

ADJOURNMENT.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until Tuesday next.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE said he would like to move that the House at its rising do adjourn for a month, if only to emphasise the fact that the Parliament had now been sitting for five weeks, and members had had nothing to do. The Address had foreshadowed certain measures, but none of these had been brought down to this House. It was a farce to ask hon. members to assemble here from week to week to go through an hour and a half's work and no more. If no effort was made to give us something to do we should adjourn for a month.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Make the adjournment a fortnight.

HON. F. WHITCOMBE: Rather make it three months.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 6-25 o'clock until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 18th September, 1900.

Appropriation Message—Papers presented—Commonwealth Parliament: Royal Visit, Duke and Duchess of York—Question: Railway Water Supply, Cost at Coolgardie—Question: Magisterial Bench at Coolgardie—Public Service Bill, Recommitment, reported—Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, second reading—Game Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Customs Duties (Meat) Repeal Bill, second reading; in Committee, Division on progress—Return ordered, Northampton District Surveys—Return ordered, Goldfields Firewood Supply Company, sale of rails, etc.—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4-30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGE.

Message from the Administrator, delivered by the PREMIER and read, recom-

mended an appropriation for the purpose of the Federal House of Representatives W.A. Bill.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, *Re Return* showing Duties on Imports from other Australian colonies, Explanation of inability of Department to comply with order of the House; 2, Correspondence on Federation, Addendum; 3, Perth Hospital Board, Report; 4, Fremantle Hospital Board, Report.

By the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: 1, Inspectors of Rabbits, Reports to 30th June, 1900; 2, Central Winery. Correspondence as ordered.

Ordered to lie on the table.

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENT—ROYAL VISIT, DUKE AND DUCHESS OF YORK.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Before we proceed to the business of the day, I should like to read, for the information of the House, the following telegram from the Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Governor of South Australia, and communicated to the Administrator of this colony, dated from London, 18th September:—

The Queen has been graciously pleased to assent to the recommendation of the Marquess of Salisbury as to the visit from their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York to the colonies of Australasia, in the spring of next year. The Duke of York will be commissioned by the Queen to open the first Session of Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth in Her name. Although the Queen naturally shrinks from parting with Her grandson for so long a period, the Queen fully recognises the loyalty and devotion which prompted the spontaneous aid so liberally offered by all the available colonies in the South African War, and of the splendid gallantry of Her colonial troops. Her Majesty's assent to this visit is, of course, given on the assumption that, at the time fixed for the Duke of York's departure, the circumstances are as favourable as at present, and that no national interests call for His Royal Highness's presence in this country.

[The above may be published in the newspapers on Tuesday morning: it will be published here at the same time.]

[General applause by Members.]

QUESTION—RAILWAY WATER SUPPLY, COST AT COOLGARDIE.

MR. HOLMES asked the Acting Commissioner of Railways: 1, Whether it

was a fact that Turnbull & Company of Coolgardie offered to supply water at less cost than that paid to the Goldfields Firewood Supply Company. 2, If so what price was quoted by Turnbull & Company at Coolgardie.

THE PREMIER (Acting Commissioner) replied:—1, No. 2, In May, 1899, about a year before the Goldfields Firewood Supply Company had water to dispose of, Mr. Turnbull offered to supply water in the Railway Department's storage tank at Coolgardie at 30s. per 1,000 gallons, but arrangements were made by which the same water was obtained from another company at 15s. per 1,000 gallons.

QUESTION—MAGISTERIAL BENCH AT COOLGARDIE IN RECENT CASES.

MR. VOSPER asked the Attorney General whether it was true that Messrs. Finnerty and Cohn were specially instructed or requested to occupy the Bench in the cases of *Gaze v. Mahon* and *Salinger v. Mahon*. If so, whether he was prepared to lay the papers on the table of the House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: No.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

RECOMMITTAL.

On motion by Mr. QUINLAN, Bill recommitted for amendment of Clause 28.

MR. QUINLAN moved that in Clause 28, Sub-clause c, the word "nine" be struck out and "six" inserted. This amendment was consequential on a previous amendment in the Bill.

Amendment put and passed.

Bill reported with a further amendment.

On motion by Mr. ILLINGWORTH, Bill further recommitted with a view of amending Clause 5, paragraph j.

MR. ILLINGWORTH moved that in Clause 5, Sub-clause j, after "Commissioner of Police," in line 1, there be inserted the words "and inspectors." The leading officers in the police force, when they rose beyond a certain status, passed out of the operation of the Police Act, and became subject to the conditions governing the civil service.

THE PREMIER: This had been the custom, and so it was at present; but it

was a custom that ought to be altered, because it produced some ill effects. The custom had been that when an officer of the police became an inspector, he was entitled to draw from the police fund (to which he had been contributing) any money payable on his account; he then entered the civil service at an age which would entitle him to only a small pension on retiring from it; so the consequence was that such officer would be likely to draw and use up the money he was entitled to from the police fund, and when he retired some years later from the civil service he would be entitled to only a small pension under the Superannuation Act, dating from the time when he became a civil servant. One effect of this system was that an inspector, having only a small pension to retire on, was retained longer in the service than in some cases would be desirable. The case of the Commissioner of Police was different, because he would have performed long service as a civil servant before he came into the Commissionership. He (the Premier) had moved in this matter with a view to amending the system, and the intention was that in the case of all officers in the police force, except the Commissioner of Police, they should not be allowed to draw their gratuity from the police fund until they actually retired from public service, in order that they might have the full benefit of the accumulation on retirement.

Amendment put and passed.

Bill reported with further amendments, and the report adopted.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather), in moving the second reading, said: Before dealing with the provisions of this Bill, I should like to make some introductory observations, which I trust the House will not deem out of place, because they shall be of a general character leading up, as I think they will, to the consideration of this great measure. It is undoubtedly accepted as an axiom nowadays that the industrial prosperity of every civilised country mainly depends on the harmonious relations existing between labour

and capital. It will not be out of place to reflect for a short time upon the history of combination, so far as it affects employees, because, strange as it may appear, up to the present day in this colony there is no legal power authorising the combination of workers. The first trace I can find as regards a combination of employees is that of the guilds in the time of the Tudors, which were associations or fraternities established for the protection of those persons who made their living by trade, or by carrying on those employments that were introduced on the continent of Europe about that time, namely the art of making silk, also of making gold ornaments, implements, and articles of that fashion. These societies found that, owing to the rapacious demands made on them from time to time by the nobles, and occasionally by their royal masters, and in order to protect themselves, they had to form among themselves that kind of combination which would now be termed a trade union. From time to time they strengthened their position by obtaining charters from the Sovereign, which might in those days be equivalent to Acts of Parliament, so far as the protection of guilds was concerned. In process of time, with the accession of the House of Hanover, property became fairly well protected, and trade began to assume dimensions that were quite new to those who were engaged in it. Indeed, it was found necessary that those societies should be changed in character if not entirely in substance; and then it was we might trace the origin of what is termed company growth. They were originally joint-stock combinations, authorised by charter. Then, coming down to what I may term modern times, they were authorised by Acts of Parliament, and became companies as we now understand them, particularly industrial societies. About the beginning of this century, when England obtained supremacy of the seas, a great impetus was given to commerce; then, almost simultaneously, the discovery of the application of steam as a motive power, and the inventions consequent on it, gave such an impetus as placed the British nation far ahead of any other people engaged in commerce. We come now to modern times, when we find that these companies,

formed originally for the purpose of trade, began also to carry on commercial operations, and gaining a status which entitled them to protection by law. So much has that spirit been cultivated in trade that now it is the exception to find any large establishment that is not either a limited company or a company of some character under the protection section. So far, therefore, as regards the combination of employers up to the present time, it will be found that they are protected amply in every possible way for their benefit and advantage. Now comes the other side of the picture, the condition of the workers. As I said, up to the present date in this colony there is no legal authority to justify the combination of working men for the purpose of looking after their own interests or for the purpose of making terms with their employers. True it is, of course, that any individual working man can make his own contract and his own bargain, and can enforce it in a court of law; but where you have to deal with bodies of persons, that is to say an aggregation of men formed for mutual protection, there is no law whatever that gives them a status, and therefore they are not known to our law. The first recognition that was given, indirectly, of the right to form associations of workers was the Act passed in the year 1871, in England, mainly for the purpose of protecting the property of workers' associations from fraud by their own officers. It did not give them any further rights than, we may say, practically to protect their property from being stolen from them. Five years after that another Act was passed, which showed that the trend of public opinion then was that it was necessary the workers should receive some statutory protection even in dealing as bodies with other people; and then that Act was passed having for its object, mainly, that it should not be deemed an act of conspiracy on the part of working men to obtain terms from their employers; in other words, what had been conceded ages ago to employers was only then, for the first time, conceded to workers. During the last 20 years, or 25 at the outside, we have come to that wonderful organisation which, in the industrial development of Australia and throughout the whole of the British

Empire, has been the vitality of the interests of the workers as crystallised in trade unions. We have seen, and many of us know personally, that the interests of these unions came into conflict with those of their employers, and that the only possible way in which their disputes could be settled was either by yielding on the one part or starvation on the other. Every hon. member will acknowledge this is a most barbarous method of settling industrial disputes—[MR. VOSPER: Hear, hear]—and the time has now come when this country must fall into line, as I take it, with the other parts of this great continent and with New Zealand, in giving to workers such recognition as will enable them not only to protect their own interests, but shall place them, acting within their legal rights, in such a position that it shall be competent for them, if they are so inclined, to make bargains in a collective capacity with combinations of employers. I doubt not that much of the failure that has been caused by trade unions up to the present time in this country, and I may say in Australia generally, has been due to this one fact, that these trade unions in Australia till quite recently had not received any legal status. Necessarily, they were cramped in their actions. Their acts were always illegal, and that being so, of course it was only natural for heat and passion to very often prevail when argument should have been used. If you create a body and give it a *locus standi*, it will be accepted as a body that has rights and duties appertaining to it; and the people who compose that body will necessarily in time be educated to a sense of their responsibility, and the officers and controllers, and directors of these societies must necessarily be improved both in knowledge and education. That must not only strengthen the societies, but must make for this, that it will help the employers, for when they come to discuss the terms in dispute with those societies they will reason and argue with educated men, and men who have a thorough knowledge of the subject they are called upon to deal with. Another reason that strongly sways in the consideration of the question why this freedom of contract in combination shall be granted, is that there is nothing so difficult for men who are not accustomed

to it, and even for those who are accustomed to it, as to try and think out a problem for themselves. Every man who works, and particularly the man engaged in manual labour, has not much opportunity, and perhaps has not much education, to think out the principles in which he and a number of representative men find their destiny mixed up; and I take it that one should have a right, when he does belong to a union, to say "I want that man to think for me. He is better educated than I am, and his interests are identical with mine. I know that his advice will be for my good." [MR. GEORGE: The interests of his own class.] Therefore, inasmuch as that is necessary and needful, I do not see for a moment how it can in any possible aspect injure the employer. Although in England to-day there is no measure on the statute book such as this I am explaining to-night, still the march of public opinion in Britain on this question has even exceeded that of the Australian continent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: At Home there is an unwritten law.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There it appears that the great employers of labour have risen, I may say like Englishmen, to the occasion and, without any Act of Parliament, have themselves formulated and carried out successfully schemes for the purpose of settling these disputes between employers and workers.

MR. GEORGE: For years and years there have been conciliation boards in the Midlands.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: But they are not of a compulsory character. As the hon. member will see, the Bill on the table to-night is in its nature compulsory; and it has been argued that if it be left to the option of the parties whether they will or will not avail themselves of the provisions of the Arbitration Act, it will be found that such a law is of very little benefit. This Bill, as hon. members are aware, is framed practically upon the lines of the recommendation made to the House of Commons by the Royal Commission on Labour that sat in England in 1894; and the recommendation of that Commission, although made by a minority, are nevertheless entitled to the highest respect. As hon. members who have paid any attention

to the question will know, the names attached to that commission's report inspire everyone with confidence, and certainly no employer of labour can afford to treat them with indifference. I shall mention the names of those gentlemen because, later on in this debate, it may be questioned how far we are proceeding—whether we are not going too quickly in doing as we propose to do in this Bill, or whether we have a perfect right to do so, having regard to the fact that we are only falling into line with the rest of Australia, and carrying out the recommendations made by the foremost English authorities on commerce. There are five names attached to this report to which I have referred. The first is that of one who, both by his position and by his skill in the science of economy, has made a name for himself independently of his wealth and title; and that is the Duke of Devonshire. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.] He is considered one of the largest employers of labour, I believe, in England. Next to him comes the name of Sir David Dale, the great ironmaster of Darlington; then comes Mr. Thomas Ismay, Chairman of the White Star Line; Mr. George Livesey, a director of the London Gas Company; Sir William Tunstall, director of several large English railways; Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, who is, I believe, the Chancellor of the British Exchequer; Mr. Leonard Courteney, who has written a treatise on economy, of great repute; and last, but certainly not the least, Sir Frederick Pollock, who is acknowledged to be the most accomplished jurist at present at the English bar. I shall take the liberty of referring to a few extracts from these gentlemen's report to show that they are but voicing the opinion of the great nation to which they belong, and that they have confidence in their opinions and have expressed their ideas in clear and unmistakable phraseology. One of the main objections urged to this right to combine was that the awards could not be enforced. These gentlemen point out, in another portion of this report, that they found from experience that where an award had been made between the contending parties, that award, as a rule, was loyally submitted to by both sides; and, therefore, a slight reference is made

to this subject at the beginning of this extract. They say—

In our opinion, the experience of the period which has elapsed since the year 1871—

That was the period, hon. members will recollect, when the first Act was passed dealing with trade unions.

justifies some relaxation of the statutory restrictions on trades unions. We think that the extension of the liberty to bodies of workmen or employers to acquire fuller legal personality than that which they at present possess is desirable in order to afford, when both parties wish it, the means of securing the observance, at least for fixed periods, of the collective agreements which are now as a matter of fact made between them in so many cases.

We find that a considerable and very important part of British industry is conducted under collective agreements made in the most formal way between highly organised trade associations, and that the substitution of agreements between associations for agreements between individual employers and industrial workmen is a growing practice, and one which is intimately connected with the mode and scale upon which modern industry is at present carried on. It seems to us to be clear, from the evidence, both of employers and employed, that the advantages of this system greatly outweigh the disadvantages. A further obstacle may frequently be found in the uncertainty which exists as to the observance of an award when given. If an arbitrator can only pronounce a decision which may or may not be followed according to the goodwill of the parties, the procedure is, to some extent, discredited. Although, as a rule, arbitration awards can be loyally accepted, and the exceptions may be very few, yet the possibility of such an exception occurring may make employers or workmen less willing to resort to a troublesome and elaborate process like formal arbitration. It has been shown that it is impossible to compel the observance of any award in these matters. It remains to be considered whether any better guarantee or motive for such observance can be obtained to supplement and straighten the moral force which already exists. In order to have arbitration in the strict sense of the word, there must be two or more parties capable of entering into a legal contract to submit present or future questions to arbitration, and there must be such submission. Then, by the ordinary principles of law, damages can be recovered from any party who refuses to go to arbitration, or declines to act on the award when made. As things now stand, large bodies of workmen or employers cannot, as such bodies, enter into legal contracts of submission to arbitration, for want of legal personality, and, for the same reason, damages cannot be recovered from them, as such bodies, for refusal to go to arbitration after agreement to do so, or for refusal to accept the result of awards. If, however, the suggestions which we have made were

adopted, and it were put within the power of such bodies to acquire legal personality sufficient to enable them to enter into collective agreements, with the legal sanction of collective liability in damages for breach of such agreements, this difficulty would so far be solved. If, under such circumstances, a body had agreed to submit future disputes on one or more subjects to arbitration, and subsequently refused to do so and resorted to a strike or lockout, it might be sued for damages; and the prospect of this, although it could not indeed prevent, would render less likely a resort to such measures. If a strike or lockout did take place, although it is true that any damages which could be recovered would probably not, except in the case of a small or partial conflict, be sufficient compensation, yet an action at law would render more visible the breach of contract, and serve to guide public opinion. The same observations will apply to the breach of an award made upon a submission under collective agreement. There would, in both cases, be the gain of a judgment publicly pronounced by a competent authority, and attended and emphasised by tangible results. For instance, an employer might insist on a reduction of wages contrary to a collective agreement or to an arbitration award founded upon collective agreement. Then, instead of striking, the workmen might continue to work at the reduced wages, and, through their association, sue their employer or his association for damages for the amount of their loss.

