the articles in the 5 per cent. list would have been placed by them on the free list; therefore what we are doing now is practically carrying out what the Commission at that time thought it desirable to do. With regard to the remarks of the member for Geraldton, we must not forget that in 1893 the House, which was practically the same as it is now, passed the Tariff Act with all these terrible duties he refers to. I do not know exactly the part the hon. member took in the debates on that occasion; but the fact remains that the tariff was passed after a good deal of consideration and discussion. The duties, as they exist now, are certainly no increase upon the tariff as existing when we obtained self-government. In fact, I think the result of the Tariff Act of 1893 was to largely decrease the revenue from Customs, the reduction amounting to £30,000. The Government, under existing circumstances, have found a difficulty with regard to dealing with the whole tariff at present. I do not think anyone in this House, at this stage of our life as a Parliament, would recommend the Government to undertake the revision of the whole tariff; and, that being so, the most we can do is to consider the demand that was made in the direction which appears in the schedule of this Bill. These duties do not involve a very large amount, but still they seem to press heavily on the industries of the colony, and we have made up our minds to deal with the tariff to the extent proposed in this Bill. A number of articles which have been referred to, such as asbestos, bellows, and bench-screws, no doubt appear small; but the Government put them there with no other object than trying to meet the wishes of the people of the goldfields. The Chamber of Commerce at Coolgardie sent down a long list, which they wanted to be added to the free list, and amongst them appeared these articles. I know they will not affect the revenue to any large extent; but as they seemed to be of some consequence to the people on the goldfields, they were inserted in this schedule. With regard to cheese, currants,

bacon, and butter, which pay a considerable amount to the revenue, the member for Geraldton did not tell us where he would put the duties he desires taken off these articles. He says the people on the goldfields are languishing under the terrible duties on cheese, currants, bacon, and butter, but I may remind him that the people get sugar, tea, cocoa, coffee, and molasses free, and also for children they get farinaceous foods admitted free. With regard to tinned meats, the Government gave the question a good deal of consideration. I believe the importation of tinned meats will not increase to any large extent, as I noticed at Coolgardie some capital butchers' shops, and I was informed that no one now uses tinned meat there, whereas some months ago it was used to a very large extent. Under this Bill, it will not be possible to reduce any duties, and I will be obliged, very reluctantly, to resist any attempt to add other articles to this free list. Our financial arrangements are made up, and the revenue we have to obtain is a very large one; although, as far as we have gone this year, it seems that the estimate will be realised. Still, we have to be on the safe side. I think hon. members had better accept the views of the Government, and adopt the Bill in the shape in which it is now. We are all going before our constituents shortly, and the eve of a general election is not a time to deal with the tariff generally. Although I do not mind hon. members making a speech that will be read by the people of the colony, and especially by their constituents, at the same time I hope they will not press items upon this list at the present. I think that, looking all round the question, it will be the best course to pass this Bill as it stands, and leave to the next Parliament the task of dealing with tariff reform as a whole.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1896-97.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration of the Estimates resumed—Posts and Telegraphs Department.

Postal and Telegraph, £323,934 9s. 6d. :

MR. ILLINGWORTH desired to protest against the small salaries paid to

post and telegraph officers on goldfields. They were placed in important positions, at salaries of £160 per annum, while miners who had to work only eight hours per day got £4 4s. and sometimes more per week. There were greater difficulties in carrying on the post and telegraph service in the country districts of this colony than in any part of the world; and when a profit was made out of those departments, as was now the case, it could be done only by underpaying the officers or by failing to properly serve the public. He desired the Government to consider the hardships of the officers stationed on goldfields, their long hours of labour, the high cost of living, and the qualifications of the staffs, on which were many first-class men. He did not think the country desired to have underpaid officers, and he would take another opportunity of referring to some cases of this kind in detail.

