:he words empowering the Governor to ıppoint a board, because, in many ınstances, the Governor would have to ap›oint a board, or there would be no one ›o control the reserves. The clause would ›e better as it stood. In some instances, ıo doubt, these boards did not work well, ınd in such cases it would be well, per›aps, to hand over the control of the re›erves to the road board or municipality.

MR. QUINLAN: Having taken the re›ponsibility of moving the amendment, ıe had good cause for doing so; but his ›urpose had now been served in showing hat it was not proper to have a board ›mposed as the existing commonage ›oards were, in districts where there was ın elective body, such as a road board ›r a municipal council. The member for North Coolgardie would find a road board ›on enough if he had to pay his wheel ax. With permission, he would withlraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 44 and 45—agreed to.

Clause 46—Reserves to be marked on he maps of the colony:

MR. GEORGE: It might be well to nake a regulation that a board should end in a report on the work done each ear.

THE PREMIER: These boards worked ınder by-laws.

MR. GEORGE: There might be by›aws, but the board might not let the ſinister know how the by-laws were ›orking.

THE CHAIRMAN: There was nothing n reference to by-laws in this clause.

Clause put and passed.

On the motion of the PREMIER, pro›ress was reported, and leave given to it again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.25 p.m. ıntil the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 4th August, 1898.

Papers presented—Message: Appropriations, (1) Fire Brigades Bill, (2) Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill—Question: Day Dawn Post Office—Question: Stock Unused, Stores Department—Question: Post Office Employees, Status and Overtime—Inebriates Bill, third reading—Fire Brigades Bill, in Committee pro forma—Land Bill, in Committee, further considered, clauses 47 to 82—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Metropolitan Water Works Board, Report for 1897-8; Mines Department, Report for 1897.

Ordered to lie on the table.

MESSAGE: APPROPRIATIONS (2).

A Message from the Governor was received, recommending appropriations to be made out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund, for the purposes of (1) the Fire Brigades Bill, and (2) the Agricultural Bank Act 1894 Amendment Bill.

QUESTION: DAY DAWN POST OFFICE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked the Director of Public Works:—(1) Whether it was the intention of the department to erect further post office accommodation at Day Dawn. (2) If so, when the work would be commenced.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—(1) It is intended to enlarge the existing post office at Day Dawn. (2) The work will be commenced when Parliament approves of the expenditure.

QUESTION: STOCK UNUSED, STORES DEPARTMENT.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Premier:—Whether it was his intention to institute a system of returning to the Colonial Storekeeper unused stores, plant, and tools, or those for which the departments drawing the same had no further use.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J.

Forrest) replied that the question was under consideration, as was also the placing of the Stores Department under an official board of control.

QUESTION: POST OFFICE EMPLOYEES, STATUS AND OVERTIME.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Premier:—(1) Whether he was aware that a great deal of dissatisfaction obtained throughout the Government service owing to the alleged practice of retaining on the temporary staff a large number of officers holding very responsible positions, and fairly entitled to be placed on the staff. (2) Whether he was aware that, owing to this practice, a large number were compelled to work excessive overtime with out remuneration. If so, whether he was prepared to issue instructions with regard to the matter.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that he was not aware of the matter, nor had it been brought under his notice.

INEBRIATES BILL.

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

FIRE BRIGADES BILL.

IN COMMITTEE—PRO FORMA.

Amendments recommended by the Select Committee were agreed to, *pro formâ*, for the purpose of the Bill being reprinted with the amendments embodied therein.

Bill reported with amendments, and report adopted.

Ordered that the Bill be reprinted.

LAND BILL.

Consideration in Committee resumed.

Clauses 47 to 49, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 50—payment of purchase money:

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that in line 1, after the word "all" the word "such" be inserted.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 51—agreed to.

Clause 52—License to occupy:

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that after the word "town," in line 1, the words "or suburban" be inserted.

Put and passed.

THE PREMIER further moved that, in lines 1 and 2 the words "of the two equal" be struck out, and the word "prescribed" be inserted in lieu thereof; also that the words "and on the payment by the purchaser of suburban lands of the first of the four quarterly instalments" be struck out, and the words "of the purchase money" be inserted in lieu thereof.

Amendments put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 53 and 54—agreed to.

Clause 55—Conditional purchase with residence:

MR. QUINLAN moved, as an amendment, that in sub-clause 1, third line, the words "one-twentieth" be struck out, and "one-fortieth" inserted in lieu thereof. This amendment was a new departure, but he hoped the departure would not be considered too material to warrant the support of members. The custom for many years had been to grant land on 20 years' purchase at 6d. per acre, provided certain improvements were carried out. It might be argued that the price in itself was low enough; but most of the good land had been taken up, and the term of 20 years, which might have served well in the past, was not so liberal in the present circumstances. The amendment would serve people who were not well off, and the granting of the terms was a great consideration with settlers who were not flush of money. He was moving in this matter at the instigation of persons who approached him prior to the last election; and the question being brought prominently before him then, he felt there was justice in the claim that steps should be taken to encourage as far as possible settlement on the land. Whatever kind of buildings settlers might erect, or whatever improvements they might make, the fact of their being established on the land was a guarantee that they were likely to be permanent residents; consequently, they would, as consumers, become contributors to the revenue of the country. If the Committee did not entirely support the amendment, he would accept any suggestion for improvement. He had not consulted any member of the House as to what form the amendment

should take. Although 10s. an acre might appear a very small sum when the payment was spread over the present term, nevertheless he moved the amendment with the view that anything which could be done to encourage settlement was a step in the right direction. The price of the land was not lessened by the amendment, which merely gave a time concession to would-be settlers. He knew of a property of 2,500 acres, within 25 miles of a railway, which could be purchased from a private owner, not resident in the colony, at 7s. 6d. per acre.

MR. A. FORREST: That must be very poor land.

MR. QUINLAN: It was not poor land, but fairly good land.

MR. LEAKE: Was it proposed to extend the payment for 40 years?

MR. QUINLAN: No; the amendment merely proposed that the payment should be extended from 20 to 25 years, being five years more than the present term, and all the other conditions of purchase must be carried out as at present. The Government, for the purpose of encouraging settlement, had bought estates at various prices within reasonable distance of towns and railways, and the fact that the Government had acted on that principle ought to find some support for this amendment. The Government had gone to expense and had run some risk in purchasing these estates to sell again in small holdings at 20 years' purchase; and this showed a desire to encourage settlement.

THE PREMIER: The amendment proposed was really unnecessary. Having had great experience in this matter he had never heard settlers complain that the amount of the purchase by rental was excessive. The terms were 6d. per acre for 20 years, while the amendment proposed to make the term 25 years. If the land was worth anything at all, it certainly ought to be worth the rent now charged. The Government went so far, under the Homesteads Act, as to give 160 acres for nothing, and also offered to the settler that, if he wanted more land adjoining his homestead, he could have it at 6d per acre for 20 years, if such land was available. That was without a charge for interest; and surely that went as far as any Government might be expected to go, unless all the land was to be given away. If the amendment were carried, the free selector of 160 acres, who afterwards wanted to take up 100 more acres—which was about the smallest area that would be applied for—would, if he did so, save or defer a payment of £1 5s a year for the first ten years. It had to be considered that the settler paid nothing for the survey, which, in the case of 100 acres, would cost £4 or £5 This amendment would not be very acceptable to the public, because settlers could clear off their liability in a shorter period than 20 years if they liked, that being a terribly long time to wait, and the ordinary selector liked to get his piece of paper to keep in his box.

MR. MITCHELL: In the bank, perhaps.

THE PREMIER: People always looked forward anxiously to the time when the property would become their own. There was no demand for this alteration in the law. Some of the constituents of the member for Toodyay were asking for more liberality, but Western Australia was the most liberal country in the world in regard to land. No English-speaking country was more liberal, and though Canada and the United States equalled us in that respect, they did not surpass us in liberality. If the amendment were carried, all the other conditional purchase clauses in the Bill would have to be altered. Really, the game was not worth the candle, and he advised the hon. member not to press the amendment.

MR. A. FORREST also asked the hon. member to withdraw the amendment, because 20 years' conditional purchase at 6d. an acre per annum was little enough The member for Albany (Mr. Leake), who aspired to the Treasury benches, might work out a little sum and say what the actual cash value of the land at the present time would be at 6d. per acre.

MR. LEAKE: No. First place him in the position mentioned before setting him to work the sum.

MR. A. FORREST: If the present period of 20 years were maintained, and if some slight reduction of rent for the first few years were asked for, that would carry out the hon. member's desire.

THE PREMIER: Look at what the State had to pay for survey to start with!

MR. A. FORREST: But people were put to great expense in the initiation of a farm.

MR. HASSELL: The amendment would not help such persons much.

MR. A. FORREST: The Premier had said the Government paid the survey fee; but the Government might well go a little further, and pay for the surveys of other lands as well as farm lands. The miner had to pay for the survey of his area, and in the timber regulations the occupier had to pay for the survey. Everybody had to pay for the survey, except the selector of a farm. All should be treated alike as to the cost of surveys.

THE PREMIER: The Government could not afford that.

MR. A. FORREST: The expenses of survey were heavy. If the member for Toodyay would ask that, for the first five years, the person taking up land should pay half the amount mentioned in the Bill, and that, during the next 15 years, he should pay something more to make up the difference, the amendment might find favour. A man would not wait 25 years for his title, if he could pay sooner. If men were successful on the land, they would want their title, probably to go to a financial institution, so that they might obtain money to assist in improving their land.