It will therefore be seen that one of the main objects which this commission had in making its recommendations was to show that the very fact of there being a public inquiry by a legally constituted tribunal would focus public attention on the points at issue, and by that means arouse public opinion; and the force of public opinion cannot, for any length of time, be treated with indifference. [MR. VOSPER: Hear, hear.] That certainly is, to my mind, one of the main arguments why I shall urge later on that in the Bill before this House the first part of it, although by some considered needless, is a necessary part; because the mere fact of bringing the parties together helps to smooth, to a great extent, their differences—[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear]—and helps also to settle the dispute by conciliation, perhaps without even going to the court of arbitration. But if the dispute does eventually go to the court of arbitration, the public in the meantime is educated with regard to the merits of the case.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: With regard to the evidence.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Public opinion is formed, too, by the evidence given before this board of conciliation, because the evidence will be taken in public, except for some special reason, when the proceedings may be private. They will be mainly in public. The publication of the evidence will undoubtedly have a beneficial influence on the determination of the dispute; and therefore I take it hon. members will agree that in dealing with this measure we should allow no portion of the first part of the Bill to be frittered away simply because it has no coercive power attached to it, such as belongs to the court of arbitration. In considering this Royal Commission's report later on, if hon. members take the opportunity of perusing it, they will find that in England the industries connected with the coal and iron trades are now entirely governed by collective bargaining, and also the cotton factories in Lancashire and the boot trade at Northampton. There contracts are made with bodies of men with regard to the terms of the employment, the hours of labour, and all the conditions that interest the parties. These are decided by contract between representative leaders of the workers on the one hand and of the employers on the other. It may well be argued: if those are the conditions that prevail in England voluntarily, what possible objection can there be to introducing them to this colony or to Australia? If those conditions are good for England, they surely ought to be good for Australia, because their main object is to save industrial war. Of course the argument has been and doubtless will be used that this Bill involves a breach of what is so dear to many people—freedom of contract. That argument has been used time after time whenever any reform is sought with a view of levelling up the condition of the workers. But that phrase "freedom of contract" must not be taken in its literal acceptance: we must look at the condition of the people, the circumstances surrounding those who are making that contract; and except both parties to the contract be placed upon a level, there is no equality of contract.

MR. VOSPER: No real freedom.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is practically, it may be said, no real freedom of contract between the parties; because one party is in a condition to say, "If you do not accept my terms, then you will suffer"—[MR. VOSPER: Starve.]—"You will starve." That is not a contract in the proper sense of the term. It cannot be called a contract when one person has a rod in his hand, and the other has to submit or be punished.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is a lion-and-a-lamb contract.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: However, that is one point of view to which I thought it right to refer for the purpose of showing that these words "freedom of contract" are, I think, fallacious in illustration, and certainly valueless in reasoning. There is no analogy between a really free contract and the cases we have before us this evening. Another consideration that forces itself upon one is that within the last 50 years there has been very fortunately a great alteration for the better amongst the working classes. They are not so ignorant as they used to be. They are educated now, and knowledge is disseminated very well amongst them. When people are educated you must have some regard no doubt to their feelings, because education helps to sharpen and make more sensitive the feelings of any class. That being so, it is only right that every fair and legitimate consideration should be given to that class for the purpose of placing it in a position where it can justly take up the stand that this Bill says it is entitled to take up. When these two great forces are arrayed the one against the other, when labour is organised and well organised, needing only the imprimatur to be given to it by law to make it a legal combination, whilst on the other hand there are the employers who for their own protection must organise—because we must not conceal from ourselves that the march of public opinion nowadays is in the industrial development of this country, and I might say the whole of the British Empire—when bodies of men move large forces, compact bodies, the individual is being swept away, the individual is being absorbed in the higher organisation that is now gradually being developed, and it may be said it is necessary that it should be so.

Instead of dealing with one or two individuals, is it not far better to have a dispute determined for a class, which saves a repetition of the dispute and finally settles the matter for such time as they agree upon? It may be said: "Why interfere between these two classes? let them make their own bargains; let them make their own contracts." The answer to that is this: Even supposing we were to be indifferent to the suffering that is caused by industrial strife, we must look at the subject from the point of view affecting every class of the community.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The public ought to have a voice.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It affects every class of the community, it affects every organisation, whether it be trade or commerce, and there is scarcely one individual in the community that is not directly or indirectly concerned by the dispute.

MR. GEORGE: You had an instance last Christmas with the railway strike.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That being so, the question arises, what position shall the Legislature take up in the consideration of this great question—what is the standpoint? I submit that the proper standpoint to take is the standpoint of the State and not the standpoint of either party. Take up a neutral position, that of the State, because the State after all is the mother parent, and labour and capital are her two children, and it is her duty to in any case preserve domestic peace. In dealing with the question of legislation on this subject I referred previously to the English Act of 1871, and subsequently to the Act of 1875, made for the protection of the property of trades unions. Next to that comes in importance the English Conciliation Act of 1896. That Act, of course, as the name implies, is merely persuasive. It is not coercive. It has worked fairly well; but in its working as well as in the scope of it, it has been rather tentative than assertive, and it may be a doubtful point whether, when a great question is brought to bear upon its workings, it may not break down entirely, because if its provisions are exercised beyond a certain point they are waste paper and useless. In all this legislation dealing with the relations between bodies, you must at the

very end, if you want finality and peace and happiness, have a coercive power. If that were not necessary, then we might rely upon the good feeling and the good will of the whole of the community to settle their differences. But unfortunately human nature is stimulated by greed and by the weakness of the other party, and people are not always so magnanimous as persons think they should be. Therefore it is necessary to bring in legislation to do what the parties should have done themselves. The English Conciliation Act provided pretty much in the same terms as the first part of our Bill for keeping a register of conciliation boards. It appears that up to the middle of last year 19 conciliation boards registered under that Act, and the work they did was certainly very satisfactory; indeed I believe a large number of disputes were satisfactorily settled under its provisions. But, as I said a while ago, they were settled by reason of public attention being focussed on the evidence given and the points at issue. A similar measure prevails in France and in Belgium, and I read in a review the other day that last year in France and in Belgium some 60,000 disputes were settled upon a salutary method; showing that people evidently, when they find a tribunal is open to them for the settlement of disputes, will resort to that tribunal rather than indulge in warfare. Then the question arises, is public feeling in this country sufficiently ripe and mature to accept this measure? Because we know from the history of legislation that except public opinion is ready for the acceptance of that legislation, it is invariably a dead letter in any community. In fact on this very subject so far back as 1821 there was an Act passed in England, the object of which was to try and settle some of the labour disputes in the rural districts, and that Act gave a justice of the peace power to appoint a board of arbitration to determine the disputes, and if the parties did not accept the award of that board the justice of the peace could determine the matter himself. Heavy penalties were imposed. Although that was very good in its terms, and, looked at in the light of to-day, one would imagine it ought to have met with a hearty reception and have been acted up to, yet what was the consequence? It was

practically a dead letter. It was never used: because public opinion was never educated up to the reception of it. Then again it appears that in much more modern days, about 1867 I believe, an amendment to that Act was proposed and passed, and then in 1867 in England public opinion was not ripe for it, and it remains up to the present day an Act unused, not resorted to by the parties for whom it was intended. Coming nearer home I would like to draw the attention of the House to the process of legislation that has been going on in these colonies on the subject. Although the New Zealand Act of 1894 is the completest legislation on this subject (because it forms really I might say a code upon this subject), there was an Act passed in New South Wales in 1892 intituled "An Act to provide for the establishment of Councils of Conciliation and of Arbitration for the settlement of Industrial Disputes." There was a fear on the introduction of that measure as to whether it would be beneficial or not, and therefore the Legislature, with a view of protecting the community and of limiting the operation of that Bill if it should be anything but beneficial, limited its operation to four years. Shortly after the expiration of the four years, the Act was re-enacted, and that Act to the present day is law in New South Wales. It is now a supplementary measure to that Bill which was introduced into the Legislature by Mr. Wise the other day.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Could you not bring that into your Bill?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have taken the New Zealand code complete, which deals with the two great courts, the Board of Conciliation and the Court of Arbitration. One practically is the complement of the other.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The public cannot come in there: only the parties to the quarrel.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly. The object of this legislation is, as far as I can see, really this. The Legislature does not concern itself with the rights of individuals; individuals can look after themselves. We want to give a tribunal to a body of people who want to come as a body.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Supposing neither employers nor employees would go to arbitration, what would you do then?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If there is a body of employees sufficient to entitle them to register (under this Bill the number is seven), they can register, and when they register they can drag employers in whether the employers like it or not.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Supposing they do not? The other Bill you refer to gives the power to the public now to come in and insist upon a settlement.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The other Bill is not found so serviceable as the New Zealand one in that respect. The idea is that we shall deal with bodies of working men. We want to settle disputes between large bodies of people, whether they are employers on the one hand or whether they are large bodies of workmen on the other. We want to settle these disputes, and therefore we will give rights to these parties under this Bill. To obtain those rights these parties must bring themselves under the jurisdiction of the Bill by registration.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is all right; but supposing they will not go to arbitration?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Bill will not recognise a single employer so far as the benefits conferred by this measure are concerned, and it will not recognise an individual worker who is utterly unknown; but if the combinations of employers or of workers register themselves under this Act, then they have the rights created by the Act. Registered combinations of men can bring under the operation of the measure employers who have declined to register.

MR. GEORGE: Then it would be forcing them to register.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It forces them to register. If an employer remains out, he is subject to all the duties and penalties under the Act, but to none of its benefits. So this Bill will enforce registration for the protection of employers as well as the registration of the men.

MR. GEORGE: It is compulsory unionism on both sides.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: In other words it may be said to be, if I may make use of a more euphonious name, a

higher system of organisation than that which at present exists. The next colony to which I wish to direct attention is New Zealand. New Zealand, if I remember aright, has been happily designated the political laboratory of social legislation. They seem to have had the hardihood in New Zealand to tackle subjects connected with industrial science in a way which certainly commends itself to the admiration of any other portion of the British Empire; and really, speaking from the success which has attended those efforts, those efforts have been mainly for good. The New Zealand Act was passed in 1894, and with the modifications made by subsequent amendments — because there was an amendment in 1895, one in 1896, one in 1898, and, as members have read by the papers, there is practically an amendment now before the Legislature of New Zealand—that measure provides for two great tribunals (a Board of Conciliation and a Court of Arbitration), and it is on the lines of that measure, with some very slight modifications, that the Bill at present before the House is drawn. In Victoria, there has been absolutely no legislation on the subject up to the present time. They have now before the House a Bill similar to the one that is before New South Wales, and brought in by a private member.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The factory legislation covers some of the ground.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. I am indebted to the hon. member for reminding me. Although Victoria has no legislation on the subject strictly speaking, yet it has legislation indirectly, because Parliament dealt with the factory question, and the legislation that colony passed dealing with bodies of people employed in factories was certainly as radical, and I think has gone even further than anything New Zealand has attempted. As Mr. Wise in his speech to the House said, it would no doubt have astonished the members of the Upper House in Victoria at the time their consent was obtained to the Factories Act of 1896, if they had been told that they were for the first time giving a legal sanction to a combination of unionists to make contracts with employers. Had they been told so, they no doubt would have shrunk from that legislation; but

being called the "Factories Act," it escaped that criticism which no doubt it would otherwise have received. In Queensland there has been no legislation on this subject, so far as I can find; and it is strange that Queensland is not, on this subject, fairly abreast with the times.

MR. MORAN: There is a voluntary Conciliation Act in Queensland.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: South Australia has got a Conciliation Act, which was passed in 1894, and it very much resembles the Conciliation measure of New Zealand; with this distinction, that in South Australia no party can be affected by the Act unless he brings himself voluntarily within its provisions, whereas in New Zealand the cardinal condition is that, whether a person likes it or not, he comes within the provisions of the Act whenever it is to the interest of the workers or whoever may be affected to move the court in the matter. The Bill now before this House was introduced last year by my colleague, the Premier, on the 29th August, and I find that the Order of the Day was discharged from the Notice Paper on the 7th September. One may be faced with the question, why adopt the Act of New Zealand in preference to the Act of any other colony in Australasia on this subject? The answer, and I think a satisfactory one, is that the Act of New Zealand has had six years of trial, six years' experience of its working, and, from all we learn, the Act has worked fairly well. It has, no doubt, not done all that was expected of it by some persons, but it has worked fairly well. Another advantage the New Zealand measure has is that it forms a complete code in itself; for there are the two elements to determine a dispute, and they are brought together for the consideration and settlement of the dispute in a manner which does not obtain in any of the other colonies. If hon. members will allow me, I will try now, in a few words, to put the salient features of this Bill in such a way that persons who have not studied the subject may readily understand the measure. The Bill may be divided into two parts; the first part dealing with conciliation, the second with arbitration. Conciliation is merely persuasive: the Board of Conciliation under the Bill can do nothing but persuade; that is, the board cannot coerce. The

Board of Arbitration, on the other hand, can coerce. All disputes must first go before the Board of Conciliation ere they can reach the Court of Arbitration, except disputes arising under industrial agreement. Provision is made in the Bill for legalising industrial agreements; that is to say, any combination of workers or of employers, having made an agreement, can register it in the court; and the agreement being once filed, the Court of Arbitration takes cognisance of it, and has power to enforce its terms. The Conciliation Board is formed on this basis: the whole of the colony is divided into industrial districts, and for each district a Board of Conciliation is to be appointed. The number of persons on the board may be either four or six: they cannot be less than four nor more than six. These are elected equally by either side. If the number be four, two will be elected by the unions of workers and two by the unions or associations of employers. If the number be six, there will be two to be elected by each side. The chairman is to be elected by the persons so appointed — not elected from among themselves, but elected by them from outside. So, hon. members will see that the board is fairly constituted. I do not think any cavil or quibble can be taken as to its constitution, as the Bill provides equal representation for both sides, with a chairman elected outside the members representing the two sides. The operation of the board will be that when a dispute is submitted to it, and if the matters involved are of a technical character, the board can call in experts to give them the necessary technical information. If, on the other hand, the board finds that it is hopeless to settle the dispute without coercive power, the board then remits the dispute to the Court of Arbitration, which has power to apply coercion. If the Board of Conciliation thinks that the circumstances do not warrant it in remitting the dispute to the Court of Arbitration, it simply confines itself to making a report, which is handed to both parties, and is filed in the court as a record. Then either party interested in the dispute may take up the matter and carry it before the Court of Arbitration, and may set in motion the power of the court to force a settlement. That

practically sums up the scope of the measure, so far as it affects the operations of the Board of Conciliation. Another portion of the Bill, as I have said, deals with industrial agreements and the mode of enforcing them. If a number of employers, not less than five, register themselves under the Bill, they are then competent to make an agreement with a union or association of workers. That agreement being made, it is filed in the court; and either party to the agreement, if a breach be committed, can call on the Court of Arbitration to enforce the provisions of the agreement, ample power being given under the Bill to enable the Court to do so. Now comes the court itself. The constitution of the court differs very much and entirely from that of the Board of Conciliation. The Court of Arbitration is a court whose jurisdiction extends throughout the whole of the colony, and it is to be composed of three members. One member is to be appointed on the recommendation of the councils or associations of employers, and another member is to be appointed on the recommendation of the unions or associations of workers; the third member being appointed by the Governor independently of either of the parties, and this third member is to be one of the Judges of the Supreme Court. So that you have a court with a representative man on either side, brought together with a third judicial man between the two, to help in sifting the facts that come before them, and no doubt to assuage any asperities of temper that may be shown. The object of having this court is that there shall be a hearing in public, that the matter shall be discussed in public and evidence be called; and, in addition to that, there is the right to call in assessors, if the court shall deem fit, when skilled knowledge is required. These assessors are to sit with the board in court. Thus it will be seen that if either side calls for assessors, the court may grant or reject the application. If granted, and the assessors be called, they are to sit with the board in court. Then evidence being called, the matter is determined, and the award is made. The provisions of the Bill will show that this award when made can certainly be enforced; so that the award practically becomes a judgment of the court, and a certificate is obtained by the one party

who wants to enforce the award. If the amount involved in the award be small, the resident magistrate or the local court may adjudicate on it; or if the amount be large, the award is filed in the Supreme Court, and being there, it becomes the same as a judgment of the court, and can be enforced by the machinery of that court. The whole of the proceedings with reference to the Court of Arbitration are conclusive and final, and cannot be reviewed. Hon. members will see that the word "final" is superfluous, because the judgment of the court itself is final, and cannot be reviewed by any other tribunal. Provision is made, I think in Clause 18, giving to unions for the first time the right to collect their own fees and fines which they impose between themselves; in other words, to compel members of associations and unions to pay their contributions, and these can be recovered from them. Up to the present time there has been no procedure in the interest of trade unions or associations to compel the payment of these contributions, which in the past have been purely voluntary, whereas now they become a matter of contract, even between members of an association or union.