Mr. RANDELL said that, with the exception of the railway men, the post and telegraph officers came in contact with the public more than any other employés of the Government; and, on the whole, they did their duty well. He believed that sufficient allowance had not been made by the public for the exceptional circumstances in which this department had been placed, and the remarkable increase of business that had taken place. The public were not always as considerate of the time of the officers as they ought to be. He knew of an instance which occurred not 100 miles from Perth, in which the sender of a telegram had omitted to put on it the destination of the message; and, on being questioned as to where it was to go, said that was a secret. Other customers, in lodging a shilling message, wanted change of a £10 note; while instances were not unknown in which people who, in the rush of business, had received too much change, had not been honest enough to return the surplus, but left the unfortunate clerk to make good the shortage in his cash. The Government, by making advances in the salaries of many officers, had admitted that their pay had hitherto been inadequate. In a few cases, he noticed there were reductions; but doubtless there were good reasons for them. As far as he had been able to observe, the officers of the

department had shown zeal in the performance of their duties, and had been prompt to give redress whenever any complaint was made. If the Postmaster General had been animated by a desire to make the department pay on its working, that was a laudable desire. The British Government obtained a large surplus income from the Post Office, and America used to do so, although he was not sure that such was now the case. In this colony, it was expected that the department would give the public every convenience compatible with the large territory and widely-scattered centres of population; and it had been the aim of the Postmaster General and his officers to give satisfaction in the discharge of their duties. On the whole, he thought it might be considered that the Post and Telegraph Department had done well, and it was only right that allowance should be made for shortcomings that were inseparable from such a large and rapidly expanding business, especially as the officers had not always obtained all the appliances which were necessary for the thorough efficiency of the service. The duplication of the line to Eucla would, he hoped, leave little to complain of with regard to this department.

Mr. GEORGE said no one would endorse such an immoral statement as that the Post Office should be made to pay. The only way in which the Post Office could justly be made to pay was to give the public the greatest facilities at the least possible cost. If once it was admitted that there must be a profit upon the working of the department, the pittance of the officers would be ground down to make a profit out of the business. In this colony it was the rule for the wage-earner to get a fair share for his labour, and the staff of the Post and Telegraph Department were pretty nearly strong enough to get that share of the profit that was being made out of their services. Looking down the list of wages—he did not call them salaries, for the amounts were hardly the wages of labourers—he did not wonder that so many of the officers found other and better employment; and when there were such frequent changes, it was to be expected there would be complaints against the efficiency of the service. Some time ago, when the public were

grumbling loudly against the telegraph department, it was said that some of the faults were due to climatic influence; but he thought there had been a considerable amount of "climatic influence" at work in connection with some of the increases in the salaries. For example, the Postmaster General was named for an increase of only £50, while the Superintendent of Telegraphs and the Telegraph Manager, who had been assailed not only by the press but by the public, were down for £70 each. To remedy the difficulties pointed out by the hon. member for Perth in the giving of change for the payment of telegrams, it would be well to adopt the system of requiring messages to be stamped with the fee for transmission.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We started it 10 years ago, and the public would not take to it.

MR. GEORGE asked when the post and telegraph office, which for years had been promised, would be opened at the Perth railway station. A portable building could be placed in the station grounds at once, to give this convenience to the public, at a very slight expense.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) said the opening of a post and telegraph office at the Perth railway station, to which the hon. member for the Murray had referred, had been delayed only pending the completion of the new wing of the station buildings, and the two rooms now used as parcels offices would be placed at the service of the Post and Telegraph Department. It had been found impossible to provide the necessary accommodation for a post and telegraph office at the railway station at an earlier date.

MR. RANDELL asked why the salary of the Brunswick postmaster had been increased from £30 to £120.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said a post office had now been opened at Brunswick, instead of having, as hitherto, a receiver of the mailbags. He would make enquiries, and give the hon. member for Perth a more definite answer to his question.

MR. R. F. SHOLL asked what was the locality of Bulong, to which it was proposed to appoint a post and telegraph master.

THE PREMIER replied that Bulong was the new name of the mining township of I.O.U.

MR. RANDELL asked for explanation of the increase of salary of the postmaster at Chidlow's Well from £20 to £150.

THE PREMIER replied that a post office was now being established at that place, instead of its being only a receiving station.

MR. A. FORREST, referring to item "Post and telegraph master, Derby, £180," said he noticed that this officer's salary had apparently been reduced, although it was stated on a further page he was to have some allowance. Even if this were not reduction, it would appear to be a reduction from the way it was placed before the House. If this officer's salary had been reduced, there would be a reason for it, and he would like to have an explanation of the matter. He noticed also that there were reductions in the salaries of the officers at Fitzroy, Carnarvon, and other places.