MR. LEAKE: While not proposing to do the little sum which the member for West Kimberley had asked him to do, he would suggest that the member for Toodyay should withdraw the amendment, because the terms were not heavy, and the amendment would introduce an unevenness in the rental, which might cause a little confusion as to other parts of the Bill.

MR. QUINLAN: This opposition to his amendment was such as he had not expected. He had no personal motive in moving it, but was strongly of opinion that anything which would tend to encourage settlement must be a benefit to the country; and, small as was the encouragement which the amendment might appear to give, yet members were making a mistake in not liberalising the provisions of the Bill in this direction. The Premier had reminded them that the Government were now giving 160 acres for nothing. He (Mr. Quinlan) did not ask for land for nothing, but that the Government should be more liberal in their terms, as land agents had to be for inducing people to buy. As the amendment would only meet with rejection, he asked leave to withdraw it.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that in sub-clause 7, after the word, "acres," in line 2, the words, "under this section," be inserted.

Put and passed, and the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 56—agreed to.

Clause 57—Conditional purchase by direct payments:

THE PREMIER: This clause was in the present regulations, but had been amended, by the time for payment of the purchase money being extended from one month to twelve. This was what was known as the direct-payment clause in the present land regulations. He moved, as amendments, that in sub-clause 7, after the word "land," in the third line, the words "under this section" be inserted; also, that in the ninth line the word "clause" be struck out, and "section" inserted in lieu thereof; also, that in line 10, after "granted," the words "to the same selector" be inserted; also, that in line 12, the word "a" be struck out, and "such" inserted in lieu thereof.

Amendments put and passed, and the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 58—agreed to.

Clause 59—Certain lands may be declared open:

MR. GREGORY: By this clause the Governor would have power to declare any Crown lands within the South-West Division, and also any Crown lands within the Eastern or Eucla divisions, if situate within 40 miles of a railway, or south of the 31d. 30m. parallel of south latitude, as open for selection under the conditions of clauses 55, 56, and 57 of the Bill. That would allow the Government to dispose of large areas of land within the goldfields as farms. It was undesirable to give away the freehold of any land on the goldfields at the present time; and he hoped the Premier would withdraw this clause, and also clause 91, which dealt with land on the goldfields for agricultural purposes. The general feeling on

the fields was altogether opposed to such a course at the present time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH supported the remarks of the member for North Coolgardie. A rich alluvial patch, or even good reefing country, might be taken up under this clause. It would be noted that clause 68 provided that the pastoral lessee had the first claim to an agricultural area; and the pastoralist, who was in possession of the first information, might easily put up a friend to apply for a large tract of auriferous country, of which he could thus become the purchaser; and then the miner could get access to it only under the private-property sections of the Mining Act. It was most undesirable that the Government should part with the fee simple of land at all, within the area of any goldfield. On reference to the map, it would be seen that the so-called "Eastern or Eucla Division" really comprised the whole of the auriferous country right away northward past the Ashburton.

THE PREMIER: That was not the Eucla, but the Eastern division.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The term was, "Eastern or Eucla Division," and it extended, in the map appended to the Bill, from the Kimberley division in the North to Dundas in the South. It included the Mount Margaret goldfield, and a good portion of the Yilgarn goldfield. It also included the Lawlers goldfield, and the new fields to the north of it. So that on any of these fields the pastoralist who happened to discover new auriferous country could put up a friend to apply for it, and would then have a pre-emptive right to purchase it, and thus to become the owner of a large goldfield in fee simple. In order to prevent that being done, the words "and also any Crown lands within the Eastern or Eucla Division" should be struck out. It was important that the whole of this vast stretch of country should be kept clear from such a danger.

MR. GREGORY said he had not referred to the Eucla division.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The terms were synonymous in the Bill, for the clause read, "Eastern or Eucla Division." The Eastern division was the Eucla division.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member (Mr. Gregory), had reason on his side; but he and the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) must be careful not to act rashly in this matter. It would be disastrous to say that no selection must be allowed in the Eastern division, because the Eastern division abutted on the Avon Valley, and at that part of its boundary, and also out towards Geraldton, there were many agricultural settlers, and in places, too, where there was no gold at all, or where none had yet been found.

MR. LEAKE: There was a limit. It was only within 40 miles of a railway that such land could be taken up under the clause.

MR. A. FORREST: Yes; but surely it was not desired to stop settlement where there was no gold. The boundaries should be altered so as not to affect settlement. Unless this were done, the striking out of the words "Eastern or Eucla Division" would be very dangerous.

MR. KINGSMILL: The difficulty could be surmounted by adding a proviso, that selection in the Eastern or Eucla Divisions should not carry with it any mineral rights.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was the law already in respect of all freeholds.

MR. KINGSMILL: Still, if the freehold did not carry with it a right to minerals, the prospector was put to a lot of trouble to get the minerals to which he was entitled under the mining on private property clauses of the Act. If the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) would move the addition of such a proviso to the clause, he would support it.

MR. A. FORREST: Progress should now be reported.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. A. FORREST: It would be dangerous to proceed further in the direction indicated by the member for North Coolgardie, until a plan could be placed before hon. members showing exactly how the proposed amendment would interfere with settlement.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It would be well to refer the whole clause to the Select Committee, which was now sitting for the purpose of dealing with kindred subjects. The problem was by no means simple.

THE PREMIER (in charge of the Bill): There was nothing startling about this clause, for it was identical with the law as it stood. He thoroughly understood the objections of the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) and he advised that the clause be passed as it stood, and he would deal with it at the report stage, for he saw exactly what was required. It was desired to prevent the application of the provisions of the clause to auriferous country; and, at the same time, the Committee did not wish to interfere with the utilisation of non-mineral lands for agricultural purposes. Not many places outside the South-West Division were suitable for agriculture. Its area was pretty extensive, from the north bend of the Murchison down through Mount Stirling to the mouth of the Fitzgerald River. There were, however, a few places outside the division, though not within the area of any goldfield, where there was some settlement, such as Doodlakine and the Wongan Hills.

MR. KINGSMILL: They might some day be within a goldfield area.

THE PREMIER: It might as well be said that land should not be let in the South-West Division because gold had been found there. Gold had been found in the Wongan Hills, and in other places, so that this difficulty had to be faced even in the South-West Division. A proviso that the clause should not apply to any declared goldfield would meet the case fairly well, although not meeting it exactly, as the boundaries of goldfields were often fixed in a haphazard fashion. Such a proviso, however, would completely safeguard the existing goldfields from the intrusion of speculators under this clause. The clause might also be amended with advantage by providing that no land should be alienated outside the South-West Division, except in an agricultural area, meaning an area set apart for the purpose. These amendments would give publicity to start with, and would not permit of free selection if the goldfields were excluded, and if the clause were made to apply only to lands properly set apart and gazetted as agricultural areas and surveyed. To carry out the operation under such a provision would take a considerable time, thus securing full publicity; and then the goldfields members should feel that they had sufficient protection against the land speculator.

MR. VOSPER said he noticed that protection was given to the lands lying to the east and north of the Yilgarn goldfield.

THE PREMIER: Agricultural settlement was possible up to the western boundary of that goldfield, although he believed that no land was taken up for agricultural purposes at the present time on any goldfield. The settlements at Doodlakine were not so far east as the western boundary of the Yilgarn goldfield. If the Committee would pass the clause, he promised hon. members to give notice of an amendment which could be dealt with at the report stage; and thus there would be no necessity for any delay.

MR. LEAKE: It was urgently necessary that goldfield areas should be excluded from the operation of the clause, for these were dealt with in clause 91, which made provision for agricultural holdings on goldfields; and it was better not to let the two clauses clash in any way. It would be well if the Premier, when any clause in the Bill which was a new one was to be dealt with, would announce the fact.

THE PREMIER: The clause should be looked into carefully. The best way of dealing with it was as he had suggested, by amending it so as to exclude the existing goldfields, and to limit its operation to the South West division, and to lands in any other division, not being within goldfield areas, which might be declared to be agricultural areas.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And the eastern boundary might be extended further out.

THE PREMIER: That would be inadvisable, because pastoral lessees would object, and there would be trouble.

MR. A. FORREST: There were no lessees out there.

THE PREMIER said he thought there were some.

MR. MORGANS: There was no good reason why agricultural leases should not be granted on goldfields, provided the miner had preferential rights, and was allowed to take up anything he liked in an agricultural area.

THE PREMIER: Agricultural lands on goldfields were dealt with later in the Bill.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 60—Lands for vineyards, orchards and gardens; conditions precedent to issue of Crown grant; additional applications:

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that in line 3 of sub-clause (7), after the word "land" the words "under this section" be inserted. By this clause the present Act had been a little extended, the maximum area being increased from 20 acres to 50, and the time for payment of the purchase money extended from one month to twelve months. These were the principal alterations.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agred to.