MR. GEORGE: Then there is to be no freedom to the individual, now?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; that is the whole system. An attempt is made by this and similar measures to deal with large numbers of persons as if they were one; and perhaps time will be necessary to prove that this new method of contract will be an improvement. Times change; we ourselves change; conditions change, and so does the condition of the workers.

MR. VOSPER: *Tempora mutantur.*

MR. MOORHEAD: You clothe these labour organisations with all the responsibilities of corporations?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes; they have practically all the liabilities of corporations, except to this limited extent, that although they may be sued and can sue, this power may be used only in respect to the provisions of this Bill. In other words, they cannot be sued by outsiders: they can be sued only under the provisions of this measure, their liability being limited and confined to the provisions of the Bill.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They can be sued only for awards. Is not that so?

MR. MOORHEAD: Can they be sued for the negligence of their members?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: No. The reason, I take it, that this Bill is silent on this subject is that the funds at the disposal of these associations are the contributions of working men, and have to be carefully nursed. They are the contributions of men who work hard; and to leave them open to be attacked by persons wishing to bring actions against them—perhaps by litigious persons—would be to deplete the funds of such bodies, and the unions would be stranded. I take that to be the consideration by which those who framed this Bill originally were influenced. They said that, though it may be contended on the one hand that the right to sue ought to be general, still it is obvious on the other hand that it ought to be limited to the provisions of the Bill, so as to protect the funds of these labour associations from speculative actions. The success of this measure, although the necessary machinery is provided, will depend on the goodwill of both the parties for whose benefit it is framed. Unless that goodwill is evidenced, no doubt the measure will be strained and the machinery break down. This Bill is but an attempt, and an attempt made with the best intentions, to try to substitute for the barbarous methods of the past the more rational method of a well-ordered tribunal to determine disputes. It may also be said by those who are in favour of giving every latitude and every freedom to trade unions, that the scope and object of this Bill is too limited. I would remind those gentlemen that we must regard the opinions of those who do not entirely concur with our own views. Many important measures have been lost by attempts on the part of their supporters to get too much at once. There are various sets of people in this community, and the opinions of all have to be respected; and I think the proper mode to adopt in legislation of this kind is to go wisely and slowly. We take the example of New Zealand, with its six years' experience of this measure, and say that is good enough for us to follow. But if we are asked to put into the Bill provisions that are foreign to it and that are

perhaps too radical, we say: if it be desired that this measure should go through this Legislature, do not jeopardise the good provisions which it contains by attempting to put into it that which is highly contentious. If it does nothing else than to bring the parties together to consider in an orderly manner their disputes, it will do much lasting good to this community; and I doubt not that the time will come when, although this measure is but a small effort now, yet, step by step, an industrial edifice will be reared up so that those who come after us may perhaps say that we who preceded them have not been entirely oblivious of the wants of a portion of the community who have not in the past had full justice done to them, but whose interests in this day have not been lost sight of. My attention has just been drawn to the fact that I have not mentioned the question as to the recognition in the measure of Government departments. The New Zealand Act does not recognise any Government department; but there is a clause in the New Zealand Act which by some means or other has not been incorporated in the measure I have submitted to this House—a clause giving to the Railway Commissioners the option of bringing themselves under the provisions of the Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Can you not put it in here?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: No doubt that could be put in; but there is a distinction between this colony and New Zealand. In New Zealand the railways are governed by a board; here they are not.

MR. PIESSE: No. In New Zealand they are under a Minister, the same as they are here.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Were they under a Minister in 1896, when the Act was passed?

MR. PIESSE: Since 1894 they have been under a Minister.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That being so, my argument does not apply. In the Victorian and New South Wales Bills, provision is expressly made for including the railways; and I take it the principle there is that where a Government department is put under a board which occupies a kind of *quasi*-public position, such a department is removed from the Government, and has not the same oppor-

tunity of representation in the House as have departments that are directly controlled by Ministers. This is a matter which may be discussed in Committee; but I feel at present inclined to comply with the principle established in New Zealand.

MR. GEORGE: Not to include railway servants?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: To leave it optional with the Commissioner of Railways to bring his department under the provisions of the Bill.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, no. Let us be uniform.

MR. VOSPER: If we put that power in the hands of the Commissioner, it will effectually stop strikes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): Since I have had the honour of a seat in this House, I think I have never welcomed a measure so thoroughly as I am disposed to welcome this Bill, the second reading of which has just been moved. The Bill, as has already been mentioned, is to a large extent—almost fully—a reproduction of the New Zealand measure, which is perhaps the only measure of its kind at the present time in the world. The fact that the New Zealand measure has worked fairly well—indeed, I may say successfully—during the time it has been in operation, speaks very loudly in its favour. In dealing with a measure of this character there are many things to be considered. Three distinct parties come under consideration, though all do not come under the scope of this Bill. The first set of persons for whom we propose to legislate is the workers, the people who give their labour, their toil—all that they have—they give that labour for a consideration to some other persons who, through the effect of continuous labour, either their own or that of their ancestors, have accumulated what we call capital; and in exchange for this capital, which of course is only accumulated labour, in exchange for the savings of preceding labour which have accumulated, and which become what we in our day call “capital,” the workers propose to give their labour, their services, their skill, their sinew, their strength and energy, to another person who owns what is called “capital.” Labour is like any other commodity as far as capital is concerned; but it has a

very different character when considered in relation to the individual; that is, to the individual labourer. A man who owns goods can come to another man and offer them for sale; and, if the other man choose to buy at a price agreed, the business goes on. If, however, the owner of the goods be not satisfied with the price offered by the purchaser, then in that case the owner of the goods may—not always can, but may—retain his goods; and no business is done. But this does not hold good when we are dealing with what we understand as the ordinary worker. If he has nothing behind him, if he has no capital, no accumulated labour, if he is placed in such a position that he must immediately sell his skill and his energy—his labour, to use a simple word—he must sell it there and then; or if he does not sell it there and then he is completely shut out of the market altogether. He cannot sell in the afternoon the work of the morning; he cannot sell to-day the labour of yesterday; and consequently, as the Attorney General suggested, the labourer's position is such that he is compelled by the force of circumstances to accept the terms which may be presented to him. This has long been felt to be an inequality which civilised communities ought to endeavour to remedy. I take it that this Bill attempts this remedy, and I have to say concerning it that I give it credit for being the most honest attempt that has ever been made, I think in the world's history, to deal with this great labour question; and consequently, while I admit that the Bill is not perfect, and that I desire to make some amendments in it, while I think that in many respects the Bill should go further than it at present does go, yet I want to say at the outset of this discussion that if I be defeated in any suggestion or presentment that I may make, I am prepared to support this Bill just as it is, rather than prevent or hinder such a valuable measure from going on the statute book. And I think we should commend, or at any rate I am disposed to commend, the Government for bringing in this measure; and I must express my regret that we did not succeed in getting it passed last year. For that failure there were several reasons. Last year there was a good deal of hurry in legislation,

and for that and other reasons this Bill did not pass. Looking at the Bill itself, I welcome it with all my heart, and for this reason amongst others, and perhaps above others: I have the liveliest recollection of the stories told me by my father when I was a boy. He had lived in the midst of the turmoil of the Radical agitations and labour disputes in Yorkshire, in the forties; and the scenes of which he could and did tell have never left me all the days of my life. Of course, early impressions are always the deepest and most lasting; and I suppose some of these scenes being with me yet have tended to make me somewhat of a Radical, as my father was a Radical. I should like, by permission, to put before this House some of the things to which I was accustomed to listen in my youth, and which are now happily matters of history. These were quoted by Mr. Cook in the debate in the Sydney Legislative Assembly on the introduction of Mr. Wise's Bill. For instance, respecting freedom of contract, of which so much has been said, of course it is a nice phrase—one of those phrases that "take on." Everybody likes "freedom" and "liberty," and if you will only talk of "freedom of contract," people are ready to join in. That is one of those things which sound well. Mr. Cook in his speech—and I make no apology, for it is not necessary to do so, for producing better language and thought on a great question of this kind than I can personally produce, when that language and that thought harmonise with my own views—spoke thus:—

But I venture to say that, upon the merits of the case alone, the Bill does right to give a preference to the trades unionist. I have already said that, in my judgment, trades unions have done more for the workers than, perhaps, all the other influences which operate to advance our civilisation put together. That is not my own opinion only; it is the opinion of those who have studied the question deeply, and who are in a sphere which enables them to detach themselves from the influences which operate with those who have had anything to do with these troubles. It is their opinion that trades unions have done a great deal of good to the country at large. Almost the last speech that Mr. Gladstone delivered before he died furnished an opportunity for a statement of this kind: "I believe the trades unions of the world are the bulwarks of our modern democracy."

Well, that is a great statement to come from a great man. Whatever opinions

we may hold regarding that great British statesman, we must recognise that his whole soul was with the down-trodden and the oppressed, that his very nature led him to face questions of this character with the great powers of intellect which we all know he possessed.

MR. GEORGE: He did all he could to keep in power.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That may be, and as long as a man keeps in power for the special benefit of the people, I do not know that there is much objection to his keeping in power. It is only when he retains power and continues to retain it when it is not for the best interests of the people, that we have the right to object.

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear. I concur with you there.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Mr. Cook quotes another authority, Mr. Thorold Rogers, who, he says, will be admitted to be one of the clearest-headed men who have ever investigated this subject. Mr. Thorold Rogers says:—

The public is profoundly interested in the efficiency and independence of the working man. By the former, the industrial success of the country is guaranteed and secured. In the latter lies the only hope that we shall be ever able to realise in our day what the trade guilds of the middle ages aimed at, and in some directions unquestionably secured. . . . The trades unions of London, and other large towns do not, perhaps, exercise the moral discipline over their members which they might do if their fellows more generally enlisted in the system, and they will do as they get stronger and better informed; but I am abundantly convinced that the trades unionists in England include in their numbers the most intelligent, conscientious, and valuable of the working men.

I confess to having at one time viewed them suspiciously. A long study of the history of labour has convinced me that they are not only the best friends of the workman, but the best agency for the employer and the public, and that to the extension of these associations, political economists and statesmen must look for the solution of some among the most pressing and the most difficult problems of our time. I shall hope to show this after I have dealt with the facts of the present situation.

He here quotes some scenes to which I just now referred, tales that I heard in my childhood. I came from Bradford, in Yorkshire, the great woollen county—it was always admitted that the conditions in the woollen counties were never so

severe as they were in the cotton counties—and the impressions given me in my childhood, which were based upon what my father saw and what he related, have deepened in my mind, and they may be expressed in something like the words here quoted. Here Mr. Thorold Rogers says—and remember he is speaking of the British House of Commons—

MR. VOSPER : The greatest authority on modern labour.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Yes. He says :—

I quote from the speech of Mr. Sadler, made early in the century in the House of Commons. Our ancestors could not have supposed it possible—posterity will not believe it true—that a generation of Englishmen could exist, or had existed, that would work lisping infancy of a few summers old, regardless alike of its smiles or tears, and unmoved by its unresisting weakness, twelve, thirteen, fourteen, sixteen hours a day, and through the weary night also, till, in the dewy morn of existence, the bud of youth was faded and fell ere it was unfolded.

That is an exact account, similar to what I heard myself from my father's lips.

Then, in order to keep them awake, to stimulate their exertions, means are made use of to which I shall now advert, as a last instance of the degradation to which this system has reduced the manufacturing operatives of this country. Children are beaten with thongs, prepared for the purpose. Yes, the females of this country, no matter whether children or grown-up—and I hardly know which is the more disgusting outrage—are beaten, beaten in your free market of labour, as you term it, like slaves. The poor wretch is flogged before its companions—flogged, I say, like a dog, by the tyrant overlooker. We speak with execration of the cart-whip of the West Indies, but let us see this night an equal feeling rise against the factory thong in England.

It was speeches like that which carried the Factory Act. The Factory Act was carried because of the condition of things in those days under what is called "freedom of contract," where people were compelled to work or die, where families had to put their little children into a factory in order to keep body and soul together; and to some extent the same kind of thing exists in some parts of the Continent, where a whole family (father, mother, and children, three or four years of age) are engaged, the children helping to make toys for other children to play with. This state of things is called "freedom of contract," and I have a very

strong execration for freedom of contract, viewed from that standpoint. Here is another picture, not overdrawn at all. Richard Oastler, speaking in the House of Commons on the same occasion, used these words :—

I will not picture fiction to you—I will tell you what I have seen. Take a little female captive, six or seven years old; she shall rise from her bed at four in the morning of a cold winter day, but before she rises she wakes, perhaps, half-a-dozen times, and says, "Father, is it time? Father, is it time?" And at last, when she gets up and puts her little bits of rags upon her weary limbs—wearied yet by the last day's work—she leaves her parents in their bed, for their labour (if they have any) is not required so early. She trudges along through rain, and snow, and mire, and darkness to the mill, and there for thirteen, fourteen, sixteen, seventeen, or even eighteen hours is she obliged to work, with only thirty minutes interval for meals and play. Homeward again at night she would go, when she was able, but many a time she hid herself in the wool in the mill, as she had not strength to go. And if she were one moment behind the appointed time, if the bell had ceased to ring when she arrived with trembling, shivering, weary limbs at the factory door, there stood a monster in human form, and as she passed he lashed her. This (he continued, holding up an overlooker's strap) is no fiction. It was hard at work in this town last week. The girl I am speaking of died; but she dragged on that dreadful existence for some years.

This is what is involved in "freedom of contract," as some people would have us accept it. Freedom of contract, from the standpoint from which we speak of it to-day, is perhaps one thing. But what is involved in this is that a man or a woman, or possibly a child, placed under certain conditions which they were under at the beginning of this century—and we could even come down to the forties—had no means of resisting the terms offered, but they must take the pay and work the hours offered, and then die. Out of this slow misery, this horrible state of affairs, out of all this, trades unionism has lifted the people; and because of that, because this Bill accepts the principle of trades unionism, if it were not for any other reason, I would strongly and earnestly welcome the Bill. I think the Attorney General has given us very good reasons in the speech he has delivered when dealing with this great measure. Before going any further, and before criticising the Bill—because I want to criticise it—I desire to distinctly say my vote will be

cast for this Bill, and I will do my best to pass it through the House no matter whether the suggestions I make are carried or not. I deem it of the utmost importance that this Bill should go upon the statute book, and though defective, it is better that it should pass than that it should not go on the statute book at all. The sooner it goes upon the statute book the better it will be for this colony, for the labourers, for the employers of labour, and for the public generally.

At 6:30, the **SPEAKER** left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (continuing) : I was endeavouring to express my opinion regarding the absolute necessity for the recognition of trade unions, in order to remedy some of the evils of the past. Before leaving this subject I would like to quote a few words from Mr. Wise, when introducing the Bill in New South Wales. He said :—

Between the labourer who is not a member of a union and who is unprotected by law, and the employer, equality very rarely exists. He seldom, if indeed ever, is in a position to make terms as to the price at which he will sell his labour. Being seldom capable of more than one occupation, he has to find work at that or he has to starve.

Mr. Wise quotes a strong authority, Mr. Thornton, an economist of great repute, who has said :—

Labourers cannot postpone the sale of their labour without incurring a loss corresponding exactly with the length of the postponement. So far as the morning's labour is concerned, it is of no use for them to know that the demand for labour will be quite as great in the afternoon as it is now, or that it is quite as great 20 miles off as it is here, for the morning's labour cannot be sold at all if they wait for the afternoon, or if they occupy the whole morning in walking to another place of sale. Owing to two causes—one, labour's inability to keep, the other the habitual poverty of the labourers—labour is almost always sold without reservation of price.

This is what I was endeavouring to call attention to, that the phrase "freedom of contract" is exceedingly deceptive in its nature as far as this Bill is concerned, and that it only approaches freedom when we treat with industrial unions or unions of workers, who are able to place their labour in such a position that they can make equitable terms. Mr. McGowan,

who is the labour leader in New South Wales, puts it tersely in this way :

If you believe it is the duty of Parliament to legislate on this question, you should advocate compulsory arbitration; and if you advocate compulsory arbitration and enforcement of awards, you have no other means to depend on than the organisation of unions.