THE PREMIER said in these cases the tropical allowance had been taken off the salaries, and for that reason the amounts given for the salaries were lower than those of last year. He was not able to say exactly the amount of tropical allowance received by the postmaster at Derby, but he might say that four officers received an allowance of £60, ten of £50, 38 of £40, and one of £30; so that unless the postmaster at Derby received £30 as tropical allowance, he had suffered no reduction of salary. He (the Premier) would make a note of the question, and let the member for West Kimberley know exactly how the matter stood. He might add that the salaries of telegraph operators had been revised and fixed by a board, which had classified each officer. Many of the operators had been overpaid, while a few others were underpaid; but now they had been classed according to ability, and it was hoped this system of classification would obviate complaints in future.

MR. RANDELL said he supposed the item "Post and telegraph master at Hall's Creek" came within the same category as the item referred to by the member for West Kimberley.

THE PREMIER said there was a good reason why the officers had been given a tropical allowance in place of an increase

of salary. This reason was that when an officer received a higher salary for service in a tropical district, it was difficult to reduce that salary on his removal to another district where allowance was not made for climate. It had been thought better that officers in tropical districts should receive a special allowance, which would lapse on their removal.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that item "Post and telegraph master, Mt. Magnet, £160," was a sample of what he had referred to a little while ago. Here was a man in charge of a post office, telegraph office, and money order office, who received £160 a year, while the men working at the mines got £4 4s. a week. The men working at the mines worked only eight hours a day, while this officer had to work about 14 hours.

THE PREMIER: He gets a goldfields allowance of £60 a year.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Even if he did get this allowance, his salary was not equal to a miner's wage. This was one amongst many cases of a similar kind. He also wanted to say that, generally, the officers sent to the goldfields were men who reflected the highest credit on the department, who had to undertake great responsibility, and who had to work very long hours according to the exigencies of the business. Officers placed in these responsible positions ought to be sufficiently paid.

MR. RANDELL asked why the postmaster at Newcastle received £10 a year more than the postmaster at Northam, the former being the inferior station.

THE PREMIER said Newcastle was the repeating station to the goldfields and the North, and was therefore a more important station than Northam.

MR. GEORGE asked how it was the department proposed to pay instrument fitters 10s. and 8s. per day, and carpenters 10s. and 9s. per day, while the ruling wages were more than that.

THE PREMIER said these men were in constant employment, and the amounts stated in the Estimates were doubtless the wages they actually received.

MR. JAMES said he understood the grievance of the member for the Murray was that the wages paid to carpenters were not high enough.

MR. GEORGE said what he wanted to point out was that the wages for

a carpenter, in the Estimates, were 10s. a day, while it was a well known fact that the ruling wage was 11s. for carpenters, and for fitters and turners 11s. a day. Bricklayers were talking of striking for 12s. It was a singular fact that, with these amounts ruling as wages, the department proposed to pay as low as 10s. and 8s. a day.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the amounts set down for fitters, carpenters, and labourers had not been exceeded to any extent. One item showed an excess of £2, and another a decrease of £4, and that was all. Perhaps it might be that these men were not employed all the year round.

THE PREMIER: There are more of them to be employed this year.

MR. GEORGE, referring to "Contingencies, £170,580," said he would like to have explanation of the item "Rent of buildings, £600."

THE PREMIER said these buildings were all over the colony, and, in fact, they had rented places in Perth, but that would not be for long, as the Government intended to build offices wherever needed. They sometimes found it necessary to start a post office before they had a building ready.

MR. A. FORREST, referring to the item "Subsidy, coastal steam services, Albany-Eucla service, £2,000; North-West service, £6,000—total, £8,000," asked if the Premier was aware of the manner in which the Albany-Eucla service was carried out, and whether the vessel employed was such as to satisfy the people trading on that coast. He had been informed that the vessel was totally unfitted for the service; and, if that were correct, steps should be taken for securing a better vessel for this important service. He also drew attention to the mail service on the North-West coast, and said that service had been carried out for many years in a way that was not quite satisfactory. When new tenders were called for he hoped the Government would see that a better steamer was placed on the coast, for the time had arrived when the people living in the far North should be able to travel with greater comfort than they could under present conditions.