Clause 61—Pastoral lessees in South-West Division may obtain land by conditional purchase, subject to special conditions:

SIR JAS. G. LEE STEERE moved, as an amendment, that the word "block," in line 5, be struck out and the words 'or more blocks not exceeding three separate selections" be inserted in lieu thereof. By the land regulations of 1887, it was provided that a pastoral lessee in the South West Division should be able to take up a certain percentage of land in his lease, but that it should be taken up in one block, and be contiguous to his homestead. Afterwards, the Homesteads Act extended the time under which that could be done; but in consequence of many persons having already taken up the one block allowed by the old regulations, they could not take advantage of this later provision in the Homesteads Act extending the time. The provision as to taking up only one block on conditional purchase was not consistent with other portions of the land regulations; for in an agricultural area a selector might take up as many blocks as he liked, so long as he did not exceed 1,000 acres; also in the Kimberley and North-West Districts, a pastoral lessee was permitted to take up a certain portion of his lease in three selections. There fore, he (Sir James) now wanted to obtain the same advantage for pastoral lessees in the South-West Division, namely, that instead of being allowed to take up the maximum area in only one block, they might take it up in three selections. That would be only reasonable, and there should be no distinction made between lessees in one part or in another.

THE PREMIER: There was a difference in area.

SIR JAS. G. LEE STEERE: Yes; 15 per cent was allowed to be taken up in the North-West, and 20 per cent in the South-West. Therefore to enable the amount to be taken up in the South-West in one or more blocks, not exceeding three, as in the other divisions of the colony, he moved this amendment.

THE PREMIER: Hon. members would notice that the maximum allowed to a lessee in the South-West Division was 3,000 acres. The Bill proposed that a lessee should be able to take 20 per cent of the aggregate quantity he held on lease from the Crown in one block, whereas it was originally only 5 per cent. That was not very important, because the maximum quantity was to be 3,000, the same as it had been for the last 20 years. There was some reason why this operation should be restricted to one block in the South-West Division and not restricted to one block in the North-West and Northern Divisions, namely, that in the North-West the lands were held purely for pastoral purposes, and there was little inducement indeed for the lessee to buy any. In fact, the lessees there had not bought any, or scarcely a piece had been bought in the whole of the North-West Division. The squatter depended on the security of his lease, and his tenure was protected there to a larger degree than was the same tenure in the South-West Division; and although he had the privilege of taking three blocks, and in a much larger area, having the land at 10s. an acre, yet the lessee did not take up land on conditional purchase, whereas in the South-West Division, on which the colony depended for agricultural settlement, the provision had been taken advantage of by many lessees. The reason why the provision was inserted in the Homesteads Act of 1897, enabling the lessee to take up a 3,000 acre block, was that many of the settlers had only small areas of freehold land around their homesteads, and as in many cases they had improved the land all round their homesteads by fencing in, it was thought they should have the opportunity of acquiring a 3,000 acre block adjoining the

homestead, on easy terms of payment, spreading over a number of years, and not to have to fence in the land if it was within a properly fenced enclosure. The fencing was not insisted upon in such case, as it would not be of any use to the squatter or pastoral lessee to have a fence within a fence, and that would only be putting him to an unnecessary expense. Another advantage was that the lessee was not compelled to reside upon the conditional-purchase block. He had to pay a minimum price of sixpence an acre, and make the minimum improvements in the same way as if he did reside upon it.

MR. MITCHELL: He had to pay double.

THE PREMIER: No; if the conditional selector of agricultural land did not reside on his block, he had to put double the improvements on it; but the pastoral lessee had not to put double the improvements on his conditional purchase block. The feeling at that time, though it was not so strong now, was that the system of making large estates should not be encouraged; and it was thought that if the area was limited to 3,000 acres, no one would say it was a very large estate. His hon. friend (Sir Jas. G. Lee Steere) thought the lessees ought to be allowed to have three blocks; that was three times 1,000 acres.

SIR JAMES G. LEE STEERE: No; the amendment was that they ought to be allowed to take not exceeding 3,000 acres, and in not more than three blocks. They might be blocks of only 300 acres, but not more than three blocks.

THE PREMIER: That would be of very little value to the lessee. It would allow him to pick out three of the best blocks on his run, and perhaps not utilise them for agriculture, but keep them for pastoral purposes. That might be an objection in the minds of some people. While not opposing the amendment strongly, he preferred the present system, and would rather have one good block of 3000 acres and a homestead, than have three blocks without a homestead. The present system had stood the test for 20 years, and he thought it had worked well. He certainly would not divide the House upon the amendment.

MR. A. FORREST: There was great objection to anyone with a pastoral lease being allowed to select from three different parts of his run. The majority of pastoral lessees had from 20,000 to 30,000 acres each, or less; and they were allowed to take up to the extent of 3000 acres on conditional purchase under this Bill. Any one conversant with the lands of the colony knew it was impossible to get 3000 acres of good land all in one block; and if a lessee were allowed to select three blocks for conditional purchase, and had such special knowledge as a surveyor might have, he could select the blocks in such a way as to make the leased area entirely useless to anyone else. The South-West Division was intended for the settlement of the people on the soil, because, in the other divisions of the colony where nothing could be grown, the land was entirely devoted to the feeding of stock. From the Murchison to the Kimberley he did not think there was 1000 acres applied for under any of the Acts, for the simple reason that the land was useless for agricultural settlement. The Committee might rest assured that if the land had been of any advantage, the squatters would have taken as much as they could get. From the point of view that there ought to be settlement of people on the soil, the leaseholder should not be allowed to select three separate blocks in any portion of the South-West Division. He had not to make improvements, nor had he to fence in his paddock or live on the land, as agricultural settlers had to do. The clause should be adhered to as closely as possible. Any one having the choice of three blocks would take over the best portions; and the object should be as far as possible to prevent any one man being allowed to spoil an area. The only effect of the proposal could be to stop other people settling on the soil.

SIR J. G. LEE-STEERE: It was a pity hon. members did not read the provisions of the Bill before criticising the proposed amendment. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) had just mentioned that the whole of the run might be spoiled for selection in consequence of a person having liberty to take three portions in different parts. But if the hon. member had looked at the clause, he would see that the land

must be taken up adjoining the homestead. The Premier had said the only advantage the amendment gave to the lessee was that he would not have to fulfil the conditions of residence. But the lessee would have to do that under any conditions, so that he would have no benefit in that direction. The only benefit the lessee got was that if this land was within boundaries, or enclosed, he need not put up a fresh fence. All the other improvements he would have to carry out in exactly the same manner as any other conditional purchaser. This provision of the old Act and Regulations had been very little availed of, and had not been of very much use to lessees in the South-West Division. He had not asked for returns, but in his district this provision was scarcely ever availed of. The hardship was, that a man who had already taken up a block of, it might be, 200 acres, and wanted to take up 200 acres adjoining, could not do so, because he had a block already, although entitled to take up an area not exceeding 3000 acres.

THE PREMIER: Why could he not take up land under other clauses?

SIR J. G. LEE-STEERE: Because his leased area was already fenced, and he did not want to go to the expense of another fence within that. If a man were allowed to extend his present block up to the maximum area he (Sir James) would not object at all. The land selected must be adjoining the homestead.

THE PREMIER: Contiguous.

SIR JAS. G. LEE-STEERE: There was no difference between "adjoining" and "contiguous."

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): There was no danger in the proposed amendment. The land must be contiguous to or adjoining the homestead, and he took the two words to mean the same thing, namely, adjoining and touching the homestead. It might be an advantage, where a homestead was situated on very indifferent land, for a leaseholder to be allowed to take up a 1000-acre block on the north side of his homestead and another block on the south side. By taking land all round the homestead he would have to take in a lot of indifferent country. While dealing with this Bill the Committee might extend the privileges of those who had already availed themselves of the provisions of the Act, up to, say 100 or 200 acres. That would not block the agriculturist in any way, while the pastoral leaseholder could take possession of, perhaps, better land than he might otherwise be able to.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member for Nelson was of opinion that members should read this Bill before they got up and said anything about it. But he (Mr. Forrest) thought he knew a good deal about the question. The hon. member for The Nelson said the land must be "adjoining or contiguous" to the homestead. He (Mr. Forrest) had not, perhaps, quite grasped the meaning of the words, and thought they might mean land half a mile away. He would, however, take the hon. member for Nelson on his own ground. The lessee was entitled to take 3,000 acres adjoining his homestead. By the amendment he could take 1,000 acres right away in the east or west of the holding, and then take other smaller quantities of land to the north or the south. To do so would simply spoil the area, and when it was desired to settle the land for agriculture, these blocks would always be found in the way. He was sorry he was not able to agree with the member for Nelson, but where there was good land the people ought to be allowed facilities for cultivating it profitably.

MR. CONOLLY: The amendment of the hon. member for Nelson should be supported, although the objections raised by the member for West Kimberley were apparent. In Queensland and New South Wales the law in this respect had been much abused by the pastoralist, and the conditions used for the purpose of acquiring large areas of country which would have been of much advantage to small settlers. That could in a great measure be prevented by striking out the words "or contiguous," and thereby allowing the pastoral lessee to take up under conditional purchase an increased area immediately adjoining his homestead. If the hon. member for Nelson would accept that suggestion he (Mr. Conolly) would have far greater pleasure in supporting the amendment.

MR. HASSELL: The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) had drawn a most exaggerated picture of what might

happen under the amendment. The hon. member did not approve of a lessee having 1,000 acres at every corner of his lease, or taking advantage of the Land Regulations. The pastoral lessees had been the pioneers of the country and had done a good deal to settle the land, and they were as much entitled to any little help that could be given them as were the agriculturists.