This expresses exactly my idea as to the necessity of trades unionism in connection with this Bill; and I am entirely at one with the Attorney General in his contention that the main effective principle of this Bill is to be found in the union of workers on the one hand, and of capitalists or employers on the other hand. But I would like to suggest, as I did by interjection to the Attorney General, that even if this does not cover the ground, perhaps he may see his way to carry this a stage further, because after all these trade disputes affect not only the labourer, and with him affect his wife and children—for we know how serious, how terrible are the effects of a labour strike on the wives and children of the workers concerned—not only is a strike destructive of capital and a waste of time and of machinery that should be employed, and by which the interests and convenience of the public are affected, but it is because the general public are influenced or hurt by the continuance of a strike that we in this House claim to legislate on this subject. Take our own case a little while ago, the strike which occurred among certain employees on the railways: although the injury to the strikers concerned was comparatively small, and the disturbance to the Railway Department was not very serious, yet what would the effect of that strike have been to the general public if the stoppage to the railway system had continued for some time? It is here, I think, this Bill has a primary defect; because had this measure been on the statute book in the form in which the Bill now appears, it would have been of no utility whatever in that strike. I hope the Attorney General is sincere, and I believe he is sincere, in his expressed desire to frame such a clause as will allow the Railway Department to come under the conditions of this Bill. I would call his attention to the fact that in the Bill now being dealt with in the New South Wales Parliament, in Clause 2 of Mr. Wise's Bill, we find that

"employer" includes the Railway Commissioners of New South Wales. I cannot see why we should not include in our definition clause the Railway Commissioner of Western Australia. Of course that is a question of drafting, and I defer to the Attorney General; but if we can reach this result we shall remove what is to me one of the primary defects of the measure. In this colony, which is such a large employer of labour, and where the Railway Department is practically the life-blood of the country, it would be a very serious mistake if we allowed the Bill to go through without including the railway operatives at least—we ought to have all Government operatives, but at least the railway operatives—within the scope of the measure. Just as a very small instance of the importance of doing this, I may mention that from my own district, in the midst of that railway trouble, I had a telegram that the population of the town from which the wire was sent, some three hundred people, were entirely dependent, and they are still dependent, for their water supply on the tanks brought every day by the trains. They were then apprehensive of a water famine. I think the Premier knows this fact. They would have been absolutely without water. That, of course, is a small matter in comparison with other phases of the question throughout the country. That railway strike was one of the biggest dangers we have had to meet, and the fact that that it nearly brought us into serious trouble clearly involves the recognition of trades unions in the Railway Department. Here I may say, in passing, it seems to me if the Government pass this Bill there can be no doubt about that question, because men are, by this Bill, absolutely compelled, or at any rate very largely encouraged, to form unions. Now if unions are formed among the men in the Railway Department, how do the Government propose to deal with the workers in that department when any difficulty arises? The exclusion, I say, from the Bill of all Government departments, and especially of the Railway Department, is a very serious defect in the measure; and I hope the Attorney General will carry out the suggestion he made when I understood him to say he would be able to

bring the Railway Department, at any rate, under the operation of the measure. It seems to me that may in some way be obtained; at any rate it may be done as it is done in Mr. Wise's measure, where "employer" is defined as including the Railway Commissioners of New South Wales, and where under the heading of "Industry" are included the men working on the Government railways. Why should we not include all the Government servants? I do not know why; but, at any rate, the inclusion of the Railway Department is such a serious matter that I hope the Minister in charge of the Bill will give us some additions to this definition clause which will bring the workers on our railways within its scope. There is another point on the face of the Bill to which I wish to call attention, before making some remarks on a few other leading principles. I notice in the first clause that the Bill is to come into operation on the 1st of January, 1901. But I do not know any specific reason for that. Is it necessary that this Bill should go home for Her Majesty's assent? If not, I will strongly urge in committee that those words be struck out; because I want to assure the Attorney General that one of my principal anxieties for getting this Bill as quickly as possible on the statute book is that there are pending, at the present moment, serious difficulties which may culminate in a strike on the goldfields at any minute; and it would be a great mistake to pass this Bill and to have its operation put off even for the few months that are left of this year. The very fact of the existence of the Act, and that it may be availed of, will possibly save the goldfields from a very serious strike; and I hope the Attorney General will accept my suggestion and remove the words in question, unless there is a specific reason for the Bill not coming into operation as soon as it is passed. The amendments I have marked in the Bill for committee I will not at present deal with, because they all stand in relation to these two things: to bring the public service under the Bill, and more particularly the Railway Department. I am very glad the Attorney General quoted at length from the minority report of the Royal Commission upon this question which sat in Great Britain. I had marked that extract myself, because it seems to

me that report is in itself a complete argument for the passing of this Bill. It takes up all the phases in a very brief and very definite form, and it is framed by men who are absolutely above suspicion. Take, for instance, the Duke of Devonshire. No one will suspect that he has any special leaning to the side of the workers, and yet he distinctly argues in this report which the Attorney General gave to the House for the necessity of the recognition of the board of conciliation, and hints at the necessity of trades unions. And then, when we come to men like Mr. Ismay and others named in this report—when we get men of that class who, if anything, distinctly represent capital—and they urge upon Great Britain in such an important report to adopt this kind of legislation, the fact of their doing so is in itself a proof that it is possible to put upon the statute book legislation which will not only meet the ideas of the workers, but will also meet the ideas of the capitalists. And following that, we shall meet the greater difficulty of the public by bringing these serious strikes and locks-out to an end. I will pass over that report, as the Attorney General has already quoted it, and has practically said about it all that I desire to say; in fact, it is difficult to make a speech on this Bill after the Attorney General has spoken, because he has practically exhausted the subject, unless we can find out something to quarrel over, and that is rather difficult to do in regard to this Bill. I should, however, like to call attention to the opinions of one or two men who have seen the working of this Bill. Mr. James Mills, speaking in the New Zealand Parliament on the 30th June, 1893, made these observations on the subject of State conciliation as opposed to State compulsion:

The time has come when we should attempt to meet the difficulty, and the only way is to establish these courts of conciliation and arbitration, and to consider to what extent we should carry them, whether we should limit them to what are termed "voluntary courts." I recognise that the experiment is a very bold one, but I cannot help thinking that unless we provide a clause making it compulsory for parties to a trade dispute to bring their grievances before the court for adjustment, the whole scheme will be a failure.

That is looking a very long way ahead in regard to the operation of the Bill.

Personally, I do not think that the conciliation board is likely to be a failure. In my opinion the conciliation board is going to be a very valuable factor in the settlement of industrial disputes. Hon. members are probably aware that the principle of conciliation has been carried to a very great extent on the Continent. In some parts of Germany particularly—I think in Bavaria, where the idea originated—there have been established courts of conciliation, not merely for disputes between workmen and employers, but for ordinary subjects of dispute: the parties quarrelling come into court and state their cases without any assistance from lawyers. I do not know whether the Attorney General would approve of that provision. The parties come before the arbitrator, state their cases and their difficulties, and it is the business of the arbitrator and his duty to try to settle these quarrels, thus saving the parties the necessity of going to law. And it has been found that a very large percentage of cases which would otherwise go to the courts of law have been settled by these conciliation courts. Of course I know there is more difficulty in settling trade disputes, because into such disputes there is imported a good deal of feeling. Some little incident stirs the difficulty up, and from time to time feeling is created by a sense of injustice on the one hand, and I was about to say a desire to oppress, but that is not what I mean—a desire to stand upon their rights on the other. And this desire increases and generates a lot of feeling. But still, I hope that the boards of conciliation created by this Bill will be a very material help in the settlement of great labour disputes in their first stages; and consequently, while I agree with the gentlemen I have just quoted, that we must have a compulsory court, and that without that compulsory court the board of conciliation will be absolutely valueless. I do think the board of conciliation will be an extremely valuable feature of this Bill. Mr. Reeves, in the New Zealand Parliament in 1894, when justifying the adoption of the principle of compulsion, is quoted thus:

What I think is this—and I am only saying this after closely studying the working of these boards elsewhere—that unless you have in the background an arbitration court, the

conciliation boards will not be respected, and they will be virtually useless.

Now I would call attention to the fact that that is just the condition of arbitration courts on the Continent. If the men who come before a judge of conciliation do not succeed in settling their disputes, there is always the law court behind them; and when the board of conciliation is in a position to hear evidence, and to say that the rights and wrongs of the matter are so-and-so, and that the matter had better be settled, I say in nine cases out of ten the recommendation of the board will be accepted, but only because behind the board of conciliation is the court of arbitration, which can and will compel a settlement. This fact is pointed out in the speech from which I have just quoted:—

It is said that certain voluntary private boards in England have been very successful in settling labour disputes; but, if that argument is to be of any avail, then we ought not to legislate at all. That is no argument against this Bill, but is an argument in favour of the State not interfering in the matter at all. But I feel sure that such voluntary boards cannot be more than a partial solution of the difficulty. It is quite true that numerous disputes have been settled by such boards at home, and by such boards as those set up by Mr. Mundella and others; but by far the major portion of those disputes have been of a minor character. It is true that many important disputes have been composed by these boards. But it is also, unhappily, true that hundreds and hundreds of disputes have not been composed by these boards; and the result has been that since 1899 there have been 530 strikes in England, and over 1,000 in Europe. That has been the result of the voluntary system as against the compulsory, and where organisation and experience on labour matters has gone far beyond what it has gone in New Zealand. I say that trade unions in England are organised to an extent to which the trade unions of New Zealand are not organised. I wish that were not the case, but it is so.

That is the opinion of Mr. Reeves in dealing with the case in the New Zealand Parliament. One other question of objection has been raised in some places against the Bill, and that is in regard to the cost; and I should like just here to quote a statement made by Mr. McGowan in the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. He says:—

The figures given for New Zealand in regard to last year show that there was a cost of £2,800 for settling the internal differences which took place. I am indebted to the hon.

member for Cobarr for these figures. From 1890 to 1894, strikes cost the unionists of Australia something like £200,000. In one year alone—in 1890—strikes cost them nearly £70,000. Look at that, as compared with the £2,800 spent in New Zealand in one year in connection with the operations of the court.

MR. GEORGE: And there was a lot of suffering, too.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes; that is perfectly true. The money cost is a very small proportion of the actual cost. I am so completely in accord with the Attorney General, and with the general spirit of this Bill, that having got an assurance from the Attorney General in charge of this Bill that he will make these amendments, or at any rate favour the consideration of them in committee, I need not detain the House at any great length. I welcome three things in this Bill—the recognition for the first time in this colony of trades unions by law; secondly, the establishment of a board of conciliation, which I think will be invaluable; and thirdly, a court for the settlement of disputes, a court of arbitration. But I think even here improvement may be made, and I would suggest to the Attorney General whether it would not be possible to make him Queen's Proctor—I think that is the legal term, but am not quite sure. I called his attention to it by interjection, and thought that possibly he might touch upon it in his speech. Suppose there is a dispute between a trades union and an employer, and the feeling has run so high that neither of the parties will appeal to the court, and the quarrel is going on to the injury of the people: the only compulsory part of this Bill is that if one of the parties appeals to the court, the other can be compelled to abide by the court's decision. Take the dispute which occurred in the Railway Department: the Commissioner of Railways was exceedingly firm, and we know the men were equally firm for a while. In the meantime the public, who were most interested in this particular case, had no voice. They were obliged to stand still and see the fight go on. I would like to see an addition made to this Bill, because I do not see any reason why we should not improve on the New Zealand measure, if we can. What I should like to see is that when a dispute has arisen, the Attorney General in some form shall be able to refer it to arbitration.

Whether that can be done under this particular Bill or not or whether a separate Bill would be required, I cannot say. Still I am not disposed to suggest this or anything else which would hinder the passing of the Bill itself. I would, however, ask the indulgence of the House to quote from Henry George, who we all admit, I think, is capable of giving judgment upon questions affecting the working classes. This was quoted by Mr. Fitzpatrick in the New South Wales Assembly during the discussion on Mr. Wise's Bill :—

It is the function of the State to endeavour by all means in its power to preserve industrial peace. No one will deny the right of the State to deal with a matter of this kind, and I should like, with the indulgence of the House, to read a quotation from a book of Henry George, entitled "The Conditions of Labour." To my mind, it places the whole of this question in a nutshell and strengthens the argument of every hon. member who contends that it is one of the highest functions of Government to do all it can in the direction of preventing industrial strikes. In an appendix to this work by Henry George, which, as hon. members will probably recollect, was a reply to an encyclical letter by His Holiness the Pope, the following occurs: "Whenever the general interest or any particular class suffers, or is threatened with evils which can in no other way be met, the public authority must step in to meet them. Now, among the interests of the public, as of private individuals, are these: that peace and good order should be maintained; that family life should be carried on in accordance with God's laws and those of nature; that religion should be revered and obeyed; that a high standard of morality should prevail in public and private life; that the sanctity of justice should be respected, and that no one should injure another with impunity; that the members of the Commonwealth should grow up to man's estate strong and robust, and capable, if need be, of guarding and defending their country. If by a strike, or other combination of workmen, there should be imminent danger of disturbance to the public peace; or if circumstances were such that among the labouring population the ties of family life were relaxed; if religion were found to suffer through the workmen not having time and opportunity to practise it; if in workshops and factories there were danger to morals through the mixing of the sexes, or from any occasion of evil; or if employers laid burdens upon the workmen which were unjust, or degraded them with conditions that were repugnant to their dignity as human beings; finally, if health were endangered by excessive labour, or by work unsuited to sex or age—in these cases there can be no question that, within certain limits, it would be right to call in the help and authority of the law. The limits must be

determined by the nature of the occasion which calls for the law's interference—the principle being this, that the law must not undertake more, or go further, than is required for the remedy of the evil or the removal of the danger."

There is more than that, but I will not trouble the House with it. In conclusion, I say again that I welcome the Bill. I hope it will speedily be made law, and that, so far as this colony is concerned, we have seen the last of those terrible strikes. We can never measure the mischief that has been done. Not only is there loss of money and loss of time, and the loss of self-respect and the wrong doing, but these things upset society and injure all the channels of commerce. I hope that when this Bill is passed we shall be free from those things, and that capitalists and those engaged in labour, the public and the people who supply the wants of the public, will be able to come closer together on a better and sounder footing, so that when disputes arise, as they necessarily must, we shall take a moderate way of settling them, and not adopt the barbarous method of a strike or a lock-out. I repeat that I hope that the Bill will be passed; I trust that the amendments suggested by myself and other members will be seriously considered by the Attorney General; and above all other things we should have the railway employees brought under the operation of the measure—perhaps others also engaged in the Government service, but at any rate we should have the railway employees within the scope of the Bill.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I do not propose this evening to say very much in regard to this Bill, except to add my little compliment, for what it is worth, to the Attorney General for the way in which he introduced the measure. So far as I can understand the Bill at present, it seems to me to be the outcome of some sort of demand which has hardly, in my opinion, been fairly focussed. There seems to be a general desire or feeling about the country that there is a possibility of a renewed struggle occurring in connection with the organised industries of this colony. If this Bill can, by the hon. members of this House, be licked into shape so that it will be absolutely fair to both sides, then I think that this session will

not have been wasted, at any rate. But I assert emphatically that if the Bill is not framed with the provisions absolutely fair to both sides, it would have been far better if the Bill had never been introduced; because whether the workers or the employers in this or any other colony obtain undue advantage under a Bill of this sort, they will be simply laying up for themselves a time of trouble, and very serious trouble. I cannot agree altogether with my friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Illingworth) about terrible strikes. There have been no strikes in my experience, at any rate in this colony, which could be termed "terrible" at all; and so far as my experience of the older colonies goes—and that extends over about twenty years—there never have been what could be termed terrible strikes in them. The maritime strike that occurred in Victoria was a big strike, it is true, but it pales into insignificance compared with the industrial strikes that have taken place during the last fifty years in Great Britain. It pales into insignificance compared with the great strike that took place in 1862 in the "black country," when there were 100,000 men and women walking about the streets of the towns, peaceable and quiet. That strike did not occur because the employers in the great coal and iron industries of the Staffordshire district were desiring to reduce wages to fill their pockets, but that state of affairs ensued on the condition of things which followed the terrible war that took place in the United States. That war paralysed matters so far as America was concerned, and it also paralysed industries in Great Britain, the consequence being that people had not work. The employers of those who had been engaged in iron-works and the coal industry were never charged during that thirteen-weeks strike with trying to make capital out of labour and trying to squeeze down wages. It was a matter of universal regret that the only way in which those men could be employed was by practically laying in stock and putting by, in the hope of a market coming along in the future. If you come to talk about strikes, I say I have never seen in the colonies, and I hope never to see in them, strikes in which men and women have had to go without a square meal, perhaps for days together; when pawn-shops were so filled with pledges that they could not