THE PREMIER said it was no doubt a small boat that carried the mail between

Albany and Esperance, but he was surprised to learn that it was not a good one. The Government had a difficulty in getting a steamer to take up the work, and he did not know how long the existing contract had to run. No complaint had reached him personally as to the manner in which this boat did its work; but perhaps the hon. member for Plantagenet knew something about it. If there was any dissatisfaction, he (the Premier) would be glad to know, in order to bring it under the notice of the Minister. In regard to the North-West mail service, the department were about to consider new tenders. The difficulty in improving this service lay in Wyndham being so far out of the way, and the traffic not being very great. The Government could not enter into a contract in which Wyndham would be left out; but some arrangement might be made by which the shipping companies could tender to supply a larger vessel. With the freight and stock increasing at Wyndham, it was probable the Government would have more tenders than they had last time.

MR. HASSELL said the "Macgregor," the little steamer used in the mail service between Albany and Eucla, was not by any means a popular vessel. A great deal had been said against her, and there was a suspicion that she was not seaworthy. She was a very old vessel, but he could not say whether it was true or not that she was not seaworthy. He had travelled in the "Macgregor," and had seen nothing in regard to her about which he could find fault. There was no board in the colony competent to hold an examination as to her seaworthiness. The vessel had been recently repaired in Albany, and it was said she had undergone this overhauling because the owners were afraid to send her away.

MR. RANDELL, referring to item "Proportion of subsidy for duplication sea cable, guarantee to Eastern Telegraph Company, and guarantee to South Australia and subsidy to Tasmanian and New Zealand cables, £800," said he would like to know, although the matter did not belong to the item, whether the Government had a contract with the steamship companies for the conveyance of mails.

THE PREMIER said West Australia contributed to the subsidy for the mail service in proportion to the population.

MR. RANDELL said he had called attention to this matter because he noticed that, in the advertisements of the P. and O. Company appearing in newspapers, it was made to appear, by the name of West Australia being omitted from the list of colonies with which the company had their contract, that West Australia did not contribute.

THE PREMIER said the advertisement was wrong, and he was surprised it should appear in the form it did.

MR. RANDELL said West Australia was becoming too important a place to be left out of an advertisement of that kind.

MR. GEORGE asked whether the Government contributed to the guarantee of the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company against loss on the Australian traffic; and, if that were so, what had West Australia to do with loss on the Australian traffic, as there could be no loss on the cable traffic of this colony?

THE PREMIER said the member for the Murray would not have asked that question if he had been in the House some years ago. An arrangement had been made with the company, when the rates were reduced from 6s. or 7s. to 4s. 9d. a word, by which the Australian colonies should guarantee the company against loss from the reduction of rates. West Australia had not had much to pay in connection with that arrangement, the revenue having been sufficient to prevent loss on the second year, while on the first year there was very little loss. As to the guarantee on the duplication of the cable, that was an old arrangement.

MR. GEORGE said there could be no loss, at present, on the West Australian portion of the cable service, and when they found the newspapers in other colonies so eager to run down West Australia, it would be well for the fact to be known that West Australia was paying the debts of other colonies in connection with the cable losses.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, referring to item, "Telegraph line, Day Dawn to Mount Magnet," for which £4,800 was voted last year, said it was peculiar that, when the line was extended to the Island, and on to Mount Magnet, a distinct promise was given by the department

that a post and telegraph office should be opened at the Island without delay. For some reason, best known to the department, although the wire had been carried to the Island, and beyond it, yet a post and telegraph office had not been opened at the Island. Application had been made over and over again for this post office, and it had been promised again and again. He had applied himself to the Minister, who coolly informed him, on a large sheet of paper, that he was surprised to find that this post office had not been erected, but that it should be attended to immediately. Those promises had been going on for 15 months, and the post office was not there yet. He would like to know if it was the intention of the Government to erect that post office or not.

THE PREMIER said he was sorry indeed to hear the complaint of the member for Nannine, but he should have thought that such an energetic member would have induced the department to attend to the matter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have got promises, but nothing more.

THE PREMIER said he could not see why this post office should not have been erected. He would make a note of the point, and would enquire into the cause and inform the hon. member next day. His own opinion was that, if they had not a building ready for a post office, they could start with a tent. This had often been done elsewhere, and he believed the Minister held the opinion that it was better to start with a tent, when necessary, rather than wait for a building.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said the Minister expressed surprise to him that this course had not been taken at the Island.

Vote put and passed.

MINES DEPARTMENT.