THE PREMIER: If the Committee struck out the words "or contiguous to," there would not be much objection to the amendment. The blocks would have to be adjoining the homestead. The proposition which had been laid before the Committee by the hon. member for Nelson (Sir J. G. Lee Steere) was not of great importance. His (the Premier's) opinion was that a pastoral lessee could take one block on the north, another on the east, and another on the south side of the homestead under the present law. Many pastoral lessees held 200 or 300 acres of freehold land, and there might be a way of getting the blocks that the lessee required without the provision which had been submitted. Therefore, he did not see much objection to the amendment. If a pastoral lessee had a large paddock surrounding his homestead and he wanted two or three blocks adjoining, he (the Premier) did not see much objection to letting him have them.

MR. A. FORREST: One block could be tacked on to another.

THE PREMIER: There might be more advantage in that way, than by taking three separate blocks. He proposed to ask the Committee to add a proviso at the end of the clause, that if any pastoral lessee had taken advantage of a similar clause to this in the Land Regulations of 1887, such pastoral lessee should not be allowed to take advantage of this clause and thus obtain another 3,000 acres.

MR. MITCHELL: Somebody else might get it for him.

THE PREMIER: That was not possible. The pastoral lessee had to apply for the land. The Committee should bear in mind that, although the Land Regulations in this respect had been in force for 20 years, they had not been largely availed of.

MR. GREGORY: Land was being taken up now.

THE PREMIER: A great many lessees in the South-West division held 2,000, 3,000 or 5,000 acres, and this proposal would allow them to take a small additional block.

MR. A. FORREST asked whether those who had taken advantage of the five per cent. regulation would be able to take up more land under the clause.

THE PREMIER: If a lessee had already taken up one block he thought that lessee would be able to get more land, but would not be able to get more than 3,000 acres altogether.

Amendment (Sir Jas. G. Lee Steere's) put and passed.

THE PREMIER moved, as a further amendment, that the words "or contiguous to" in line 6 be struck out.

Put and passed.

SIR JAS. G. LEE STEERE moved, as a further amendment, that in line 13 the word "five" be struck out and "two" inserted in lieu thereof. This would make 200 acres as the minimum to be taken up. His reason for moving this amendment had been stated by the Premier, that many pastoral lessees in the South-Western Division had small leases, and to compel them to take up blocks of not less than 500 acres would render it impossible for them to take advantage of the clause at all. His amendment would enable small lessees and holders to take advantage of the clause.

Put and passed.

THE PREMIER moved, as a further amendment, that the following proviso be added to the clause:—"Provided always that this section shall not permit any pastoral lessee who, prior to the coming into operation of this Act, has taken advantage of a similar provision in the Land Regulations of 1887, to obtain under this and such Regulations a greater area than 3,000 acres."

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

At 6.30 p.m. the CHAIRMAN left the chair.

At 7.30 the CHAIRMAN resumed the chair.

Clause 62—Pastoral lessees in other than the S.W. Division may obtain land

by conditional purchase, subject to special conditions:

THE PREMIER said he would like to hear the opinions of hon. members in regard to this clause. He proposed to amend it, so that if a lessee had lands within a goldfield area he should not be able to take advantage of this conditional purchase. The clause simply meant that a pastoral lessee who had on his land 40 head of sheep or 5 head of large stock for each 1,000 acres might purchase any land within his lease not exceeding in the aggregate 15 per cent. of the total area held by him. But this percentage was altogether too large. Under the old regulations, not 1 per cent. was allowed to be so acquired. In all the districts mentioned in the clause, the Kimberley, the North-West, the West, the East, and Eucla divisions, the areas were large; and it would be much better to revert to the provisions of the old regulations, under which ten head of sheep and 1 head of large stock were the minimum stocking allowed on leased areas. If selection was to be permitted at all, 1 per cent. instead of 15 per cent. would be quite sufficient. There was a limit in section 53 of the present regulations. He intended to propose that the maximum should be 5,000, and the percentage 1 per cent. instead of 15; and he would like the opinion of hon. members as to the quantity of stock which should be carried on a lease to each 1,000 acres, in order to entitle the pastoral lessee to the privilege granted by the clause. It should be recollected that in these districts there was no free selection; and the desire of the Legislature in 1887 was, as it appeared to be now, to give security of tenure whereever possible, and at anyrate where no one wanted the land—or where there was no desire for agricultural settlement. Lands in the North-West and Kimberley divisions were not suited for agriculture under existing conditons; therefore there was no desire to hamper the pastoralists there in any way, though the Government must have the right to reserve areas for towns and villages and for commonages, also to sell blocks as town and suburban lands. The only reason why the lessee was given this privilege of taking up a certain portion of his leasehold area as a freehold by conditional purchase was to encourage him to improve the piece of land immediately surrounding his homestead. The privilege, however, was not valued highly by lessees; for they knew well, if they bought such portion of their lease as the law allowed them to buy, it would be of little use to them if they were afterwards deprived by legislation of the leasehold country surrounding that freehold; so that few people had availed themselves of the opportunity of purchasing land in these districts. He had always advised his friends, when consulted on the point, not to buy land in this way, because it would be of no use to them if they were afterwards deprived of the lease; and, as a consequence, very little land had been so taken up. Still, there were people who liked to have a piece of land round their homesteads which no one could take from them; and therefore the clause might be left in the Bill. It had certainly done no harm, and had perhaps done a little good, though very little during the few years it had been in operation. He was inclined to think that the number of sheep and large stock required to be carried on each thousand acres provided in this clause was too large. Several hon. members were perhaps more conversant with the subject than he, and they might oblige the Committee with their views on the subject. He also intended to move, as an amendment, that the words "or within a goldfield" be inserted after the word "area" in line 6. A lessee would then be unable to select any land within a proclaimed goldfield or on a goldfield.

MR. CONOLLY: The proposal of the Premier as to the amount of stock to be carried per thousand acres was a wise one, so far as the Eucla Division was concerned. He would also suggest that the area to be taken up should not be less than 500 acres and not more than 5,000. This was specially desirable, because in that district the greater part of the country was not of a high grade; and, in order to be worked remuneratively for pastoral purposes, it would have to be taken up in large areas, and probably in larger areas than would be required in the remaining portion of the South-West Division. Such was the case with regard to the greater part of the Eucla country, and he would like to see the area which

intending pastoralists could take up increased somewhat.

MR. A. FORREST: The framer of this clause could have had no idea of what he was putting in the Bill when he drafted the stocking portion of it; because he ought to have been aware that the Eucla Division could not possibly carry the proportion of stock per acre that the lessee was to be compelled by the clause to place on his land. Even in the Kimberley districts, although he would be sorry to say they could not carry this amount of stock, it would be a great hardship if a man should have to stock up his run every year so as to comply with this clause, there being good seasons and bad seasons. In good seasons, no doubt the stocking proviso could be easily complied with in Kimberley; but the seasons were not always good, and it would be an utter impossibility for a man during a bad season to carry 40 head of sheep or 5 head of large stock on each thousand acres leased, which this clause would compel him to maintain. He suggested that what was in the present Act should be retained, and this would meet the case of lessees in the Northern Division of the colony. It was not the wish of the people in those districts to acquire the freehold. It took them all their time to carry on without paying a large amount for freehold. He would like to ask hon. members who had been in the northern districts whether the amount of freehold land a lessee could acquire would be of any use to him, except that this Bill would allow to some people 15 per cent. of a million acres of land, and many of those lessees did hold that quantity. It would allow them about 150,000 acres of freehold land. He did not think the colony was prepared to go that far in alienating pastoral land; at any rate he was not, although a large leaseholder. One per cent was quite sufficient, because those districts did not require the freeholds. They only required the pasture. It would be a great mistake for the Legislature to allow any of the northern lands to be acquired at the rate of 15 per cent. freehold. The clause "provided that the minimum area in each block shall be one thousand acres, and in no case shall more than three separate selections be allowed to be taken by one lessee." It did not say how much a man might take.

THE PREMIER: That was going to be put in.

MR. A. FORREST: The Premier would, he hoped, alter the stock clauses, and not put in an amount which meant the full carrying capacity of the land. A lessee might have to take a thousand acres of land which might not carry one head.

THE PREMIER moved, as amendments, that, in line 3, the word "forty" be struck out, and "ten" inserted in lieu thereof; also that in line 4 the word "five" be struck out, and "one" inserted in lieu thereof; further that after the word "area," in line 6, the words "or within a goldfield" be inserted; further that in line 7 the word "fifteen" be struck out and "one" inserted in lieu thereof.

Amendments put and passed.

THE PREMIER further moved that in line 12 the words "one thousand" be struck out, and "five hundred" inserted in lieu thereof; also, that after "acres" there be inserted "and the maximum 5000 acres." The minimum would then be 500 acres, and the maximum 5,000, this being the same as was the law since 1887 which seemed to work well, and he saw no reason to alter it.

Further amendments put and passed, and the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 63—Restriction on alienation of Crown lands in Kimberley, N.W., W., E., and Eucla Divisions:

THE PREMIER: Whilst asking the House to pass this clause, he wished to state that the last three or four lines required amending in the same way as in clause 59, and he would give notice accordingly.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 64 and 65—agreed to.