take more, and when organised charity, headed by Her Gracious Majesty the Queen, had to provide throughout Great Britain for the necessity of relieving the distress which was met with during that strike. These are the strikes to talk about, when you come to talk about strikes at all. But we shall never have such strikes in these colonies; therefore I think we may leave that phase of the question entirely on one side. I think I am entitled, perhaps, to have my little bit of say in connection with this affair. I lay down the principle that if a man is fair to his employees, he is never likely to be troubled with strikes; but if a man is unfair, and tries to make his profit absolutely by unfair means, he is going about the most probable way to bring about a loss in his balance-sheet. If employees have an idea that this Bill, or any Bill, is going to give them a substantial advantage to which they are not entitled, even if they get the measure passed they will be simply preparing a rod for themselves in the very near future. I agree with what has been said about including employees on the railways. The principle has practically been admitted—I do not say I entirely agree with it, but it has been admitted; and as we have now gone too far to stop, therefore we may just as well make this Bill cover every kind of labour in Western Australia. I see no reason why the Government employees should be excluded from it. I see no reason why the Government should introduce this Bill, which carries with it some rather peculiar conditions, without on their own part facing the conditions it imposes upon private employers. If the Government do so, and they feel the evil effects of the measure when brought into operation, they will be able to introduce remedial legislation; but otherwise they will not, because we know very well that, in regard to this Government or any other, the mere fact of sitting on the Treasury benches brings a sort of moral obtuseness in relation to all the troubles that affect everyone else, and an extraordinary supersensitiveness to trouble that affects themselves. In connection with this Bill I have had several amendments sent to me by both employers and employees, but details of these will be given in committee; and all I can say now in further reference to

it is that, if the Government of this colony wish to make any more kudos in the way they have done during the last few weeks by making it appear that they are the only people who have any feeling or sympathy towards the employees of any particular body, I beg to dispute their claim altogether. As far as I know—and I know a great number of employers in this colony—their endeavour will be, and their desire is, that this Bill shall be made fair to both parties. The employers desire nothing unfair, and, so far as I can judge from what I can gather from conversing with a number of employees, the employees think that “what is sauce for the goose should be sauce for the gander.” Therefore, while employers are willing to have fairness, I am sure the employees will be willing for the Bill to be fairly gone into. I believe that this Bill can be whipped into proper form. I desire to see the extinction of that class which is the most dangerous class that this or any other community can have—the paid unscrupulous agitator, who has seldom done a day's work in his life, and will not do it if he can help it. He lives by foisting himself upon those unions and associations, and by breeding and fostering grievances where grievances probably never fairly and honestly exist; and if this Bill will deal with this undesirable class of men, who are not the friends of the workers, but are really their enemies in disguise, men who have really no reason for their existence, then I say the employers of this colony, and the employees also, can be thankful indeed for the introduction of the Bill. There is one part of the Bill with which I do not altogether agree, and I drew an observation on the point from the Attorney General, who did not require much drawing. This Bill practically says that henceforth all employees shall belong to unions. The difficulty I see in connection with it is this. I do not object to a union either on the one side or the other when it is conducted on fair lines, but I do object to bringing all men down to one particular wage. I know that in my own trade I can get a man who is probably more intelligent, or at any rate more intelligent in his own particular branch, and worth more money than another, and the condition of the workers throughout

the colony will not be raised by making any rules or forms by which an employer cannot recognise the particular abilities of a man and cannot pay more for them, but must pay exactly the same rate to the competent as to the partly incompetent workman. The result of that will be to weed out all those who are not fully competent men, and those men will thus be left out in the cold. No law can be of any good in any colony or country, if it compels a man to employ men who are not capable of doing their work. Another point is that it is not good for the competent workman that he should feel that whereas he can do a better job, or do it in quicker time than some other workman, yet that his greater ability should have no recognition in the wage that is paid to him, as compared with a workman alongside of him who cannot handle a chisel or use a file. When the Bill gets into committee I shall do my best to amend it in certain particulars. The measure, as a whole, is one which I think will go forward with the good wishes of employers and employed in this colony.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie): I do not think I should have had anything to say in regard to this measure, had it not been the reference made to me by the member for East Perth, on the opposite side of the House, when he stated that I caused delay of the Bill last session; though I think this was due to the exuberance of his desire to impress this House with the idea that members on the Opposition side did not block this Bill in the last session. The hon. member stated that the Bill had been deferred out of consideration for the wishes of the member for Coolgardie, meaning myself. But I would like to say that is not so, as I took no part whatever in blocking the Bill last session. The Bill was brought in at a very late date, and there were some members on the other side of the House who thought with me that an important measure of this kind required more consideration than could be given to it in the limited time available, when other important measures also engaged the attention of the House. I believe the Bill was brought into the House on the 23rd August of last year; and in view of the fact that there was some other pressing business before the House, and that no one

in the colony, either employees or employed, had had a proper opportunity of studying the nature of the Bill, for these reasons it was then withdrawn. I am sure, however, that this House had no desire whatever to see the Bill withdrawn finally, but, on the contrary, if the Bill had been brought in at an earlier date, I should have been glad to have given it my support. The Bill now before us is one I intend to support, although I consider there are certain conditions in it which require amendment and alteration. When the measure has been calmly discussed in committee, I think it will be found that all the necessary conditions to protect the interests of both sides will be embodied in the measure. I see no reason why this Bill should not go safely through the House this session. It is often supposed that a man who employs labour, as I do, is opposed to the principle of trade unions; but I can assure this House that I have always favoured the principle of trade unions, and I am one of those employers who believe that the existence of well-regulated trade unions is a great advantage both to the employer and the employed. I know from my experience, having employed a large amount of labour during the last thirty years, that when any question has arisen between employer and employed, and when common sense has been brought to bear on the question by both sides, with a proper desire to find a solution of any difficulty, that difficulty is always overcome. I have never, in an experience of thirty years as an employer, had any difficulty with my men. It is quite clear that under circumstances such as employers do find themselves in, there must be occasions when the employed are not at one with their employer, and grievances have to be brought forward. My experience is that when the employees bring their grievances forward in a proper manner, and they meet the employer in a proper spirit, and when common sense is brought to bear on the question, there is never any difficulty in settling it. I should not object even to this Bill going through just as it is, because after the experience of thirty years as an employer of labour, and having managed to get on without disputes during that long period, I believe I could go on for another thirty years with-

out disputes; so that personally I would not object to the Bill going through as it is. Still, there are other interests and other views to be considered, and I have received from the Chamber of Mines at Coolgardie and at Kalgoorlie a list of amendments which they desire to have introduced in the Bill. Therefore it will be my duty, when the Bill is being considered in committee, to call attention to amendments desired by these two important bodies. One of the principal objections, so far as I have been able to learn, on the part of employers with regard to the Bill is that there is no proper machinery provided for enforcing its provisions as against workers. I think there seems weight in that objection, that there is a want of power in this Bill to enforce its provisions as against the workers; but I think that when the clauses are discussed in committee, some means will be found to overcome this defect. I do not hesitate to say that if there is a weakness in this Bill, I would rather see the advantage lie on the side of the worker than on the side of the employer; and I am prepared, so far as I am able to understand the Bill, to accept the general principles contained in it. I can only now express the hope that in committee hon. members will listen to any reasonable amendments that may be proposed, and will discuss them in the same spirit of fairness in which those amendments are brought forward. If that is done I am sure the Bill, which is a most important one, and will have a material bearing on the relations existing between labour and capital, will have a successful exit at the hands of this House.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I suppose I represent the constituency from which has come most of the pressure that has been brought to bear in regard to this Bill. Employers and employed are to be found in that district on a larger scale than in any other part of the colony, consisting of very large mining companies on the one hand, and consisting of thousands of miners on the other hand. I have no doubt there has been some grave reason for this course, or the extraordinary pressure which has been brought to bear on this House, on this so-called moribund Parliament which is supposed not to have life enough in it to do any important business, would not

have taken the form of urging the House to pass this Bill in the present session. There must have been considerable reason to suspect that a Bill of this kind, whatever good effect it might have, would be in danger of defeat by further delay, or so much pressure would not have been brought to bear on this House to pass it; and there must have been reason to suspect also that it would be dangerous to allow this Parliament to die without passing this Bill. I have good reason to say that, knowing as I do some of the inner workings of large mines up there, I believe that certain extraordinary actions on the part of large mining companies in London during the last two months have originated in the idea that certain political changes which are impending in this colony would bring about a condition of affairs whereby the extraction of gold could be done at a cheaper rate. Anything I can do to prevent any effort for reducing the standard of wages on the goldfields I shall do to the utmost of my power; for when we consider the condition of life on our goldfields and compare the wages there, with the fact that people are living there under conditions which do not obtain in other parts of Australia, we must make an allowance by which a man can save. The average wage now paid on the goldfields is, I admit, more than a living wage, that it is a wage from which a saving can be made; and this is as it should be. It would be a hopeless thing for a man to work for years in the torrid clime of our eastern goldfields, and to find at the end of his time that he had nothing saved, had nothing to spare in his old days. I hope the people of Western Australia will never seriously attempt to rush on with the working of low-grade mines, such as cannot give a good standard wage to the workers; and I would like that any great extension of our goldfields to be effected by that means shall be put off in order that a good living standard of wages may be maintained. As an hon. member says, wages are really all that the country has to expect from those mines, for we do not get the dividends, and all we can expect is such benefit as comes to the country in the earning and distribution of wages. I know that where the mines are the best managed and are turning out the most

gold, there the best wages are paid. We find that comparing our mines with the mines of all the world, we are 50 per cent. ahead of them in our output of gold, and out of that great difference we can surely afford to pay a good wage. While supporting the Bill I should like to warn the mining population of one thing, and that is that it is impossible to reach the millenium through any legislation such as is proposed in this Bill. For it is impossible to force any mining company to work its mines when the company is not willing to do so, and no coercive legislation can prevent a company from shutting down its mines and availing itself of the provisions of a law which allows the company to put one man on a few acres and turn off all the other workmen now employed there. If this Bill be passed in the present session, it cannot prevent, say, four of the great companies at Kalgoorlie from throwing that district into a state of trouble and distress by reducing the workmen to a condition of starvation, or forcing them to accept employment on such terms as those companies choose to offer. If reason be not used by the employers, and if wise counsels do not prevail among the employees, we may see a condition of things brought about in which the Lake View Consols mine, or four great companies combined, resisting this measure in its application to them, so that they may say, "For six months we will shut down our mines, and maintain only as many men on our leases as the law actually compels us to do."

MR. MORGANS: They would have to pay the fines.

MR. MORAN: I have yet to learn that any legislation can make a man work his factory or his mine, if he does not wish to do it. All you can do is to regulate the wages to be paid by the mine owner, but you cannot compel him to employ people if he is not willing to do so. I say this only to take a little of the enthusiasm out of those who are expecting too much from this measure, and who seem to think that the passing of this Bill will cure all the ills to which human flesh is heir. Take the Lake View mine as an example, with its 48 acres, eight men would be sufficient to man those acres under the law, and the other 400 or 500 men now employed

there might be turned adrift unless the owners of that mine were willing to work under the terms of the measure which this House may pass. There is always the dread of the power possessed by great mining corporations, and the only power, the greater power remaining is the moral suasion of the people, and the moral suasion of Parliament. This Bill is a very weak instrument for bringing about the desired state of feeling between labour and capital; and I say there is no law, saving the law of moral suasion, that will bring about a good condition between labour and capital; for, as I said, 5,000 men may be turned out of employment by the action of one directorate if several mines amalgamate, and who is to prevent that? The directors may say, "We are reconstructing and getting more capital." Then what remains? Only moral suasion remains, and behind that the power of this Parliament; but I think that when this power is used, it will not, unless the directors are willing, put more than one man on six acres of mining ground, while if the directors do not accept the measure, they may shut down their mines and turn away hundreds or thousands of men now employed.

A MEMBER: You would ruin the country by that.

MR. MORAN: Still the power remains to the owners to shut down their mines if they are not willing to work them, and I point this out so that there may be no rashness on the part of either party in carrying out the provisions of this Bill. Labour is always hopeless as against inhuman capital, in our present conditions; although I think this Bill will do great good, for it has worked fairly well in New Zealand, and we know that all the evil effects predicted for it have not been realised, that it has not brought ruin to vested interests, to capital, and we know also that the condition of the labouring class in that colony, as a whole, has improved. I hope the provisions of the Bill will be used with the greatest care by both sides to the dispute. We cannot possibly get over the difficulty of providing machinery to enforce monetary contributions from the labourers. I think it is impossible to do it, because we cannot collect the fees. If we do enforce monetary penalties, the cost of getting them in will be twice as much as

the amount recovered. A great deal, therefore—everything, in fact—rests with the labour unions and their leaders. It is for them to determine when they will use this Act, and how they will use it. It must always be borne in mind that if it be abused, the bottom ranks of life will always suffer. If the labourer interfere with capital unduly, what will be the consequence on those goldfields? The mines cannot be worked without capital. Without capital, nothing can be done with any mines in Kalgoorlie. There is nothing to be gained by killing the goose that lays the golden eggs.

MR. A. FORREST: Neither in Kalgoorlie nor anywhere else.

MR. MORAN: In some goldfields capital is not so necessary; but where, as in Kalgoorlie, the ore is refractory and the conditions of working complicated, large capital is indispensable. Considering the status of the labour unions, and the intelligence that characterises them to-day in their congresses, in their debates amongst themselves, which are conducted with a decorum that would do credit to this Parliament, I feel perfectly certain that wise counsels will prevail with them, and that no action will be taken which would bring the Act into disrepute, which would help to bring about such a state of affairs as that I have mentioned. It seems to me somewhat of a pity that one party or the other in this House should have been twitted by their opponents in respect of this Bill, because I feel perfectly certain that no advantage was sought to be obtained by either side. The whole country has asked for the measure; capital does not object to it; and it is rather a pity that any such action should have been taken as we saw taken a few days ago, when one party tried to bring against another an accusation that the passage of the Bill had been sought to be delayed. I hope it will pass in this House without delay, and when it goes to another place I hope it will meet with that calm and deliberate consideration which is usually accorded by that Chamber, and that we shall very shortly find it on our statute book.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): I rise to congratulate the Attorney General on the manner in which he illustrated this subject. I think every credit is due to him, and that every mem-

ber will appreciate the manner in which he explained the matter, firstly of conciliation and secondary of arbitration. There cannot be the slightest doubt that in very many cases conciliation prevents what at any time may cause a strike; and anything which will prevent that must be recognised by this House as a good thing. The Bill has been asked for, and I think it a pity that it did not pass last year; but still, it is better late than never. The probabilities are that when such a Bill is passed and becomes one of the Statutes of the Colony, we shall hear nothing whatever with regard to strikes; and I would urge the Attorney General to agree to what has been mooted on this side of the House, that the railway servants be brought within the scope of the measure. There can be no doubt that there are many things in the Railway Department which have caused dissatisfaction amongst the men; and the sooner that dissatisfaction is ended, the better, not only for the men but for the whole colony.

MR. MORAN: That is quite another question.

MR. SOLOMON: Because nothing can be more inimical to the interests of the community than dissatisfaction amongst the railway servants. Trade unionism under fair rules is undoubtedly a good thing. It is a check against the harshness of employers; and I feel sure the employers themselves would rather deal with representatives of a body of men than be constantly annoyed by individual complaints. After what has been said by other speakers, and the manner in which the Attorney General explained everything with regard to this Bill, I do not think it is necessary to say any more; but I hope he will agree to the Government railway employees being brought under its operation. As I represent a port where there is a great deal of shipping, I should like to ask the Attorney General whether seamen on board ships would come under the Bill. Possibly to do so they would have to be in some way associated.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

GAME ACT AMENDMENT ACT.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

CUSTOMS DUTIES (MEAT) REPEAL BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading, said: This is a very simple measure. It has for its object the removal of the existing customs duties upon cattle, pigs, and sheep imported into this colony for slaughter, and also of the duty upon frozen and chilled meat. For very many years—I do not know how many—there has been an import duty upon stock for slaughter; and in recent years there has been a duty on meat imported in a frozen state. The object of the duty was to encourage and stimulate the local industry, but I am not prepared to say it has done that to any large extent, although no doubt it may have had some effect. It also had for its object to preserve the home market for the people of the colony. However, the time has now arrived when, owing to the very large influx of population—owing to our enormous population compared with our numbers years ago, and owing to the consequent large importation of stock for slaughter—the time has now arrived, in the opinion of the country and of the Government, to remove these duties altogether. A good deal has been made of the fact that we have a duty on live stock for slaughter.