Mines, £89,867 7s. 7d. :

MR. GEORGE said that, before proceeding with the items of this department, he believed several members wished to speak generally on these estimates. If there were any one point on which members should be particularly careful, it was upon questions affecting honour and integrity in the administration of the departments; and seeing that in the Press, not only in Perth but on the gold-fields, the Minister in charge of the Mines

Department was attacked directly and indirectly, and that charges were levelled against his department imputing mal-administration, bribery, and corruption, this House had a right to ask, through the Minister representing the department, for some sort of explanation. If these statements in the Press had any semblance of truth, this House had a right to an explanation of them.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: Those who make the statements should explain.

MR. GEORGE said if there was any truth in those statements, this House had a right to demand that the matter should be clearly laid before it. It was no part of the duty of a Minister to shield himself behind his office, nor was it his duty to expose an impassive demeanour. It was the duty of this Assembly to ask the Minister representing the department in this House to give an emphatic denial and refutation to the charges that had been made. The best friends of the Minister of Mines would advise that this matter should be thrown open, and he hoped the Minister in this House would now deal with it in an open manner. It was no use saying these charges were made by men of straw, for the mischief was that the statements were made throughout this colony, and were communicated beyond the colony, so that they might reach all who were interested in Western Australia. He hoped the Minister representing the Mines Department in this House would give not only an indignant but a categorical denial to the charges which had been so persistently made. This was a matter affecting the honour of every individual member of this Assembly, and he hoped it would be dealt with in that spirit.

MR. A. FORREST said it must be amusing to hear the bald statement of the hon. member for the Murray as to the administration of the Department of Mines. Every member who knew the Minister of Mines intimately would know that, although there might be mistakes made by officers in the department, the Minister himself was above suspicion. What had been stated in some portions of the Press, in a scurrilous manner, was such matter that the Minister of Mines was quite right to take no notice of it. If any Minister was to follow about the

newspaper attacks, in one district or another, he might be always bringing actions, and what would be the result? The Minister of Mines knew full well he had the confidence and respect of nearly every man who had business to do in connection with the Mines Department; and though it seemed very easy for a certain section of the Press to attack a man in the office he occupied, this was an office that called for the greatest ability, and should be filled by a man of the highest honour. The House might congratulate itself that it had been able to get the present Minister of Mines to occupy a seat on the Government bench. He (Mr. A. Forrest) said this, not because the Minister was an old friend of his, but because he felt he was speaking the wishes of every man in the country that knew the Minister well. It was rather surprising to find the hon. member for the Murray backing up the action of a certain scurrilous portion of the Press in this colony, for none of the articles which had been alluded to had appeared in the respectable portion of the Press, but were only put forward by persons who were trying to get a different class of men into these positions. He wished to draw the attention of the Treasurer, as representing this department, to the low salaries paid to the wardens on the goldfields. It was well known that the wardens could not possibly live on the salaries and allowances they now received. Anyone travelling about with the wardens would see how they had to maintain their positions, and would see the expenses they were put to. He had been so impressed with what he had observed, that he must say none of the wardens in the goldfields districts should receive less than £1,000 a year. The highest salary was given to the officer at Coolgardie, and hon. members knew he was one of the best officers, and had been in the service many years, having risen from a small salary to his present position. Could that warden, occupying an important position in a town of the dimensions of Coolgardie, be reasonably expected to live and carry out his duties satisfactorily even with the increase of £200 a year which these estimates provided for? It was to be hoped the Government would see their way to make these salaries

larger, so as to attract a good class of men in case of vacancies occurring. Wardens saw everyone around them making money, but they dare not engage in speculation on the goldfields, because they were subject to various disabilities, and even imprisonment; therefore the least this House should do for the wardens was to put them in a position that would not allow their names to be brought before the public in any improper or unpleasant manner. It was the more necessary to increase these salaries in districts where house accommodation was not available for the warden or his family, and in fact the families had to live away from the goldfields, the warden's expenses being thereby increased.