Clause 66—Portion of improvements may be dispensed with in certain cases:

THE PREMIER: The effect of this new clause, that if land was taken up under special occupation license or conditional purchase under the Bill, or under any former regulations, the purchase money being payable in, say, 20 years' instalments, or sooner if the lessee liked, and if the sums were duly paid, the land fenced in, and the prescribed improvements to the extent of 4s. an acre, instead of 10s.,

were duly made, and if the Minister was satisfied that the land, after having been taken up with a view of making the full improvements upon it was not worth the improvements, and that no good returns would come from the expenditure upon it, then the Minister might estimate the value of the improvements remaining to be made, and upon the licensee or conditional purchaser entering into a covenant to continue to pay rent under the term of his lease or license, until the rent so covenanted to be paid amounted to the half of such estimated value, the Minister might discharge the lessee or licensee from the obligation to make further improvements, provided further that in cases where the fencing on the outer boundaries was both sheep-proof and cattle-proof, half the value of such fencing should be deemed to be improvements under this section, and valued as such. That was a concession. We all knew it had happened many times in the colony that people took up land *bona fide*, with the intention of complying with the conditions; that they paid rent and fenced the land; but that, after a while, they found the land did not turn out as well as they had expected, it being perhaps more difficult to handle, or was rocky, or there was something else which they had not taken into consideration at the beginning. It had often happened that land was too sandy. In such cases it was found desirable that the department should have some latitude, and it was desired that the Minister should have discretionary power to relieve the tenant or lessee from the obligation of performing the statutory improvements. It was here proposed that, instead of making all the improvements, he should go on paying the rent: that if he had fenced the land in and spent 4s. an acre on it, he should go on paying the rent until half the value of the improvements had been received by the department, and then the Minister could give him the fee simple. It was an important clause, and he thought it a wise one. It was introduced by the late Commissioner (Mr. A. R. Richardson) who took a great interest in the subject. In fact, his (the Premier's) note said this was Mr. Richardson's special clause. Those who knew the working of these improvement clauses were aware that cases existed where men had been compelled to make improvements without benefiting themselves, the land not being good enough, or something having happened. Of course, it might be said they ought not to have taken up such land; and that was an argument worthy of consideration. Men took such land, hoping to comply with the conditions, and after all found it did not add to their material prosperity. This clause was sufficiently surrounded with safeguards, and, of course, it gave discretion to the Minister to estimate the value of the improvements remaining to be made.

MR. HASSELL said he knew of persons who, in improving their land by ploughing it, had totally destroyed its value. In one case at Braemar Bay, some years ago, the carrying-out of improvements under the Act really spoilt the land; and that occurred at two different places three miles apart, the ploughed soil on nearly ten acres of land in each case being blown away, leaving only the rock.

HON. H. W. VENN: It was gratifying, indeed, to hear the explanation given by the Premier. This vexed question had agitated the minds of all having any business with land or the land regulations. The Act left the Commissioner of Crown Lands no alternative but to insist on the strict conditions of the lease, and this had resulted in great hardship to individuals. Absolutely senseless and useless expenditure had been caused by complying with the strict letter of the Act. There was great force in the argument that people, when they took up this land, did so with their eyes open, and with full knowledge of the conditions attached; but there remained the fact that large tracts of country had been taken up, and were, perhaps, now being taken up, under the S.O.L. system. Numbers of people had paid rental for so many years that, if they were asked to sell the land to-morrow, it would not realise anything like the amount which had been paid for it in rent. That state of affairs should exist no longer. Every Commissioner of Crown Lands might not have the discriminating power, backbone, or common sense of the hon. gentleman now in office; but, under any circumstances, it was well to have a provision giving Ministerial discretion, under

the advice of the officers of the department. It was very rarely a corrupt man became a Minister of the Crown, and, in any case, so much publicity was given to a Minister's actions as to render it almost impossible for him to resort to practices unfair or improper. If responsibility were placed on Ministers, as was done by the present proposal, they would very seldom be found doing what was not right. The clause would be accepted with great satisfaction as in the interests of the whole colony.

MR. LOCKE said he had much pleasure in supporting the clause. He came from a part of the country where there was supposed to be good land and a splendid rainfall, but with these natural advantages, there were places where land was spoiled by cultivating it in accordance with the strict letter of the Act. In several cases in his own district land had been absolutely ruined by being ploughed up in compliance with the conditions of the Act.

MR. A. FORREST: The clause would be a great help to those taking up land under the old S.O.L. system, some of whom to his knowledge, had been paying one shilling per acre for over 20 years. Land under that system had been taken up on river frontages towards Geraldton, and also in the south. In some cases the land ran back for half a mile into what was neither more nor less than sand. This land, after selection, had been fenced in, but the holders were no nearer getting their title than they were when they started. There were many places throughout the southern portion of the colony were some such clauses as that before the Committee should be brought into effect as a means of relief to holders. Men felt that under the present law they, and their sons after them, would be compelled to continue to pay this shilling per acre, seeing that it was an utter impossibility to make the statutory improvements. It was understood that when the 10s. was paid they would get their title under certain conditions, but the holders could do no more than they had done to fulfil those conditions. It was no use wasting money ploughing some of this land, because it was simply pure sand. This clause would be received with satisfaction throughout the farming districts of the country.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 67—Governor may declare certain lands in the South-West, West, East, and Eucla Divisions open for selection as grazing leases:

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that in line 4, after the word "railway," the words "not being within an agricultural area, or within a goldfield" be inserted. This clause was taken from the Homestead Act of 1893, and was placed in this consolidating measure so as to have the whole of the land regulations in one Bill. The clause was of a freehold character, inasmuch as, in time, a person who took up this grazing land and complied with all the conditions, would get a freehold. It was necessary, therefore, to be as careful in considering this class of holding as any other class; and it would not do to give discretion under which those purchasers, for they were nothing more than purchasers of inferior land, could take up holdings within any goldfield or agricultural area.

Amendment put and passed.

THE PREMIER: As had been stated, this clause was taken from the Homesteads Act of 1893; and by paying rental for a certain time the lessee eventually got his freehold; but an alteration had been made in the Act of 1893; there were two periods of 15 years, and a higher rental was charged for the second period than for the first. That was all very well in the abstract, but it did not seem to work well in practice. There were two terms to a lease, and in a colony like this it usually happened that before the second term came round there would be an amendment of the law, so that practically the second term was never reached. This division of the period into two terms had not been found by the department to work well, so that in this Bill, instead of dividing the lease into two terms, and doubling or increasing the rental in the second term, the rental had been fixed at one rate all through. Throughout the Bill terms with different conditions had been avoided. Past experience proved that the second term hardly ever came off. After people had held land for a long time under a certain rental they objected to have that rental increased or doubled, and there was agitation for fresh legis-

lation. The result was that the people who held the land succeeded in getting their rents reduced. The department thought it would be better to have one rental all through. This would not in any way interfere with the result in the end. The same price was charged. The maximum and minimum areas were the same for the second class land as in the Bill of 1893, and a man might hold some land in both classes. Having one rental throughout would be better after all than having two terms with different rentals, and the rentals which had been fixed in the Bill were not so very high. Although he was generally in accord with the grazing leases of 1893, yet looking at the matter all round there was an improvement in the general plan upon that adopted previously.

Clause as previously amended put and passed.

Clause 68—agreed to.

Clause 69—Definition of poison land:

THE PREMIER: The clause dealing with poison land was a most important one, and he would like very much to have the opinion of hon. members who had had experience in regard to the question, because there was a good deal of difference of opinion as to whether poison leases were really necessary or not. No one had a greater hatred to the poison land than himself. He knew the great injury that was done to the flock-owners in the south-east portion of the colony by the York Road poison and the box poison, and the hart leek poison in the south-west was most destructive to stock. The York Road poison, and the box poison on the road to Albany had kept the stock-owners, not exactly in poverty, but their prosperity had been very much retarded. This part of the Land Regulations had always been difficult to administer. There were very few persons who wished to take up poison land of poor quality. The desire was to apply for land that was pretty good—if not first-class land, second-class land which was very good but infested with this poison to a certain extent. There were very few instances in which settlers in the colony had taken land that was very bad, and that being the case this class of land was not likely to be availed of by squatters or sheep farmers, as one might have expected or desired. This class of land had been taken up by speculators in England, who had sold it for very much more than it was worth—at any rate, much more than was first paid—and those who took the land from the English speculators, thought they were buying something of a freehold character, but they found afterwards that they had only a pastoral tenure, and that they had to clear the poison, fence the land, and carry out certain improvements before they could claim the fee simple. Although a good deal of work had been done by persons taking up this land, altogether the Regulations had not been a success. These Regulations gave a good deal of trouble to the department, because all sorts of attempts were made to get land with a little bit of poison on it as poison land, and which would cost very little to eradicate the poison from. People would not touch the land which it was intended by the Legislature should be taken up under the Regulations as poison land, because it was too expensive to eradicate the poison. If people got very bad poison country it would take a large amount to eradicate the poison, and the ordinary settler therefore would not touch this class of land. The very worst poison grew on the very poorest land, and the land was not worth the cost of eradicating the poison. The worst poison grew on ironstone hills, and places where the land would not be worth very much after the poison had been cleared off. The lands that were desired, and that were applied for, were the g od flats of the rivers, with York Road poison here and there, and any one who saw this land would say that it was infested with poison. But that was not the class of land intended to be granted by the Act as poison land. The *modus operandi* used to be, that certain settlers were appointed to inspect the country. These men had had a long apprenticeship to disaster from the poison, and it did not take much poison on the land for them to state in their report that the land was poison land, and that sheep could not be grazed there. The result was that some lands had been obtained as poison land that it was not contemplated should be granted by the Act as poison land. At the same time he did not grudge these people getting