MR. MORAN: How do you know the opinion of the country on the subject?

THE PREMIER: I think we are, by introducing this Bill, doing rather an ill-turn to those who want a good cry at the forthcoming general election.

MR. MORAN: You are always doing that.

THE PREMIER: Because it is a capital cry, that the high price of meat is due to the customs duties.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about eggs and bacon?

THE PREMIER: We have heard that a good many times during recent years. I may inform hon. members and the people of the country that the duties have had little to do, and during the last year or more have had nothing to do, with the price of meat—that is, of meat imported alive and killed here. Hon. members will at once see my statement must be absolutely correct, because the largest amount that the existing duties on live stock imported and killed here realised cannot exceed a farthing in the lb. We know

very well that we do not deal in farthings in this colony, and that the lowest advance or reduction in price recognised by butchers is a halfpenny. It will be remembered that some time ago—I think it was in the year before last—the duty was reduced by one-half on imported bullocks; and we were told by a certain hon. member that he hoped to be able to “scoop the pool” to the extent of £300 that week on account of the reduction of duty, and that if we would only let him have the other half off he thought he would be able to reduce the price of meat a little.

MR. MORAN: Meat has gone up a lot since then.

THE PREMIER: Yes; I believe the price has increased. Practically the price of meat all round has increased, notwithstanding that the duty was reduced by one-half. Now we are about to do what that hon. member desired we should do then. We are going to remove the duty altogether.

MR. MORAN: Meat is sure to go up in price.

THE PREMIER: And we shall see whether that hon. member and those engaged in the industry will be able to reduce the price by reason of this removal of duty. In my opinion they will not be able to do so, because the amount of the duty is too small. I must say this here because hitherto I have used the same argument, and I must use it still because I believe it to be right: my own opinion is that the whole duty will go into the pockets of those who import live stock and those by whom it is retailed. I should like to inform hon. members of the amount of duty we received during the last three years on account of cattle, pigs, and sheep imported for slaughter. In 1897 the amount received for duty was £34,288; in 1898, £30,767; and in 1899, I am glad to say we received only £11,894: showing that last year the local supplies were much more adequate to the demand than in the two previous years. During 1897 we received in duties on fresh, frozen, and chilled meat the amount of £16,449; and in 1898 we received under this head only £1,177. Frozen meat must have been “scotched” that year, somehow. Last year we received only £2,566 from the duty on fresh, frozen, and chilled meat. It therefore

comes about that we received in 1897 duties which we are removing now equal to £50,737; in 1898, duties equal to £31,944; and last year, duties equal to £14,460. This year I think the receipts will be less; I believe that during this year the effect of the duties upon revenue will not be much over £8,000 or £10,000 at the most; so that I am glad to say we are not losing a large amount of duty.

MR. MORAN: Then we are doing no good.

THE PREMIER: I think we shall, perhaps, do some good. And the idea has gone forth, and it is firmly held by nearly everyone in the colony, by those who may be termed the humbler class or the labouring class, that the price of meat is high owing to the duties; and it is no use trying to tell them it is not so.

MR. MORAN: Yet the duty is only £11,000 per annum at the outside!

THE PREMIER: That does not matter. These are the facts. On the hustings we find men who ought to know better using the fact of the existence of the stock tax or the meat tax against the present Government. It is generally believed that this small duty has something to do with the price of meat; but as I said, the duty will not affect the price of meat, and I am sorry to say so; nor will it now very much affect the revenue. From the Treasurer's point of view it was, years ago, a consideration; but it will not affect the revenue very much during this year, and both the Government and I have come to the conclusion that the best thing we can do is to get rid of it altogether. On the goldfields, especially this duty has caused more adverse comment than perhaps anything else on the statute book; and it is firmly believed by thousands and tens of thousands of persons in this colony that meat is dear because of this small import tax. As I said before, they will have to get up some other cry now; they will have to find some other reason for the high price of meat. They may account for it by the fact of there being a meat ring. I do not know whether they can do away with the meat ring, but there is no reason why they should not have a ring of their own if they like. Hon. members will notice

it is not proposed to add anything to this Bill, the reason being that we do not want to interfere with the tariff generally if we can avoid it. The tariff, if not altered by this House, will continue, I think, until it disappears under the provisions of the Commonwealth Act; and I think we should keep faith with the people of the colony by leaving that tariff untouched. I regret to have to alter it to the extent we are doing now; but there seems to be a general consensus of opinion almost everywhere that this duty may well be removed, and that it does a lot of harm—and does most harm in the idea that it engenders amongst the people that their meat, which is dear enough, goodness knows—too dear, I regret to say—is increased in price by reason of this duty. There is no other tax upon the statute book which is so much talked about and, perhaps, so much felt as this small impost. I wish the effect of this legislation would be more apparent than it will be. However we will not give the enemy reason to blaspheme, and we will make this exception in regard to our tariff; that is, while we propose to amend the Tariff Act to this extent, at the same time we hope hon. members will not at the present time seek to interfere with it further. The provisions of the Commonwealth Bill were inserted by certainly some of the ablest men in Australia. They considered some consideration was due to Western Australia owing to her peculiar position in raising so much money from customs duties; and this clause was therefore specially inserted, and was almost unanimously agreed to. It seems to me we ought not to seek to undo what was done there, and we know it was done for our benefit. As I observed before, it may be said of us that we are seeking on this occasion to undo what has been done by the Commonwealth, and to some extent, no doubt, that would be accurate. At the same time this is in accordance with a sort of pledge, a sort of understanding arrived at before the federal vote was taken. It was really practically agreed to during the short session when the Referendum Bill was passed, and that being so, we are intent upon carrying out the understanding arrived at before we knew we would be entering the Commonwealth. I hope, therefore, hon.

members will agree to this Bill; also that they will not seek, at the present time at all events, to alter the tariff any further. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. WALLACE (Yalgoo): I should rather like to say a few words in regard to the remarks of the Premier. I must follow the lead of two other members of this House in congratulating the Government on introducing this measure. We recognise in their action in this matter, as we also recognise in regard to the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, that they have very successfully forestalled the Opposition. Members will remember that the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), even before this session of Parliament, had intimated his intention to move that these duties be repealed; and, before the hon. member had time to move the motion from this side of the House, we were informed that the Government were going to bring down a Bill to remove the duties on live stock and chilled meat. The Premier has certainly taken from some of us, myself included, a good election cry. At the same time I want to tell the right hon. gentleman and other hon. members of the House that, notwithstanding that last year we took 15s. per head off cattle, even that reduction, as the Premier points out, did not reduce the price of meat. The reason the meat did not go down in price, and the reason there was this outcry against these particular duties, was that there was a distinction made between live meat and frozen meat. The cry was as to the injustice of differential duties. The duty on a sheep alive, as we have often been told, is 2s. 6d.

THE PREMIER: It is 1s. 3d. now.

MR. WALLACE: The duty on the same sheep frozen would have been 7s. 6d. before the repeal last session. The excessive duty on frozen meat, as compared with the duty on live meat, is one of the principal causes for keeping up the price of meat. It did not produce competition. We could not get the meat other than through the people trading in live stock. Had frozen meat come in, it would have been accepted by the consumers, and it would have been given to them at a lesser price. Then the price of live meat was influenced by the view enforced by the Government as to the duty on live stock.

There is still an additional penalty imposed on the importation and sale of frozen meat, because the importer or seller will have to affix a label on that meat distinctly stating that it is imported or frozen meat, as the case may be. I do not know that it will interfere with the sale of frozen meat, because I think the majority of the people cannot tell frozen meat from local meat.

THE PREMIER: They can when they eat it, I think.

MR. WALLACE: It would be just as well to put the importer and seller of frozen meat on the same footing as the importer and seller of live meat.

A MEMBER: Subsidise the importers.

MR. WALLACE: I do not wish to subsidise them. I must congratulate the Premier on the very clever way in which he has forestalled the Opposition in bringing in this Bill, and I promise that I will support it.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): At last we have arrived at a stage in the history of this colony on which I think we can all congratulate ourselves. For fifteen or twenty years, and at every election, this subject of the duty on meat has been a burning question. People outside this House, and very often in it, who know nothing about the trade, get up and make statements as to the profits and the way in which the trade is conducted, altogether foreign to the question; in fact they speak on a subject which they know nothing at all about. We have just heard from the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) the statement that he would like to introduce frozen meat into this colony and allow the retail or wholesale butcher to sell it as prime fresh meat without any restriction. You cannot go on the continent of Europe or into any meat-shop in London or any part of England without seeing meat marked in a way showing whether it is from America or from Ireland, or whether it is Scotch mutton or frozen or chilled meat from Australia. That information is marked up, and a person going into the shop can buy what he likes. There is a great difference in the price and in the quality. When we come to the last clause of this little Bill, we find there is a proposal to inflict a fine of £10. I shall move that the fine be £100. That is the only protection those who have live stock

in this colony possess. The people of the Northern division of this colony are giving away the only duties that they have to protect them, and they have to pay for everything they consume—flour, and I was going to say chaff. Of course they do not pay duty on chaff, but we consume a great lot of it in the Northern part of this colony. We have given up all that, and the Premier says we will not interfere with the tariff. What have the members from those districts to say to their constituents when they go back? Their constituents will say, "You were agreeable to take the duties off this meat, and with the same breath you voted to keep the duty on the articles we cannot produce."

THE PREMIER: Sugar, tea, and kerosene.

MR. A. FORREST: Flour.

THE PREMIER: Only flour?

MR. A. FORREST: Flour, oats, and chaff. We give up the duties on these. I am prepared to support this Bill, except the last clause, to which I am prepared to move an amendment; and I accept it for one reason only—that I am tired of the cry on the cheap meat question. I say in the face of all the members of this House that taking off the duty will make no difference whatever in the price of meat. The price of meat is regulated for this colony by the Eastern colonies, and for six months of the year by the trade with the East Kimberley and West Kimberley districts, and the North-West district for sheep. I should like to ask how many sheep and cattle have been imported from the Eastern colonies since the 1st July, and how many will be imported to the end of the year. Practically none, all the stock coming from our own territory in the North. After the season is over, in what they call the winter months, we buy from the Eastern colonies. At the present time the price of beef and mutton is not high. I believe that if you like to take your money to retail shops you can get beef and mutton very cheap. If you want credit and the very best meat the butchers can produce, you have to pay a higher price. People want beefsteak, and we know that in a bullock there are about 20lbs. of beefsteak. A person pays for beefsteak 1s. per lb., but what about the parts that are sold for 2d. or 3d. per lb.? It is absurd

to fancy that taking off the duty will make any difference whatever. As I have said before, the prices are regulated by what we produce here, and by what we import from the Eastern colonies. I hope the Government will be careful to see that this label is placed on the imported frozen and chilled meat, so that the general public will not go into a shop expecting to get what they are paying for and be shoved off with an inferior article. This reduction will make the reduction of the duty on frozen meat $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb.

MR. HIGHAM: Three-farthings.

MR. A. FORREST: Three-farthings last session, and that makes $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. for frozen mutton. Now they have that reduction, people will be able to sell it at a much lower price than that received for the cattle that come here for slaughter. You can also see that if this importation of frozen and chilled meat reaches any large extent in this country, it will do away with a large export trade of the colony in skins, tallow, and bones; and there are engaged in this trade more men than many people have any idea of, whereas frozen beef and mutton come here in bags. That meat is taken from the steamer and conveyed directly to the shop of the retail butcher. Those are the facts of the case. I say they are indisputable. Members on this side of the House who sanction this Bill do it for the reason that they are tired of the whole subject; and when we go to the electors next year we will be able to say: "At all events, we have done one good turn for you; we have given you cheap meat."

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I hope the appeal of the Premier will be listened to, and no attempt made to interfere with the tariff at present, saving and excepting in regard to this one item, which the Premier admits is a political matter, and not one having reference to the price of meat. The Premier practically admits he collected only £11,000 of duty last year under this heading; and of what benefit is that to the people? It amounts, I believe, to about 1s. $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per head per annum, and what that amounts to per head per week I have not time to work out. I hope good faith will be kept by this dying Parliament, and no attempt made to interfere with the privileges that remain under the federal sliding scale. Nothing could be more absurd than for

this House to attempt to interfere with the tariff when we are within, we may say, a few days of the general election and shall have to decide under a new constitution, an increased representation and the most liberal electoral laws in Australia, what shall be our policy under the sliding scale for the next five years. Nothing could be more foolish, or more calculated to bring discredit on us as a Parliament, than to interfere with the tariff in the present crucial state of the colony's finances. I was pleased a day or two ago to see in the leading federal organ of Western Australia—a paper most hostile at the present time to the producers of Western Australia, and to any protection that may be given to them—an expression of opinion that Parliament should allow the duties to remain under the sliding scale for five years. The paper I refer to is the *Kalgoorlie Miner*, with which I do not always see eye to eye in public affairs. That newspaper has not been in the habit of saying sweet things about me, nor have I been in the habit of saying sweet things about it; but on this occasion I noticed, with a great deal of pleasure and a certain amount of satisfaction, that the *Kalgoorlie Miner* at least is not going to break the pledge given by the federalists of this colony to the producers, a pledge by which many thousands were led to vote for federation, who otherwise would not have done so. That pledge was to adhere to the scheme laid down, with, I hope, such alterations as will make the steps of the ladder even, and make the duties accommodate themselves to the fall of one-fifth every year. I hope that nobody, for the sake of gaining a little popularity, will get up in the House and propose to interfere with the duties, because, in the first place, to do so would be a breach of faith on the part of the country as a whole, if not on the part of the individual member.

MR. CONNOR: Is this not a breach of faith?

MR. MORAN: This is a breach of nothing: you cannot call it a breach at all, because it is simply a make-believe on the part of Parliament that we are going to give the people cheap meat. All through the federal campaign I took the stand which I maintain now, that the customs duty has no more to do with the

price of meat than the man in the moon. If the customs duty has to do with the price of meat, how is it that after we reduced the duty last session, meat went up to a great price, thus proving at once that there was some greater cause and reason? I want to point out to the member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) that all his constituents voted for federation and free-trade in meat sooner or later, and also to the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), whose constituents to a man—

MR. CONNOR: You are mixed.

MR. MORAN: Then I will say the members for the two Kimberleys, both of whose constituents are men who are living on the meat trade or on the growth of cattle, and voted for free-trade, knowing that meant an abolition of duty in three years. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) seems to take this to heart a little bitterly, and I would like to know whether his bitterness is real, in view of the fact that he generally "gets home" on the public as a rule, and rises a little too early for most people.

MR. A. FORREST: Too early for you, anyhow.