MR. HASSELL said he fully endorsed the remarks of the hon. member, for, having travelled about the goldfields, he found the wardens were living on salaries so inadequate that he thought a warden could not easily keep out of debt. The wardens ought to be above suspicion, and unless they were paid a sufficient salary they could not be held in that respect which was desirable.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he had already expressed surprise that the Government should have brought into this House a Bill for largely increasing the salaries of the judges, with a Pension Bill added; and yet the Government were not sufficiently increasing the salaries of the wardens on goldfields, who were judges in their districts, and had a deal more work to do than the judges, and, so far as property was concerned, had far more responsible duties than judges of the Supreme Court. The same complaint had been made for years past. The wardens were placed in very responsible positions, having onerous and varied duties to perform, including the absolute control of large districts; and having to deal with great interests, involving hundreds of thousands of pounds, it must be evident that the slightest mistake on their part might cause great loss to the country, or loss to individuals. The country had been fortunate in having on these fields remarkably good men as wardens—men of undoubted integrity who had, under peculiarly difficult circumstances, exercised a vast amount of discretion in the

discharge of their difficult duties; exercising practically the powers of local government, for they were absolutely the rulers of their particular districts for the time being. Men of this high character were not easily found, and the country being fortunate in having them, their salaries should be fixed on a fairly liberal scale. Comparing their salaries with those of judges of the Supreme Court, it must be unsatisfactory and discouraging to these wardens to find their merits were not better appreciated, and he hoped the Government would do justice to them; for, if not, serious consequences might follow. These men were possessed of abilities which would enable them to take better positions if they left the Government service.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) asked who were these men? It was very refreshing to the Government to hear hon. members wishing to increase salaries in the case of deserving officers. As to the salaries of the wardens, there was a reason for these things. The salaries of the wardens had been increased this year about £200 in each case, for formerly each warden had a travelling allowance, but the amount was now added to his salary, and the travelling expenses would be paid as an addition to his salary. The warden at Coolgardie, for instance, received £500 a year last year, and now, with the addition of the travelling allowance, he would get £700 a year, besides which his transport expenses would be paid entirely by the Government; therefore, when at his camp his salary would be at the rate of £700 a year, with a house, and, when travelling, his actual expenses would be paid. It should be remembered that the highest salaries paid to the most responsible officers of the Government in Perth, some of these officers having been in the service nearly 40 years, was £700 a year. Mr. Gill, the warden at the Murchison, entered the service at £250 a year two years ago, and now his salary was nearly £700 a year. The acting warden at Menzies was a registrar only the other day, and now he was a warden with a salary of about £500 a year, and travelling expenses added, together with a house. The salaries of these officers could not be increased all in a moment. The permanent warden at North Coolgardie, who was formerly in

the Railway Department, was now occupying the responsible position of warden with a good salary. Altogether these officers were not badly paid, in comparison with other responsible officers in the Government service; still he would have pleasure in bringing the matter under the notice of the Minister of Mines, and felt sure the Minister desired to be liberal with the officers of his department. Officers who had entered the service only in recent years could not expect large salaries all at once, and they must win their spurs in the service. The warden at Coolgardie was getting £700 a year and a house, equal altogether to £800 a year, and that was not a poor salary in this colony.

MR. A. FORREST said Coolgardie was an expensive place to live in.

THE PREMIER said Perth was also an expensive place for officers of the Government to live in. It was gratifying to find that the wardens were giving so much satisfaction, and he believed the colony had been fairly fortunate in obtaining good men to fill these responsible positions. He recognised that, where men all round were dabbling in gold mining, there would be a great deal of temptation to a warden, and this circumstance should be duly considered. Altogether those officers were not badly paid; but he would bring the matter before the notice of the Minister. The officers received transport expenses and so much per day.

MR. LOTON: Whatever the cost is?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A new arrangement.

THE PREMIER said that, formerly, the warden had to pay the cost out of the £200 allowed for travelling allowance; so really the wardens now received £200 increase of salary. It was gratifying to hear the wardens were giving so much satisfaction, and the department had been fortunate in getting good men, who recognised the responsibility of their office, and were worthy the confidence reposed in them. With regard to what the member for the Murray has said, it was not the duty of a Minister to take up the cudgels every time he was attacked in a newspaper. The best reply to give to charges of the sort referred to was that the Minister of

Mines had the confidence of Parliament. It was not very pleasant to occupy a responsible position and perform important duties, and then be misunderstood and traduced, and one's character attempted to be taken away. At any rate, if the Minister of Mines would act on his advice, which he had already given, the Minister would take no notice of scurrilous attacks; and, by taking that course, the Minister would not only retain his own self-respect, but also the respect of the community.