the land on easy terms if they eradicated the poison, because the poison had been a great curse to the South Eastern Division of the country. The only question to his mind was whether the poison Regulations were required now at all, and whether the homestead grazing farms which allowed the land to be taken up very easily, were not all that was necessary. Third-class land was valued at 3s. 9d. per acre, payable half-yearly at the rate of one-thirtieth of the total purchase money per annum. That was 1½d. per acre per year for 30 years, and he would like to know whether that Clause would not cover all the lands likely to be taken up under the Poison Regulations? He was one of those who thoroughly believed that real poison country—thickly infested with poison—if it were given away, would be dear, because it was not much good after the poison was cleared off. That was not the case with the generality of land which was desired to be taken up under the Poison Regulations. People wanted something better than poison land. They wanted land that was pretty good, and had a little poison on it. He would like the opinion of hon. members on this matter. The present law had been a long time in existence, and altogether he did not say it had worked very badly; but at the same time he did not say that it had worked very well. That part of the Bill in reference to grazing farms really covered the ground, and there would be much more chance of men getting what they required, because land infested with poison would be considered, no doubt, as third-class land, seeing the difficulty there would be of bringing the land under subjection and making it useful. Therefore there would be more chance of getting what was wanted in the future than existed now. He threw out these points for the information of hon. members, and he would like to hear their opinions upon them. In reference to the Land Regulations, there was no question of opposition to them. All that was wanted was to get the best people we could to settle in the colony. He was much obliged to his friend opposite for the interest he had taken in the Bill, because this was a very important matter, and one upon which we could all afford to speak plainly, and give the best advice we had in regard to it.

MR. HASSELL: There were a number of poison leases in the district he represented, and no doubt some of the best land there was so infested with poison plant that unless the lessee could get the land at a low cost it was not worth while to take it up. He (Mr. Hassell) had some poison land in his own estate, and it had been thrown up by the former owner as useless. There was plenty of poison land in his district that was really worthless. He objected altogether to poison leases being granted.

THE PREMIER: Would not this poison land be taken up under the homestead lease regulations at 3s 9d per acre for 30 years?

MR. HASSELL said he did not think so. The Government should appoint some responsible man to advise them as to whether the land was poison land or not. There was plenty of land in his district which was supposed to be poison land, but it was not known positively whether it was so. If the Commissioner of Crown Lands could be advised as to whether land was poison land or not it would be a benefit to the country. At the present time a large quantity of this land was lying useless in his district. It was unreasonable to suppose that anyone would take up poison land under the homestead clauses.

MR. LOCKE: The Sussex district was troubled with only one kind of poison plant, and it had never been known to grow further than half-a-chain away from a valley. He agreed with the observations of the member for Plantagenet (Mr. Hassell) and those of the Premier. The poison regulation, so far as his district was concerned, had been a failure, and he would be pleased to see it done away with altogether. He would not pretend to speak with regard to the eastern districts, but in his district large areas had been taken up at one time and another under the poison regulations, on which there was very little poison indeed.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): The clause provided that poison land should be charged for at the rate of 1s 3d per acre. Under the old Act the charge was £1 per thousand acres. Therefore,

at the rate provided in this Bill, £62 10s instead of £1 would have to be paid for every thousand acres; consequently the State would derive a benefit of £61 10s in the value of the land alone; and, seeing that the conditions here were similar to those of the old Act, if a man carried out these conditions he certainly deserved the land, as all would agree who knew what amount of trouble had to be taken to eradicate the poison plant. In the country spoken of by the member for Plantagenet (Mr. Hassell), such as the district about Kojunup and bordering on the Great Southern railway, the poison plant was more in evidence than in any other portion of the colony, though there was good land there for grazing purposes along the valleys and river banks. It was in the hills that the poison plant was found to be abundant, and its eradication was one of the great difficulties confronting land settlement in that part of the colony. The old conditions of inspection by local farmers, and also by travelling inspectors of poison plants, did not have the effect desired by the Legislature, and much good land which was practically free from poison had passed out of the hands of the State under the leasing system. A vast improvement should be effected by the system of inspection now proposed, under which inspectors appointed by the Minister would decide which portions of the country were to be considered as poison lands within the meaning of the Act. Settlement on such lands ought to be encouraged under proper conditions. Rather than strike out any portion of the clause, it would be well to postpone its discussion, so that hon. members might have time for further consideration. Any man who succeeded in clearing such land, which was no use whatever until the poison plant had been eradicated, was certainly a benefactor to the country. He had known country where the poison had been eradicated only by an expenditure of 2s to 3s per acre: therefore most liberal conditions should be offered to those who would clear such land. In the preceding clause very liberal conditions were accorded to lessees, which would no doubt be largely availed of; but we might go still further with regard to these poison lands, with a view of making them useful by having them fenced in, for that would mean that the surrounding country would be protected from the heavy losses sustained by the wandering of stock on to poisoned areas. There would thus be a great saving to the community generally by the fencing provision alone. The committee should pause before taking the poison clauses out of the Bill.

MR. A. FORREST: Immense good had been done by granting poison leases, and a large revenue had been received from lands which had never yielded one penny before. Land taken up under poison leases would never be selected for pastoral purposes, and he was at a loss to understand why there should be any opposition to the clauses, for it was impossible to mention any instance in which the provision had done harm. If a man took up a selection consisting entirely of poison land, it would cost him 6s or 7s per acre to eradicate the poison, and perhaps more than that; whereas he could get land free from poison at 6d per acre; therefore, when a man applied for poison land, it could be easily understood that he did not intend to take poison land alone, otherwise he would be putting himself to an unbearable expense. There were many patches of country of perhaps 700 or 800 acres of good land surrounded by poison country. If people could be got to settle on such land and improve it by fencing, and to eradicate the poison in the adjoining blocks, the Committee would be doing good work. No abuses had been detected in respect of these regulations. He disagreed with the Premier in regard to third class land. The pastoralist could not afford to pay more than £1 per 1,000 acres for such country. Even that figure was too much. To clear ordinary land of poison would cost from 2s to 3s per acre, and then the lessee had to fence it before he could make any use of it, for the poison would still be thick in the adjoining country, and the applicant would, of course, take good care to select as little of the poison land as he could help. He hoped the clauses would be retained in the Bill.

HON. H. W. VENN: It would be well to follow the course proposed by the Premier. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) maintained that no harm had been done by these regulations; but

he (Hon. H. W. Venn) believed that great harm had resulted from them, this opinion being based on personal knowledge and observation. Some years ago when in London, he had been consulted about the commercial value of some poison lands in this colony, which had been sold to people in that city. His opinion, as then expressed, sent purchasers' hopes down to zero. Those lands had been taken up by speculators in this colony, and sold in England, the purchasers being told that they could be cleared for 6d. per acre. He told them that their informants must certainly be labouring under a grave misapprehension. These people had been egregiously taken in. The original desire of the Legislature was most laudable. Inducements were offered to people of means to take up land which would otherwise be useless for pastoral purposes, to fence it in, and on certain conditions to acquire the freehold. Many thousands of acres in the Champion Bay district had been taken up under this regulation, which at the present time constituted first-class station property. But that land did not carry out the idea of poison land. There had been a contravention of the intention of Parliament in that respect when the poison regulations were framed. He had in his mind different classes of land with regard to poison. There was a large area of land between the Williams and the Collie Rivers which he did not think anyone would take up. Where the poison grew, the land was absolutely worthless. There was other land near it of really fine quality, but infested with poison. He was disposed to think it would be as well to place poison leases under a special clause, classing the land as fourth-class, and lowering the price considerably. It should be open to everybody at a lower price. It could not be cleared at less than three or four shillings an acre. He knew there were thousands of acres which could not be cleared for anything like that cost. Pay a man by day labour, and one would soon find out how much it would cost to clear land of poison; but not only was the first clearing necessary, but a second or third, before the poison could be eradicated. There had been some poison on his own property, and he cleared it, but not under the poison regulations. He agreed with the Commissioner of Railways that the regulations made in the Bill were rather better. At the same time it would be still better to place such land in a fourth class.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell): The term "fourth class land" would hardly meet the case. It might be fourth-class or scrub land. The clause said "Land shall be considered as 'poison land' when in the opinion of the Minister it is so infested with poisonous indigenous plants that sheep or cattle cannot be depastured on it." If such words as the following were added, we would be sufficiently safeguarded: "And that, apart from the poison, could not be classed as first, second, of third-class land." He hoped the Premier would take action in this direction.

MR. A. FORREST: A man could take 5,000 acres of poison land on lease, and could easily fence off the portion that had poison on it, having the greater part practically freehold without any conditions whatever. That was his objection to classing it as fourth-class land, because that system would lock up the country, and there would be no conditions attached to such land except fencing off. It was a common practice at the present time for holders to fence off the worst portions of the land, so that they might be able to use the other portion, and during the twenty-one years of the lease gradually clear the part very thick with poison, otherwise they would not be able to use that land for a long period.