MR. MORAN: The present position of station property in the eastern colonies absolutely precludes any undue competition between East and West for the next three years. Some little time ago I was talking to Mr. Kidman, who is not unknown in connection with the cattle trade, and who had just come back from Queensland, New South Wales, and South Australia. He told me that on most beautiful stations, which were carrying tens of thousands of cattle a year or two ago, there is hardly a hoof alive to-day. In one case Mr. Kidman bought a mob of 5,000 cattle somewhere on the borders of Queensland, and started them off to South Australia, and only 200 got there out of each 1,000. In another case Mr. Kidman cited to me, 1,000 cattle were sent out, and the men carried their saddles back on their arms, the horses and cattle having all died. In view of these facts, and in view of the fact that between 30,000 and 40,000 sheep were lost by drought in New South Wales alone, what is there to be feared for the next two or three years from undue competition from the East? If the facts be as I have said,

and some people voted for federation, which will bring free-trade at the end of three years, "whence these tears?" What is all this trouble about? Is the emotion real on the part of the hon. member (Mr. Forrest) when he says a hardship is being done to those very people, who by their votes asked for free-trade in meat? The fact of the matter is that firm contracts were made between Queensland cattle station owners, and the home Government, and the Governments of many European countries, in the good times to send home frozen meat, and although these owners would rather send their meat here, they cannot do so because all their available supply is required to fulfil the contracts. Right down from the Gulf, the whole western part of Queensland has been swept clean of its stock, as is also the case with the whole of the interior of New South Wales; and on those magnificent stations around Broken Hill, where hundreds of thousands of sheep and tens of thousands of cattle used to be seen, not hundreds are left to-day. These are absolutely hard facts, and for the sake of removing a cry, for the sake of doing away with the name of a duty which is so small that it only realised £11,000 last year—to remove this agitation and bring quiet to the minds of the people, the reduction of this one duty which we could with some decency interfere with, has been proposed in this Bill. This reduction was promised before federation, and therefore there is no breach of faith; but to go on further interfering with the tariff would be unjust, injudicious, and inopportune, and a breach of faith at the present time. Who knows but that at the next general election a Parliament may be returned which will take advantage of the powers under the sliding scale, and increase the duties so as to give Western Australia protection for five years? So far as I am concerned, if I have the honour of being re-elected, I shall go for increasing some of the duties. However popular or unpopular the opinion may be, I maintain that for the next three years at least, we should do our best to give the staple products of Western Australia a little more protection than they have at present, and that the protection should be arranged in such a way as to let the

duties fall by easy gradations, so that after three years they may be abolished altogether. Not only do I oppose interfering with the duties at present, but when the time comes I shall be prepared to listen to any proposal to increase the duties on some of the staples of Western Australia. I hope this debate will be confined to the one object, namely the removal of this cry about the duty on meat, and to the giving of free competition to anybody who likes to go into the trade. We will then see how little there is in the cry that the duty is causing people to pay 1s. a lb. for meat, although the duty is only three-farthings a lb.

MR. HARPER (Beverley): I rise to point out that the Government have decided to make this move without having thoroughly considered its effect. I am prepared to show that the action of the Government in removing the duties from all these meats will, in one instance, affect injuriously the most struggling section of the community. It is well known the effect of freezing on beef and mutton is injurious; and if one looks at the quotations of the sales of frozen meat in England, it will be found that this meat is generally half the value of the locally killed. The meat may be quite good, but the effect of freezing is to reduce the value of beef and mutton by one-half. Experience also shows that the effect of freezing on pork is very little injurious, and the result may be that the importation of carcasses of pork will strike a very serious blow at the producer of pork in this community. When you bear in mind that it is not the graziers or the squatters who produce pork, but the farmers, and mainly the small farmers, it will be seen that this aims a blow directly at the latter class. Not only is the farmer affected in the ordinary course, but the conditions under which pork is produced in the Eastern colonies, where there are enormous dairies and the production is very cheap, intensify the effect on the small farmer here, who will be compelled, if he produce pork at all, to do so at a rate which is not payable in the same way that the lower prices are payable in the Eastern colonies. The effect therefore on the farming industry in this colony, of the removal of the duties on frozen pork, will be a direct blow at that section of the community which deserves our

deepest and most earnest consideration, namely those men whom we are trying to settle on the soil. I really hope hon. members and the Government will consider this matter deeply, and exclude pork from the operation of the Bill. I feel confident that those who introduced the measure have done so without considering and without knowing the effect; and I urge this on the House, because I am sure that anyone who inquires into it will find that what I have said is the case.

MR. CONNOR (East Kimberley): Like other hon. members who have spoken, I agree with the Bill, which the Premier some time ago gave us to understand was coming. The people demanded the Bill, and have got it, but I do not think it will be of much good to them. The question of whether or not the Bill will do any harm to the producer has been discussed, but that, I think, is somewhat foreign to the question as to whether the duty should come off. The whole question of free-trade has, however, been introduced, and taking a duty off a commodity is a step towards free-trade; and as I have always been a free-trader, except on the question of beef and mutton, the discussion has not had the effect of changing the ideas I have always held, but it has given me a certain amount of scope, when the Bill is passed, that I did not have before; because as a representative of the pastoralists, although I am a free-trader, I have to pay some attention to the ideas, the wants, and the wishes of the people who sent me here; consequently I have had to hold my tongue in debates. That impediment has now been removed, and when the question of free-trade and protection is raised in this House I shall give my vote every time in favour of free-trade. The people affected by the abolition of the duty, the producers of sheep and cattle principally, will be able to produce pork and keep the animal that "pays the rent." If this Bill passes, the people in the northern portion of the colony will say to their representatives in this House, "why should we have the little protection we had taken from us, and still continue to pay duties on all our requirements and on the necessities of life?" Because upon everything used in the North there is a duty; therefore the

pastoralists will say to their representatives, "we want a *quid pro quo*; we want something in return for that which you have taken from us." As to the price of meat to the consumer I do not think the removal of the duty will make much difference, because the cost is regulated by the supply and the supply from the other colonies at the present time is smaller than ever before. The cost of cattle in the other colonies is dearer than ever before. There is a phase of the question which has not been touched upon, and it seems to me to be a question of out-Heroding Herod. We are supposed to be the youngest producing country, therefore we should require the most protection, yet we are making concessions to the other colonies. We know there is a heavy tax on any cattle which go into South Australia or into Victoria; yet here are our pastoralists struggling in the far north of this country paying high rates, and the little protection they have is to be taken from them. Perhaps this Bill will do away with the cry raised by the people of the country, who have worked so hard to make this country what it is, for cheap meat. If the pastoralists in the North produce more meat than is required in the near future what a nice position they will be in if they want to send cattle across to the Northern Territory of South Australia to ship them at Port Darwin! That is a position that has not been looked at by hon. members, and it is a matter which has not been taken into consideration by the Premier.

MR. MORGANS: But there will be free-trade under federation.

MR. CONNOR: At any rate we cannot send cattle there now. The member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace), whom we look upon as a high authority on tick and stock, interjected when the member for West Kimberley was speaking, and asked would a label be put on ticked meat. I do not know whether there will be a label on ticked meat, but I know there is a lot of meat obtained on "tick." The only possible way of getting cheap meat in this colony is to obtain it from Kimberley. Just that reference to tick which was made by the member for Yalgoo made me speak on a matter on which I probably should not have spoken, because a Select Committee is now sitting dealing with this tick

question; but I cannot help taking this opportunity of saying that it is being suggested outside the House that undue, unnecessary, and absurd restrictions should be placed on the meat trade. It will be the duty of members who represent growers of stock, if these restrictions be adopted, to go before the country and place the position before the people in the settled districts. It will be a pity if that is necessary. This Select Committee is sitting in connection with the tick question, therefore I will only say that any unnecessary restrictions placed on the importation of meat will be resented by the great bulk of the electors.

MR. HOLMES (East Fremantle): I do not think I should have been found addressing the House on this subject, being so intimately connected with the business affected, were it not for the fact that the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) raised a point that is worthy of consideration. He referred to the production of pork and the removal of the duty. At present the local man can obtain 7d. per pound for his pork, whereas the man in the Eastern colonies is content with 4d.; and with the removal of the duty you can easily land pork here at 5d. per pound.

THE PREMIER: Why do they now get 7d. for it?

MR. HOLMES: I was going to add, but it would be for the House to consider whether it would be wise, in the interests of the local man, to allow him to retain 7d. per pound or whether the House thinks the local man can reasonably produce at 5d.

THE PREMIER: There is only a duty of three-farthings a pound on it now.

MR. HOLMES: And the freight is three-farthings a pound, and the freezing and charges another farthing a pound, therefore producers from the other colonies cannot land meat here under any consideration at less than 5d. per pound.

THE PREMIER: That would make it 5d. per pound.

MR. HOLMES: It is a question for the House to consider whether the local man would be satisfied with 5d. a pound with the present conditions, while the man in the Eastern colonies only receives 4d. per pound.

THE PREMIER: It is 7d. per pound now, you say: that could not make a difference of 2d.

MR. JAMES: The duty does not make the difference.

MR. HOLMES: While the present duty is in existence, the producer in the other colonies cannot land pork here under 6d. a pound; pork is 4d. a pound in Melbourne, then there are three-farthings a pound freight, one farthing for charges, and three-farthings a pound duty, which really make it 6d. per pound.

THE PREMIER: Then why give 7d.?

MR. HOLMES: The local man contends that he cannot produce pork under 7d. per pound.

THE PREMIER: Then imported pork is cheaper to buy.

MR. HOLMES: The point raised by the member for Beverley is that we shall strike at the industry of pork raising in this colony. If the House thinks the local man, with the conditions he has to contend with, is well paid at 5d. a pound on equal terms with the man in Victoria at 4d., the House will be justified in leaving the Bill as it stands; if not, an amendment can be moved. While speaking on this subject I would like to congratulate the Premier and the Government on the political aspect they have introduced at this stage. This can be considered as nothing less than a political Bill, because the Premier practically admitted that when introducing the measure. He said that the duty collected on meat of every description during last year was £11,000, or 1s. 2d. per head of the population of the colony, which in itself is a fact not worth mentioning.

MR. A. FORREST: The general public will not believe that.

MR. HOLMES: Whether the general public believe it or not, the fact remains that the duty collected last year on meat of all descriptions came to 1s. 2d., or not more than 1s. 3d. per head of the population. That was practically an admission on the part of the Premier that it was a political Bill, and I congratulate him on forestalling the members on the Opposition side, as he generally does. The removal of the duty will not have the effect on the price of meat that some hon. members think. We can never expect to have cheap meat in the colony until the local production is carried on

somewhere in the immediate vicinity of where the meat goes into consumption. While we have to bring meat across the Australian Bight under the conditions which exist at present, and pay high rates and charges which have a tendency to make meat dear, so long must the people of the colony expect to pay dearly for their meat. It is also a question of supply and demand. Butchers in this colony do the best they can and make all the money they can. If the supply is scarce they get the best price they can, and if the supply be plentiful they suit themselves to the circumstances and make the supply available. There is one point I would like to mention. The passage of this Bill will necessitate the opening of shops for the sale of frozen meat, and frozen meat alone. It will be impossible for butchers to comply with the conditions of the Bill, and ticket the meat for sale as frozen meat; consequently it will necessitate the opening of butchers' shops specially for the sale of frozen meat and nothing else. That difficulty will be overcome, because doubtless as soon as the Bill is passed there will be frozen meat shops both in Perth and Fremantle. Those engaged in the trade cannot combine the sale of fresh and frozen meat to one premises, and probably there will be no disadvantage in that. The removal of the duty will not affect myself as a butcher; at all events I am in this position: unfortunately I am not interested in any station, and consequently do not produce. I have to buy from those who do produce, and this has the effect of reducing the charge to us. On the other hand if we can make a concession to our customers, so much the better for the customers. If we cannot and do not see the necessity for it, probably so much the better for ourselves. However, I hope the Bill will bring about the good which the public anticipate; but in the face of the figures quoted by the Premier, I fail to see how it will do so. I once more congratulate the Premier upon its introduction.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—Repeal:

MR. MORAN moved that the word "pigs," in line 3, be struck out. This

item was of great importance to the farmer. During the next two or three years, before the intercolonial duties became uniform, let us give our farmers a chance of creating the pork-raising industry, especially in view of the great wheat production of this colony, which, from an agriculturist's point of view, would be its mainstay.

MR. EWING: Wherein lay the distinction between pigs and sheep and cattle? The Bill was required to cheapen the price of meat. The only consideration was whether people of this colony were paying more for meat than they should pay. Pork was, if anything, dearer than mutton or beef; therefore it should be subjected to intercolonial competition.

MR. MORAN: Did the hon. member believe in absolute free-trade?

MR. EWING: It was wrong to impose on consumers any burden which was unjust or unfair; and circumstances had proved the meat duties unreasonable. If the retention of the duty on pork would not unduly affect the consumers, he would support the amendment. But either abolish all the duties, or let them all stand, and treat both pastoralists and farmers alike.

MR. MORAN: Owing to droughts in the East, this colony's pastoralists would not be seriously affected for some years by intercolonial competition, and they were in a better position than the farmers, to whom the small duty on pork might mean much, though it must be some burden to the consumer, as the hon. member (Mr. Ewing) was aware.

MR. EWING: It was of undue impositions he had spoken, which bore harshly on the people.

MR. MORAN: A penny extra on pork would be no great hardship.

MR. QUINLAN: One of the objects of the Bill was to help to stock the country; and the importations must include pigs. At present there was a duty on pigs for breeding purposes of two shillings per head. Better abolish the duty on live pigs.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. EWING moved that in line 4 the words "for sale" be struck out. Why should farmers pay a duty on pigs imported for breeding purposes?

MR. MORAN: How distinguish breeding pigs from others?

Amendment put and passed.

MR. GREGORY moved that the words "preserved and" be inserted after "upon," in line 4. It was about time the duties were taken off this class of food, the duties being a very large tax upon those whose necessity compelled them to eat it.

MR. MORAN: Jams were important too.

MR. GREGORY: Not nearly so important as tinned meat. This class of food was an absolute necessity, not only for those living on the fields, but for the poorer classes in this part of the colony. He knew that the removal of the duties would mean a big loss to the Treasurer. He (Mr. Gregory) did not wish to go any further, nor did he think any member of the Committee desired to go further. Those who were compelled to eat this class of food should have it at the very lowest price possible. It would be much better if the ordinary fresh food were available at a cheap price, and then there would be no necessity to eat this class of food. He hoped the Premier would see his way to allow this reduction.

THE PREMIER: A halfpenny a tin.

MR. MORAN: What weight?

THE PREMIER: One pound.

MR. GREGORY: It was to be hoped the Committee would agree to this amendment.

MR. MORAN: The Treasurer would now have to consider his revenue. One understood from the Opposition that this was the only reduction they wanted to move for, and if that were the case he would support the amendment.

MR. DARLOT: As a rule, the tinned meat referred to was only the refuse of the freezing and tinning places, the consequence being that people were fed only on the poorest meat; so that the sooner they were got out of the lazy way of using tinned meat instead of buying sound meat and salting it down so as to have something that contained some sustenance instead of this stuff, the better for themselves. There were a large number of miners and others who never knew what it was to salt a bit of meat or make damper for themselves. They had been brought up in towns where they lived in lodging-houses. They did not like cooking, and to save themselves from that, they

ate this tinned meat, which did no good and assisted materially in producing typhoid fever about the camps.

MR. KINGSMILL: The member who had just resumed his seat put forth the most powerful argument in support of the amendment. In many parts of the colony people had to eat tinned meat because they could not get a supply of fresh meat, and they should get it as cheaply as possible. If, as alleged, it contained microbes, people ought to get it cheaper still. Many people prospecting in the southern parts of the colony, at all events, were compelled to eat this tinned meat because they could not get any other.

MR. DOHERTY: The prospector should be supplied as cheaply as possible, and he (Mr. Doherty) was prepared to support the amendment. Of course the difficulty could be got over by allowing a large number of cattle to come down from the north, when there would be a supply of fresh meat.

MR. A. FORREST: If this amendment were carried, he would move for a repeal of the duty on flour.

MR. DOHERTY: The duty on tinned meat should be removed.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The duty on preserved meat in 1898 was £8,901.

MR. MORAN: Was that a separate item, "Preserved meat?"

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes. Notwithstanding that the amount of duty was a considerable sum, the House might very well pass the amendment which had been moved. As far back, he thought, as 1894, and every year since, the Government had been urged to remove the duty. People who had to go to the back country could not get fresh meat, and the only way in which they could get meat there was to take tinned meat.

THE PREMIER: Tinned meat was not very dear.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Government might well admit this tinned meat duty free.

THE PREMIER: In 1898 the amount of duty was £8,900, and last year it was £5,600. He really thought there was no necessity to add this to the Bill. The Bill was introduced for the repeal of the duty on live stock and frozen meat and not on preserved meat. The duty was $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a pound. Would anyone wish him to believe that if this duty were removed

from "tinned dog," as people called it, tinned meat would be any cheaper? Would a pound tin be sold at a halfpenny less?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It could be sold for 1d. less.

THE PREMIER: Halfpenny a pound for preserved meat. He hoped members would not agree to this reduction. Already we had agreed to give away £14,000 or £15,000, and members seemed to wish him to lose another £6,000. He expected that every year the duty would become less, but he really could not see any necessity for reducing it at the present time. We could not give everything all at once, and if we reduced the duty on live stock and on frozen meat, we should, he thought, have gone as far as we now need. Members should recollect the arguments used in regard to not interfering with the tariff more than was absolutely necessary. The excuse for interfering with it now was that there was a sort of pledge or understanding before we knew whether we should enter into the federation. There were a lot more items; bacon, hams, and other things.

MR. A. FORREST: Flour, too.