MR. R. F. SHOLL endorsed everything the member for West Kimberley and the Premier had said, regarding the Minister of Mines. The Minister had been known all his life in the colony, and those who knew him well knew he was a gentleman of the highest integrity. No one coming here and making personal charges would be likely to succeed in taking that character from him. The wardens ought to be well paid, as they occupied very responsible positions, and had great temptations placed in their way; but it was desirable that wardens should not hold office in one particular district for more than two years continuously. The statement of the Premier had put a different complexion on the question of travelling allowances; as, if transport was to be paid for in addition to an allowance, it would make a great difference to the salary, as compared with the amount in previous years.

MR. HASSELL said that, in spite of what the Premier had stated, he believed the warden at Dundas would be worse off now than under the old arrangement.

MR. GEORGE said he had not attacked the Minister of Mines, nor had he any intention of doing so. The personal honour of any Minister was closely related to the personal honour of Parliament; but the Minister of Mines had been attacked in newspapers which had been spread broadcast throughout the world, and anyone attacking the honour of the Minister in that way attacked the welfare of West Australia. [THE PREMIER: What do you wish?] He wished to have a categorical denial of the statements, so that it could go forth to the world that the newspaper which traduced the Minister of Mines was lying.

THE PREMIER said he really did not know what the charges were; but if the

hon. member wished a categorical denial, and would put his questions, he would be glad to answer them. The Minister of Mines had lived too long in the country, and was known too well, for them to be influenced by any newspaper article.

MR. GEORGE, referring to items in the Estimates, said he wished for information on the item, "Prospecting for precious stones, £100." He had been informed that £87 12s. had been expended in sending a gentleman northward to discover diamonds, but the individual did not get to the fields.

THE PREMIER said the amount was expended in searching for diamonds in the North-West. The gentleman in question did visit the fields and reported upon them; and, if desired, the report could be laid on the table. He thought the money had been well spent, and £100 had been allocated this year to be available if required.

MR. GEORGE asked what was proposed to be done regarding the item, "Bonus for tin smelting, £1,000."

THE PREMIER said the Government had been asked if they would give a bonus of £1,000 for the first two or three tons of smelted tin that was produced, as it was expected there were people prepared to erect smelters, and £1,000 had been promised as a bonus. A notice was inserted in the *Government Gazette*; but he was afraid this offer would not be availed of, from all he could hear.

MR. ILLINGWORTH called attention to the item, "Survey of gold mining leases, £40,000," and inferred there had been some change in the ordinary procedure.

THE PREMIER said that hitherto the amount received for gold mining leases had been kept in a separate account, and not treated in the way the Under Treasurer and he (the Treasurer) thought it should be treated. It was kept as a separate account and drawn upon as fees became due, altogether contrary to the Audit Act, which provided that all money should be carried to Consolidated Revenue and be disposed of in a certain way. This item had not been so noticeable when the amount of fees in hand was small. Hon. members would notice that the sum of £50,000 was placed to the credit of survey fees; but though that seemed a large estimate, yet some £30,000 was to the credit of the account,

and had been transferred to revenue. The Government got nothing out of the fund; but something should go to revenue, as the collection and disbursement of these fees meant considerable trouble, and under existing circumstances the fees were very high.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said the survey fees were too high, now that the goldfields work did not involve the travelling of long distances by the surveyors. The work was done by persons outside the Government service, and if the State could not make a profit out of the fees, at least the country ought not to be put to the expenses of keeping the books of the account. He hoped the Government would revise the scale of fees to meet present conditions and to prevent loss to the public.

THE PREMIER said he would be glad to look into the matters to which the member for Nannine had drawn attention.

MR. GEORGE, referring to the item of £500 for the examination of engine drivers, complained that a charge of £2 2s. was made for a certificate of competency, which charge was much too high. The State insisted that only competent men should be employed in the charge of engines, in order that life and limb might not be endangered; and it was quite enough to compel these men to travel frequently a long distance, in order that they might be examined, without mulcting them in a heavy fee for a certificate.

THE PREMIER said he did not regard it as being an unreasonable thing to ask a man to pay a fee for a certificate setting forth that he was a competent engine driver, without which certificate he could not get employment in that capacity. An engine driver was really a professional man, and as much entitled to pay a fee for his certificate as was the captain or mate of a ship.

MR. ILLINGWORTH urged that, as the examination of engine drivers was compulsory, the country should pay the expenses of the examination. The £2 2s. fee now charged was a grievance which had been protested against in many letters that had been written to him. The fee ought not to be more than a nominal one.

THE PREMIER said he would bring the matter under the notice of the Minister of Mines.