HON. H. W. VENN: The hon. member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) was quite right in regard to the point he had raised. There were people who, having taken up land, would fence off the worst part of it and use the other. The difficulty might be obviated in some way. The Department would be careful that, under an inspector, a lessee could not take any large area that had no poison on it; because, as a matter of fact, if anyone took up poison land and there was an area free from poison, he would fence off the good and leave the poison to take its course for a number of years. The abuse would not be so bad in the future as in the past.

THE PREMIER: No doubt it would be said that the rent was somewhat higher in the third class, being 3s. 9d. as against 1s. 3d.; and that would make a great difference. A difference of 2s. 6d. an acre on 1,000 acres would be £125; and perhaps that was too much. But a decision should be come to now as to whether first-class land infested with a bit of poison was to be leased as poison lands, or whether it was to be second-class, third-class, or whatever it was to be. His own opinion was that good land with a little poison on it should not be leased as poison land.

HON. H. W. VENN: There was not much of that now.

MR. HASSELL: A quantity of good land was infested with poison.

THE PREMIER: It was not infested in such a way that it would cost much to clear.

MR. HASSELL: It would take a lot to clear.

THE PREMIER: Really good land?

MR. HASSELL: Yes:

THE PREMIER: With the evidence before us, we had beter deal with the matter as it was in the Bill. His friend, the Commissioner, thought we might have a clause to the effect that poison land should be considered land which was so infested with poisonous indigenous plants that sheep or cattle could not be depastured on it, and to add these words, "land that, apart from the poison, could not be classed as first, second, or third-class land." That definition would make it very inferior stuff. Hon. members would notice that the price in the Bill was more than double what it was at the present time; and, that being the case, perhaps we had better let the clause stand as in the Bill.

MR. HASSELL: The rent would, if he had his way, be reduced instead of increased.

MR. MONGER: As one who a few years ago had some little experience of poison leases, he was rather surprised to find that the Commissioner of Crown Lands, in his desire to promote settlement should have thought fit to introduce the idea of raising the price of poison lands. Any hon. member who had ever had any experience of poison lands would know that the more money he put into them the less he took out; and, with one or two exceptions in Western Australia, no one had ever secured a block of poison land that was practically worth expending money upon. If any person would go and take up poison land, eradicate the poison, fence the land in, and even try to carry stock upon it, he should be allowed the use of that land and have the fee simple for practically nothing. How many grants in fee simple had been alienated from the Crown under the old supposed liberal laws? He might venture to say that there were not more than half a dozen. Under the circumstances, why should we try to impose greater hardships upon people who were desirous of taking up, developing, and working these practically barren areas? It was surprising that the Premier, with his progressive ideas, should appear desirous of increasing rather than reducing rents for poison areas. It was well known, especially to the Premier, that out of millions of acres applied for by the West Australian Land Company, between Beverley and Albany and in the vicinity of Toodyay, not one solitary acre had at present been alienated from the Crown.

MR. A. FORREST: Yes, 10,000 acres.

MR. MONGER: Out of millions of acres applied for by a company which had paid big dividends, only 10,000 acres had, according to the member for West Kimberley, been alienated. That clearly showed the difficulty the people had, under the present supposed liberal land laws, in getting the fee simple of these poison lands. There were millions of acres of poison land in Western Australia which would be dear if, the moment they were fenced in, the fee simple were given; and the colony would derive considerable benefit, if such was the condition of purchase. It was surprising that, in his desire to liberalise the land laws of the colony, the Commissioner of Lands had thought fit, in very nearly every particular, to increase the rents instead of reducing them.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): The chief object was to protect the country from abuses likely to arise under the Bill. Some poison lands would be dear at a gift, and £1 per thousand acres, the present price, was sufficient. If all the conditions were complied with, all that should be necessary

had been done to give a right to the title of the land. Those who fenced in the land and eradicated the poison plant did a service to the country. The granting of millions of acres in different parts of the country to various land companies for speculative purposes had no doubt led to abuses. These companies had imposed on the unwary by disposing of areas to people who knew nothing of the quality of the land. As pointed out by the member for York (Mr. Monger) the cost of eradication was very great. The course should be followed of making the conditions as easy as possible in regard to prices, in order to induce people to take up this land. But the conditions in regard to improvements should be made stringent, and should be carried out under proper inspection. The course lately followed by the Commissioner of Lands in appointing his own inspectors, instead of leaving the inspection as in the past, to the people of the district, was a right course to follow. Under thorough inspection, the abuses of the past would not be experienced again, and some of the land which to-day was useless would be brought into profitable occupation.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell) said he did not want to be misunderstood in regard to these poison leases. The Committee had already provided that the price of second-class land should be 6s 3d, third-class land 3s 9d, and first-class land 10s per acre; and this poison land ought to go at 1s 9d or 1s 3d per acre. Only on the previous day, a gentleman, who had bought poison land from someone who had taken an area up from the State at 20s. per thousand acres, called at the Lands Office. The Department had no control over the original holder of the land for 20 years. The gentleman who called at the Lands Office had paid 2s 6d per acre, and was honestly engaged in improving the land. He came to the Lands Office and offered to sell the Government a 29,000-acre block of poison land for the sum of £12,000. In other words this land was offered at its cost price, the money spent in improvements, with compound interest for the nine years, totalling £12,000. Questioned as to whether the land was good for agriculture, vineyards or orchards, the reply was in the affirmative. That was the sort of thing the Minister of Lands had to protect the State against. If the words he had suggested were not put in the clause, there would be danger. It was clearly set out that where land was infested with poisonous plants, which rendered it unfit for sheep and cattle to graze on, it must be regarded as "poison land." There might be a Commissioner of Lands who would grant poison lands wholesale, and another Commissioner who would be averse to granting them; and unless the words he had suggested were inserted in the clause, any one who showed that sheep and cattle could not graze on the land, could get that land at, perhaps, 1s 3d an acre, although the Government inspector reported that, apart from the poison, it could be classed as first, second, or third class land.

HON. H. W. VENN: If the land were valued apart from the poison, the chances were that it would never be taken up. The rent now charged in cases where the poison was completely over the land, although the land might be good underneath, was the full value at the present time; and if 10s were to be asked, with the poison there, the land would remain State land for ever. It was easily understood that the Commissioner of Crown Lands did not wish to give away good land at third class value; but good land, thoroughly infested with poison, was well paid for at the lowest rate the Government were charging.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 70—Governor may declare poison lands open for selection, and after inspection, Minister may issue lease:

MR. A. FORREST suggested that the clause should be amended by providing that the charge be £1 per thousand acres per annum, payable half yearly, and that the lease be twenty-one years, the same as at present.

THE PREMIER: A vote could be taken on it.

MR. MONGER: Poison land was practically valueless, and every penny put into improvements on such land only meant so much to the good for the State.

THE PREMIER: There was not the slightest chance of good land, if infested with poison—he did not mean land full of poison, but land which had poison scat-

tered through it—being granted under the land regulations. There were so many people after land which was any good for agriculture, that when the department could get rid of this land under conditional purchases conditions, either as homestead farms or homestead leases, the department would not let the land under the Poison Regulations. It seemed to him that those persons who wanted poison leases would not get them, because they would want something better than the department would grant under the clause. The clause under consideration was not a bad one. One shiling and threepence per acre, payable half-yearly at the rate of one-thirtieth of the total purchase money per annum was not very heavy. If people wanted land at less than this, then the Government might as well give the land away. It was almost a gift as it was. He asked the hon. member for West Kimberley what was the capital value of land at 1s 3d per acre for 30 years. It must be remembered that the Government was put to a good deal of expense in arranging for inspection and other things, and a man had 30 years to pay the money in and ten years to pay for the survey.

MR. HASSELL said that at Cookernup there was land so bad that no one would take it.

THE PREMIER: Not since the railway had been built?

MR. HASSELL: It was sold at the time the railway was constructed, and a man could get any quantity of this land for whatever he liked to offer.

THE PREMIER: And would he get 30 years in which to pay the money?

MR. HASSELL said he believed a man could get 50 years—any time he liked so long as he took the land.

THE PREMIER said that was not his experience when he wanted to buy a piece of land for the Government.

MR. HASSELL: That was a very different thing.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) said that he had seen a good deal of poison land, and he felt quite convinced that no man would desire to take up the poison land which he had seen under the conditions provided in the clause before the Committee. The regulations at present in existence as to poison land were quite stringent enough with the right to the freehold after the poison had been cleared off and the land fenced in. If the Government desired to introduce settlement on the poison lands and induce people to eradicate the poison they must make the regulations as liberal as possible. He felt convinced that no one would take up poison land under the provisions laid down in the clause before them, because the conditions were not sufficiently liberal. The poison land in this country was really no good. Much of this poison land would have been taken up, if the present leaseholders had been allowed to avail themselves of the regulations, but those persons who were leasing land from the Crown had been prohibited for a considerable time from taking the poison land within their leases..

THE PREMIER: The lessees had twelve months.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: They only had twelve months under the poison regulations, in which to take poison land within their leases, and many did not do so; but had the regulations been allowed to remain in force up to the present time a great deal more land would have been taken up by the present leaseholders. The only person whom it would pay to take up poison land was the leaseholder of the land adjoining, and who lived in close proximity to the land, and desired to work it. He felt certain that if the Government wanted the poison eradicated they would have to make the conditions more liberal than those laid down in the Bill.