THE PREMIER: If we once commenced, we did not know where we should get to.

MR. GREGORY: We were not going to touch the duties on those things.

THE PREMIER: At any rate we might leave any further reduction of duty to the next session, and let the new Parliament say what they would like to do. Perhaps the successors of the present Parliament would know more than we knew now, and possibly someone else would have charge of the finances.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Never more.

THE PREMIER: Then perhaps the successors of the present Parliament would not be so eager to interfere with the revenue.

MR. GREGORY: Other things could be taxed.

THE PREMIER: It was not so easy to put a tax on other things and obtain a revenue thereby. The object of imposing taxation was to bring in revenue, and a tax might be imposed which might produce a great deal of trouble and annoyance, but bring nothing in. He hoped members would not agree to alter

the Bill any further. It was inconsistent to at one moment ask him to omit pigs, and to want to insert tinned meat in the next. He could not see very much difference between pork and any other kind of meat.

MR. A. FORREST: If this Bill was to be carried any further, and the duty taken off preserved meat, he would move—and he would have the support of members on that (Government) side of the House—that the duty should be removed from flour, chaff, and oats. The Northern members had gone a long way to allow duties to come off, and if further duties were to be removed, the time had arrived when these members would sit down and see what they were going to do. It was understood that the tariff was not going to be interfered with except in relation to these special items, but now we found that members wanted duties to be taken off other items, because they had to go before their constituents shortly, and they would save this $\frac{1}{4}$ d. a lb. on "tinned dog." A man very seldom ate any of it, and perhaps it would poison him, or something, if he did. He knew something about prospectors, having had a good many himself, and he knew they did not eat tinned dog when they were prospecting for other people, but they lived on the fat of the land. He hoped the House would not go any further on the question, but would stick to the Bill brought down by the Government. If the House went further, some would want the duty off bacon, some off butter, and some off cheese, and some off other things, and so the Treasurer would find there would be no duties at all.

MR. EWING: The threat held out by the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) would not have any effect, because, as to many of the items that the member had mentioned, it was very desirable the duties should be removed. The people of this country had been loaded with taxation; and some hon. members looked as if they had derived a good deal of benefit from that taxation.

MR. DOHERTY: The hon. member looked well on it.

MR. EWING: But the time had arrived when the people should no longer labour under these burdens, which the Premier estimated was three-halfpence per pound.

THE PREMIER: One halfpenny per pound.

MR. EWING: The Year Book said it was three-halfpence, but taking it at a halfpenny, if it was worth removing a halfpenny duty from live and frozen meat, surely it was worth while removing the duty from tinned meat.

THE PREMIER: It was three-farthings on frozen meat.

MR. EWING: The valuable book already quoted was prepared in the Government departments, but the information might or might not be correct. In any case, the Government had seen fit to introduce a Bill to remove a duty which differed very little from the one now under consideration. If there was any class of persons who ought to be encouraged, it was that class in the far districts of the colony who were compelled to use what meat they could get, and if that meat was of the quality described by the hon. member for the De Grey (Mr. Darlôt), they ought to have it as cheap as possible. The object of the Bill was, he took it, to remove a burden now on the people, because, if there was no burden by reason of the taxation of the meat, why did the Government introduce the Bill? If the Government had realised that the people had laboured under a burden for years past, such as necessitated a Bill of this kind, why did they not do all they could to complete the remedy? The Government were only endeavouring to cast before the electors a suggestion that they desired to reduce taxation, without really striking at the root of the thing; and so far as Western Australia was concerned, tinned meat was to a large extent the root of the question. Was it not a matter of importance that the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) made such a fuss about the question? It must be "striking home" somewhere, and if it was "striking home" on that hon. member, that was good enough for him (Mr. Ewing). The "meat ring" could be seen shifting and wriggling about in their seats: they did not want this duty removed, and the inference was that the removal must be going to affect the meat trade of the colony.

MR. DOHERTY said he supported the removal of the duty on tinned meat.

MR. EWING: If further evidence were wanted that this was a duty that

should be removed, it was supplied by the fact that the member for West Kimberley was very desirous of having the duty retained.

THE PREMIER: How could it affect the member for West Kimberley?

MR. EWING said he did not know how it affected the member for West Kimberley, but it evidently irritated the hon. member, and if it irritated him, it might be suggested that it affected him; and, strange to say, the proposal seemed to affect another big meat producer (Mr. Darlôt), who did not want the tinned meat duty removed. Then there was another member at the back of the Government benches (Mr. Connor) who looked very savagely at him (Mr. Ewing). There was no logical distinction between tinned meat and frozen meat, and if one duty was removed, why not remove the other?

MR. MORAN: Last year £6,000 duty was paid on tinned meat, at one half-penny per pound, and he worked that out to mean that 2,880,000lbs. of tinned meat were imported, showing that a large portion of the population were consuming this commodity. Taking the population at 180,000 people, in round figures that meant 16lbs. per head for every man, woman and child, or eightpence per annum per head of the population; and as duty on frozen meat amounted to 1s. 1½d. per head, there was not very much difference between the two. If the duty on meat were removed, this duty should be removed also.

MR. A. FORREST: Remove the duty on bacon.

MR. MORAN: In keeping the duty on bacon, a new industry was being helped.

THE PREMIER: This industry was just as new.

MR. MORAN: In three years time, under federation, protection would probably go, and during the interval there could be no undue competition in live meat between the East and the West. Tinned meat was eaten very freely by the most valuable part of the population, namely the prospector as opposed to the digger, the latter of whom usually gravitated within half a mile of a beershop. The digger was the man whom the Government were catering for in taking the duty off meat, but in taking the duty off tinned meat the prospector was considered. Could it be imagined that only prospectors

consumed 2,880,000lbs.? The Opposition had made a faithful promise that if the Committee agreed to this one item, they would not seek to interfere with the tariff any further, and as he regarded that as an honourable understanding, he would vote for the abolition of the duty on tinned meat. The duty of £11,000 on fresh meat, and £6,000 or £7,000 duty on tinned meat, made £17,000, and payment of members at £300 year meant £24,000, or altogether, £41,000; and he had the other evening worked out some figures and calculated there would shortly be a deficit of £600,000. If the Committee undertook to take the duty off meat, there was no use in any half measures, and the compromise suggested by the Opposition should be accepted.

MR. QUINLAN expressed the hope that the Committee would not agree to the amendment. The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) suggested that the burden should be removed from the shoulders of the community, but it would be better to remove the burden from the stomachs of the people by preventing tinned meats coming into the colony.

MR. MORAN: The fact that so much tinned meat was eaten, showed how necessary it was.

MR. QUINLAN: The duty had been taken off fresh, frozen, and chilled meat, which were much more desirable than tinned stuff.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Fresh, frozen, and chilled meat could not be taken by prospectors to the back-blocks.

MR. QUINLAN: But corned beef could be taken there.

MR. KINGSMILL: Old corned beef was worse than tinned meat.

MR. QUINLAN: After some years experience in a commercial house, he knew that people who bought tinned meat did not get the quantities they paid for, but were imposed upon in regard to what are called 1lb. and 2lb. tins, and it would be better for the revenue if the duty were retained.

MR. DARLOT: A great deal had been said about preserved tinned meat being required for prospectors; but he, as one who had lived for many years on the very fringe of settlement, and who was conversant with the southern half of the goldfields, could say that prospectors

did not eat tinned meat when they could get ordinary salt meat.

MR. MORAN: Did the hon. member ever see salt beef in Kalgoorlie, in the old days?

MR. DARLOT: The committee were catering for the population of the present day, and not for people who were dead through eating tinned meat. This cry of "tinned meat for prospectors" was all a bogey, because, generally speaking, they used fresh or salt meat. The district where prospecting was being done was north of a line passing east and west through Menzies, and north of that line was pastoral country, more or less occupied with stock.

MR. MORAN: Who ate the 3,000,000lbs. of "tinned dog" last year?

MR. DARLOT: People who could not cook decently, and who rushed to tinned meat to save themselves trouble. The member for the Swan had not sold a pound of fresh meat or a tin of preserved meat to a prospector or to anyone else.

MR. CONNOR: If this amendment were carried, there was an item "goats and monkeys," which would have to be struck out.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: As a grower of stock, he did not rejoice over the removal of the duty; at the same time he might say that since the duty had been imposed on stock, he did not suppose he had received a penny benefit.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member could not believe that.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: If the duty were taken off fresh meat, the public living in the towns and villages near the coast would reap the greatest advantage; therefore if we took the duty off preserved meat the people in the far districts would also benefit.

MR. HOLMES: The object of the Bill was to reduce the price of meat. If it had been found necessary to remove the duty on live stock, which was only a farthing a pound, surely it was necessary to remove the duty on tinned meat, which was a half-penny a pound.

THE PREMIER: We must consider the revenue.

MR. CONNOR: Viewing the amendment from the point of view of revenue he could not support it. No doubt there were other items of duty which the members of the Opposition would try to reduce. The member for the Swan had

said that he wanted duty taken off everything.

MR. EWING: That was not what he (Mr. Ewing) said.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. member said that he would follow any one who moved the abolition of duties. When in a few days the hon. member would ask the House to remove the railway workshops from Fremantle to Midland Junction, then it would be a matter of consideration as to where the money was to come from.

MR. EWING: It would not come out of revenue, but out of loan.

MR. CONNOR: If the members looked at the matter seriously they would see they were going too far. If the Opposition persisted in the course which they were now pursuing it would imperil the Bill altogether.

THE PREMIER: Why was there such eagerness just now to remove this duty? It might have been fairly expected that the House would not touch the tariff at all, and no one would have had any cause to complain if the Government had not proposed to do so. Members were aware of the circumstances under which the Bill was brought forward, and the title of the Bill itself only mentioned live stock and frozen meat. Members of the Opposition should be satisfied to get something now, and consider other matters at another time after a general election. Of course the Committee were able to do as they liked, but he advised them not to go further than what the Bill proposed. All were agreed as to the removal of the duties on fresh and frozen meat; but instead of taking what everyone was agreed upon, and over which there were no heart-burnings, the Opposition wished to go further. It was not such a pressing matter at the present time to remove this duty on preserved meat. There was only a duty of a half-penny a pound on preserved meat, and this duty could not press very heavily on any particular section of the community. How much duty would the genuine prospectors have to pay? He could not carry much tinned meat about with him, for prospectors had not a great number of pack horses.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: At the Phillips River goldfield there were 200 men at the present time.

THE PREMIER: If it came to the prospector, one did not see why he should not pay something. The prospector had his tea and sugar free, and now the Committee were going to give him fresh meat. The desire seemed to be that the prospector should pay nothing. That would be very well if practicable, but the business of the country must be carried on. The Government provided the prospector with many requisites.

MR. GREGORY: For which the prospector paid his share.

THE PREMIER: Regarding "the genuine prospector" there was too much playing to the gallery. [**MR. ILLINGWORTH**: Oh!] The genuine prospector did not complain of the halfpenny a lb. duty on tinned meat; but members of Parliament complained for him. Make those tariff reductions on which all were agreed, and leave other items at present unaltered. Though the duty on meat was only £14,000 last year, it had been something like £32,000 the year before, and the year before that £50,000. In the event of an increase of population or shortage of supply from Kimberley, the customs revenue might rise to the old level. It was questionable whether the House could deal in this manner with the Bill without altering the title.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The title could be altered.

THE PREMIER: If the Bill were so altered that it would cause a great loss of revenue, it could be withdrawn by the Government. The demands on the Treasury were certainly not less this year than they had been in the past, amounting as they did to £600,000 more than he was able to comply with, and he would have to apply the pruning-knife. In this growing colony, every industry required State encouragement; and this was no time to injure the revenue by materially altering the tariff.

MR. PIESSE: When the Government introduced a Bill amending the tariff, private members always showed a tendency to go further than was proposed. All were agreed on the reduction of the price of meat, which would interfere sufficiently with the customs revenue. Better be satisfied with the reduction already made. He had been tempted to move the repeal of the clause in the principal Act of 1893, which included horses

in the stock tax; but being reluctant to injure the revenue, he and others had refrained from so doing.

MR. GREGORY: An amendment by an Opposition member was always imputed to some ulterior motive. Who had "played to the gallery" as the Premier did during the last three months? The member for West Kimberley (**Mr. A. Forrest**) need not be afraid of his constituents in his pocket borough.

MR. A. FORREST: They were worth more than all those of the hon. member put together.

MR. GREGORY: For the last four sessions of Parliament, there had been a desire to remove the duties on tinned foods. It was idle to suppose that the repeal of those duties would burst up the meat ring.

MR. DOHERTY: Why did not the hon. member and his friends make a ring of their own?

MR. GREGORY: The hon. member interjecting was interested in a firm which was a member of the meat ring.

THE CHAEMAN: The hon. member must not impute motives.

MR. GREGORY: Motives had been imputed to him several times to-night.

THE PREMIER: Politically; not in connection with one's private business.

MR. GREGORY: It was desired to do something to oppose this ring of butchers. If people could get down meat cheaply it would compel these butchers to reduce the price of meat, because persons would not buy fresh meat if they could get tinned meat so much cheaper. He recognised that the passing of the amendment would mean a loss of revenue, but he thought the Premier should not desire to raise money from the stomachs of the people. He could put on some probate duties.

THE PREMIER: We had probate duties now.

MR. GREGORY: In that way the loss might be recouped to the Treasury. He hoped the House would agree to the reduction. As one who took a great interest in the question of federation, he wished to say he would not want to try and get the whole of the food duties removed. There was a tacit agreement, if not an actual statement, that the Government should take advantage of the sliding scale, and he (**Mr. Gregory**) was

going to support that sliding scale as far as possible, but he always made this exception in regard to the meat supplies of the colony.

MR. A. FORREST moved that progress be reported.

Motion (progress) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	17
Noes	10

Majority for ... 7

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Connor	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Darlôt	Mr. J. F. T. Hassell
Mr. Doherty	Mr. Holmes
Sir John Forrest	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. A. Forrest	Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Higham	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Hubble	Mr. Moran
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Solomon
Mr. Locke	Mr. Wallace
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Gregory (Teller).
Mr. Monger	
Mr. Morgans	
Mr. Pennefather	
Mr. Piesse	
Mr. Quinlan	
Mr. Throssell	
Mr. Rason (Teller).	

Motion thus passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

RETURN—SURVEYS IN NORTHAMPTON DISTRICT.

MR. MITCHELL moved:

That there be laid on the table of the House a return showing: 1, The amount paid to Mr. Surveyor Dreyer for marking and surveying blocks of land and roads in the Northampton district during the last 12 months. 2, The amount remaining unpaid (if any) for work done during the same period. 3, The amount of revenue derived from land sold or leased actually marked or surveyed by Mr. Dreyer in this district (Northampton).

He wished it to be distinctly understood that in bringing this motion forward he did not reflect upon the department. He and many others in his district wanted to know about Mr. Dreyer, who had been to Northampton in a treble capacity—surveyor, mischief-maker, and electioneering canvasser. As a mischief-maker Mr. Dreyer had done more to stir up strife than any man who had ever come to Northampton, or he believed ever would come in the future. He understood that Mr. Dreyer contracted for this work of surveying, and got so much a chain or so much a mile. He also understood that a second party, consisting of a surveyor with a big staff, was sent out to go over this work. If that were so, the authori-

ties should have sent out in the first instance a surveyor who would have done the work in a proper way, so that we should not have incurred the expense of having the work done over again. There was another matter, connected with the classification of land. It was generally thought that the present was an inopportune time for that purpose, because there had been a phenomenal rainfall, and no matter how honest a man might be, he would be very likely to classify the land above its value. In what he (Mr. Mitchell) now said, he was not only expressing his own opinion, but the opinion of those in his district.

Question put and passed.

RETURN—GOLDFIELDS FIREWOOD SUPPLY COMPANY, SALE OF RAILS, ETC.

On motion by MR. HOLMES, ordered that there be laid on the table a return showing: 1, The quantity of rails, fastenings, and sleepers sold to the Goldfields Firewood Supply Company. 2, The date on which each of the sales was effected, the value and quantity of each parcel sold, and the date on which payment for said parcel or parcels was made. 3, The price paid per thousand gallons of water at the siding on the main Eastern Line. 4, The total quantity of water bought from the company. 5, The charge made for the hire of tanks used by the company to carry water over these lines. 6, The amount owing by the company to the Government on 31st July, 1900, for freight charges and material sold, each amount separately. 7, The extent of the credit bond provided by that company.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11 o'clock until the next day.