MR. RANDELL said he was in favour of the fee being reduced to 5s., as the fee really was a tax on labour, and a fee might, with as much justice, be imposed on all classes of mechanics.

THE PREMIER said that while he should be glad to bring the matter under the notice of the Minister of Mines, to see if the fee could be reduced, he did not consider that an engine driver could fairly complain of being charged a fee for a certificate which was his trade passport through life, and which placed him both in regard to status and pay above his fellows who did not possess a certificate. All classes of professional men had to pay a fee for obtaining their credentials. The certificate was worth all that an engine driver was asked to pay for it.

MR. SIMPSON said engine drivers were not professional men. On the goldfields they had simply to push a lever backwards and forwards, in the raising of stuff from below, and any steady man could learn all about that work in a fortnight. There was no parity of reasoning in comparing engine drivers with professional men; and to ask men who were working for daily wages, and liable to be knocked off at a moment's notice, to pay £2 2s. for a certificate was so unreasonable that this fee could not be defended by anyone who knew the merits of the case. It was, under the circumstances, an enormous tax.

MR. GEORGE protested against engine drivers being traduced by the member for Geraldton, who spoke of the work of these men, with whom he (Mr. George) had worked and whom he respected, as being nothing more than pushing a lever backwards and forwards. It was a wicked imposition to charge an engine driver, who perhaps had to travel 50 miles to be examined, £2 2s. for a certificate.

MR. SIMPSON said the member for the Murray sometimes used words he did not know the meaning of. He (Mr. Simpson) had not traduced any of those men at all. He had employed more of these men than had the member for the Murray. As to driving an engine on goldfields for working the pumping and winding gear, that was a mechanical operation, and a man could be trained to do it in a fortnight. The boards of examiners proposed to be appointed

would be composed of the best men available. As to the fee of £2 2s., if the payment were forced, the result would be that the companies would dodge the law by employing engineers as drivers only when the inspector was about.

MR. LOTON said the Government had promised to look into the matter. It was desirable that the men who drove engines should be examined and certified, and this would cost them a certain amount of money. If the fee was too high, it could be reduced; but they should not do away with the examination and with the certificate.

Vote put and passed.

Progress was reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:36, p.m., until next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 16th September, 1896.

Question: Reported influx of Asiatics in the North—
Question: Gingen Government Reserve—Questions:
Carnarvon Jetty Site—Motions: Leave of Absence
—Motion: Payment of Members—Motion: For-
closure by Government over Midland Railway—
Motion: Starting Point of Greenhills Railway—
Western Australian Bank (private) Bill: second
reading—Fencing Bill: in committee—Customs
Duties Repeal Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—REPORTED INFLUX OF ASIATICS IN THE NORTH.

MR. SOLOMON, by leave and without notice, asked the Premier whether he had heard anything about the reported influx of Chinese or Asiatics in the North of this colony, and whether the Government intended doing anything with regard to

stopping any large immigration of Asiatics.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: I have not heard anything about it officially. I saw a notice in a newspaper to the effect that a large number of Asiatics had come down in the steamer *Saladin*, then at a Northern port. I expect they must be Japanese, or at any rate they cannot be Chinese, because only one Chinaman can be brought for every 500 tons of ship's burthen at one time. I must admit I was rather startled when I saw the report of the number who had arrived in that steamer, and I may say the matter has not been lost sight of. As hon. members know, the other colonies are now dealing with the question, and there seems to be a great deal of difficulty in arranging as to what is best to be done for excluding undesirable immigrants. The matter is now under the consideration of the Government.

QUESTION—GINGIN GOVERNMENT RESERVE.

MR. LEFROY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands:—1. What was the acreage of the Government reserve adjoining the township of Gingen? 2. For what purpose the reserve was used? 3. Whether there was any good reason why this land, or the greater portion of it, should not be thrown open for selection for garden and orchard purposes?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) replied:—I have already had under my notice the desirability or otherwise of cutting up into garden and orchard blocks a portion of this reserve, but have not yet had time to make exhaustive inquiries in order to decide whether all this land is required as a public reserve, but I hope to do so shortly; and if such a large reserve is not actually required in this locality, I will take into consideration some scheme of cutting up which would result in a good portion of it being turned to more profitable account.

QUESTION—CARNARVON JETTY SITE.

MR. R. F. SHOLL, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works when the Government proposed