MR. MONGER moved, as an amendment, that the words "one shilling and threepence" be struck out, with a view to the insertion of "sevenpence halfpenny."

THE PREMIER: The Government could not accept that. We would accept 1s.

The amendment, to strike out the word "one shilling and threepence," was put and passed.

THE PREMIER said he could not agree to 7½d. being inserted. It was too small an amount. If poison land was any good at all it ought to be worth more than 7½d., with 30 years to pay it in. It was not a good advertisement to speak of the good lands of the colony in this way.

MR. MONGER said he was speaking of bad lands.

THE PREMIER said he would be willing to have 1s. inserted.

MR. MONGER said he was willing to accept one shilling, and with leave he would withdraw the amendment to insert "sevenpence halfpenny."

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that the words "one shilling" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed, and clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 71—Pastoral lessee to have prior right to poison lands:

THE PREMIER: This clause was a very important one, but he did not know that it was a good one. It seemed to give the pastoralists too much advantage. He would rather give the pastoralists the right to avail themselves of the land than give them the option of taking it. No one would apply for the land if the matter had to be referred to the lessee first. The old plan had worked very badly. Twelve months were allowed to a pastoral lessee to take up the land, and if he did not take it up after that anybody could take it. There was a good deal of dissatisfaction about that system; but perhaps the clause as it stood was all right.

MR. HASSELL: This clause was only fair to the pastoral lessee, who should have the right to come in.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 72—Governor may order that certain lands shall be available for homestead farms:

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that after "railway," in line 7, the words "or south of the 31d. 30m. parallel of south latitude" be struck out, and the words "not being within a goldfield" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 73 to 81, inclusive—Agreed to.

Clause 82—Applicant for homestead farm may apply for additional land under land laws in force for the time being:

THE PREMIER: This clause contained an important provision, of questionable value. The homestead farmer was to be allowed to reside upon a village allotment within ten miles of the land applied for. In the Homesteads Act of 1893, the limit was five miles; and the great merit of the homestead system was residence. The object of the Government in giving land to the people was, not merely that they should improve it, for they could do that under other clauses, but that they might found homes upon it. He did not like the new provision, nor that in clause 75, which said the Governor might grant exemption from residence in special cases. That would have to be further discussed at the report stage. The great principle of the Homesteads Act was that the selectors must live on the land. Certainly there might be cases in which the land taken up was on a line of railway, and the farmer could readily travel to and from his land. In such cases, the provision would not be so objectionable.

MR. A. FORREST: A man might have his business in a village and his farm outside.

THE PREMIER: This provision was not meant for business people, but for farmers. Provision was made elsewhere in the Homesteads Act for a number of people living in a village to cultivate the surrounding country; but the proposal in this clause was a decided innovation. His friend, the Commissioner of Lands, was not so strongly attached to the condition of residence as he was; but the main feature of the Homesteads Act was residence upon the land, and the same principle was carried out in other countries; therefore, he was altogether opposed to this alteration. It would be unfortunate if the idea got about that the object of the Bill was to allow people to get land cheaply in country districts, and to live in towns and become storekeepers. If a man wanted to live in a town and do business there, and also to have a little farm in the country, he must get the farm under some other Act, and not under the Homesteads Act, which was introduced with the special object of founding homes in the country, and to give land for the purpose of so doing.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell): The observations of the Premier were hardly in accordance with his own views. The Act already provided for village allotments, which were to be granted to every

selector, who could select a village block within five miles of his homestead farm. So far, only one such block had been granted. To enable a man to follow his trade in a town, and also to give him a village block, but insist that he should live on his farm, would prevent him from following that trade. It was better to let him follow his occupation in the town, and not to give him a village block. By clause 75, the Governor might grant exemption from residence on condition of the selector effecting improvements to the satisfaction of the Minister to double the value of the improvements thereinafter required. That was exactly identical with the old provision of double improvements in lieu of residence. He remembered a case in point of three brothers, who were carpenters, residing in a village settlement, who applied for a homestead farm; and, if he remembered rightly, he discussed this very matter with the Premier on that application. Those men were earning good wages, and they did not ask for a village block, but asked for exemption from living on their land. Wherein lay the difference? The Premier would like to see the smoke coming out of a man's own chimney on his selection; but this was not essential, because what was wanted was the development of the country, and not compulory residence. Hon. members could see that if a man living five miles from his village were given a village block, he would not feel inclined to incur a walk of ten miles per day by taking up his residence in the village. He (the Commissioner) trusted the Premier would allow the proviso to pass. He could assure him it would not be abused, and that it would be of great benefit to some very worthy men.

MR. LEAKE: If he could only understand this clause, he might be able to heal the breach between the two Ministers; but, like many other clauses in the Bill, it would require an algebraical exercise to unravel its meaning. If a man had a homestead block on certain conditions, one of which was that he should reside upon it, what necessity was there to give him, for nothing, another block ten miles away, with no residential condition attached? Much as he respected the opinions and the energy of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, he could not follow him here, particulally as it was a fundamental principle of the Homesteads Act that no land should be acquired without residence. Let the land be given away; but one condition should be that the party taking it must reside upon it and improve it.

HON. H. W. VENN: As the last speaker had said, this was a strange departure from a fundamental principle which had long since been threshed out in this House, and had ever afterwards been recognised as a vital principle. If the principle was to be abandoned, the term "homestead farm" should be altered, for it would be a misnomer. What necessity was there for giving such a selector a village block? Under the regulations, he could take up land on exceptionally favorable terms, which had been referred to in other parts of Australia as being good and easy; but it was provided that he must reside on his land. To say that he need not reside there, but that he could live on some little village block at a distance, was a departure in the wrong direction. The Commissioner of Crown Lands had referred to some carpenters, whom it would have been a pity to have deprived of the privilege of taking up land; but he (Hon. H. W. Venn), from experience of agricultural pursuits extending over 20 years, was forced to the conclusion that it was better for the carpenter to stick to his bench, and the shoemaker to his last. A man would have enough to do if he took up land and lived on it: and it was useless to try to combine two occupations in such a manner as had been suggested. There was no occasion for it. He thought that the conditions offered in relation to homestead blocks some years ago should be availed of by those who desired them, and that the departure suggested in the Bill was not one in the right direction.

THE PREMIER: It would be well to report progress as he would like to look into this matter more closely. The provision in the Homesteads Act was perfectly clear; but in clause 83 of this Bill, dealing with village sites, one of the original provisions which explained the object of village sites did not appear here. Section 15 of the Homesteads Act 1893 said: "If a number of selectors, embrac-

ing at least twenty families, with a view to greater convenience in the establishment of schools and churches, and to the attainment of social conditions of like character, asked to be allowed to settle together in a village declared as aforesaid in connection with the land out of which their homestead farms are selected, the Minister may, in his discretion, vary or dispense with the foregoing requirements as to residence upon, but not to the improvements of each separate homestead farm." It went on to say that a person could select one of these allotments, and he was to get it without payment. That was clear enough. In order to have those advantages, a village was laid out especially for that area; but, if we now extended the principle to people living in towns who were not farmers at all, it certainly would destroy the intention which Parliament had when the Homesteads Act was passed. In order to look further into the matter, he moved that progress be reported.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9.50 p.m. until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 9th August, 1898.

Papers presented—Return: Coolgardie Goldfields Water Scheme, Expenditure—Return: Loan Moneys—Local Courts Evidence Bill, first reading—Criminal Appeal Bill, first reading—Return: Goldfields Population and Expenditure—Message: Assent to Supply Bill—Prevention of Crimes Bill, third reading—Early Closing Bill, in Committee, further considered and reported; Divisions (4)—Jury Bill, first reading—Inebriates Bill, first reading—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Expenditure on vessels owned or chartered by Government at Fremantle. Fremantle Public Hospital, Rules and Regulations. Counsel's Fees under Supreme Court Act, Judges' Order. Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme, Final Report of Commission of Engineers. Mines Department, Report for 1897. Mining Commission, Report and Evidence. High School, Report of Governors for 1897-8. London Agency, Statement of Operations for 1897. Museum and Art Gallery, Report for 1897-8. Metropolitan Water Works Board, Report of Works carried out to date.

RETURN: COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS WATER SCHEME, EXPENDITURE.

On the motion of the HON. R. S. HAYNES, ordered that a return be laid upon the table, showing (1) the amount borrowed by the Government on account of the Coolgardie water supply scheme; (2), the amount already expended; (3), where is the balance, if any, and if it or any portion of it has been expended, the nature and amount of the expenditure.

RETURN: LOAN MONEYS.

HON. R. S. HAYNES moved that a return be laid on the table of the House, shewing—1, the amount of money at present due by the colony on loans raised; 2, the amount raised on Treasury bills; 3, the amount due to the A.M.P. Society and any other financial institution, including banks; 4, the amount borrowed by the Government from the Savings Bank; 5, the amount for which the Government have given guarantees, or are in any way liable to pay; 6, the total amount of loans authorised to be, but not yet raised: 7, the actual amount to the credit of the Government in the various banks in the colony, specifying the respective amounts to credit in each bank; 8, the actual amount to credit of the sinking fund, and where the amount is lying, or if invested, the nature of the investments; 9, the amounts to credit of the Government, with details, available for the construction of public works; 10, the amounts of the actual contracts let by the Government. The information would be of great use to