

Homesteads Act, may be relieved of residing on the land on doing double the improvements. These are all the provisions, and I now move that the Bill be read a second time.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: It is not my intention to oppose the second reading of this Bill, although I intend, when in committee, to move that subsection 2 of clause 2 be struck out. This subsection provides that no selection shall be allowed until the lands have been surveyed into sections, and notified in the *Government Gazette* as open for selection. I consider that this clause is one of the drawbacks to the effective working of the Homesteads Act, inasmuch as people who would go out and select land are unable to do so until it is surveyed. From what I know of surveyors they are not the best judges of what is good agricultural land, and I know in the South-east it is a very great drawback to the settlement of the soil that people cannot select before survey.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House, at 5:20 o'clock p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, 2nd October.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 27th September, 1894.

Petition of Mr. J. G. Drake-Brockman—Roads Act Amendment Bill: first reading—State Aid to Religion and the Ecclesiastical Grant—Rottneest Island as a Summer Resort—Care of Neglected Children by the State—Dentists Bill: second reading—Registration of Births, Deaths, and Marriages Bill: in committee—Friendly Societies Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION OF Mr. J. G. DRAKE-BROCKMAN.

Mr. CLARKSON presented a petition from James G. Drake-Brockman, praying for redress in connection with his removal from the position of stationmaster at Newcastle.

Petition received and read.

Mr. CLARKSON moved that the petition be printed, and that its consideration be made an Order of the Day for Wednesday, 3rd October.

Question put.

The House divided, the numbers being—

Ayes	13
Noes	6

Majority for	...	7
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AYES.
Mr. Harper
Mr. Illingworth
Mr. James
Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Monger
Mr. Moran
Mr. Phillips
Mr. Randell
Mr. Richardson
Mr. Solomon
Mr. Throssell
Mr. Wood
Mr. Clarkson (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. Burt
Sir John Forrest
Mr. Pearce
Mr. Traylen
Mr. Venn
Mr. Simpson (Teller).

Question put and passed.

ROADS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by **Mr. BURT**, and read a first time.

STATE AID TO RELIGION: PROPOSED DISCONTINUANCE OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL GRANT.

Mr. SIMPSON: Mr. Speaker—In rising, sir, to submit for the consideration of this House the motion of which I have given notice, I think I am practically taking the step which has been suggested to us by the Premier for the last two or three years, in order that this question of discontinuing the Ecclesiastical Grant should come up for discussion in the form of a distinct resolution. For many years the question has been debated when the item came up in committee on the annual Estimates, and it has been generally conceded—so far as I have been able to follow these debates—that it is undesirable to perpetuate the system of State aid to religion, but objections have been heard on the ground of whether, in taking any drastic steps in the direction of abolishing the grant, we

might not be doing an injustice to the various denominations who have been participating in the grant for many years. It will be observed that the first part of the motion I have the honour to submit suggests that it is inexpedient to perpetuate the system of "monetary" State aid to Churches. I thought it wise to insert the word "monetary," inasmuch as, if this House affirmed the resolution, it would not prevent the State from making grants of land to religious denominations, in the centres of population, for the erection of churches, chapels, manse, or palaces, or whatever they may like to call them. That has been my reason for inserting this word "monetary." I do not think, sir, it is necessary, in the year of grace One thousand eight hundred and ninety-four, to argue this question of State aid to religion. I am sure I am only uttering a historical commonplace remark when I say, as is known to members of this House, that as soon as the other colonies of Australia received the right of self-government they one and all deliberately abandoned the system of State aid to the Churches. No man, sir, has a higher respect than I have for the good work done by all our Churches. I have the highest regard for the work done by the whole of them, and I do not in this respect differentiate between them. I have no doubt myself that we should look upon our Churches as the moral police of the country, and that their efforts have the effect of reducing the charges in connection with the administration of justice and the maintenance of law and order. But the question has occurred to me, as it has occurred to others, how can we equitably or consistently grant assistance to these various religious denominations out of the public revenue? When we interfere with the religious teachings of the Churches we are deliberately plunged into troubled water, and what the result of that plunge may be no one can safely predict. The second part of my motion suggests that—having equitable regard to existing life interests—it is desirable to discontinue the annual Ecclesiastical Grant. I say "having equitable regard to existing life interests" because it is not my desire that this grant should be withdrawn without a moment's consideration. I desire to put the Church authorities in a

position that they need not abrogate any moral or other obligations they have contracted with present holders of cures. It is interesting, in looking through the debates on this subject, and I think worthy of note, that the prevailing idea in the minds of all members—with the exception perhaps of two, who hold somewhat pronounced opinions on the subject—has been that it is only fair and right we should deal justly with existing interests. I do not propose to trespass upon the time of the House by labouring this question of State aid to religion, as I know many gentlemen in this Assembly have very distinct views upon it. But I may say this: so far as I have followed the teachings of Australian history, the result of State aid to religion has been the sapping of the vitality of the Churches depending upon such aid. No greater amount of vitality exists in any of the Churches than in those supported entirely upon the voluntary principle. I have been in communication with some of the heads of the Churches in this colony, and I do not really think, sir, that, so long as regard is paid to engagements entered into under what we may call existing contracts—if I may use the term without disrespect—the heads of these Churches would distinctly advocate, in the interests of religious vitality, a continuance of this system of State aid. It will be urged no doubt that these grants are of material advantage to our rural settlements, our back country settlements, where the parishioners or adherents of the various denominations are not in a position to support their own clergy without this assistance. But my motion does not attack existing interests; it aims at dealing with this question of State aid in the future by its gradual extinction, or by capitalising or commuting the present grant. When this question was under discussion in committee of supply last year, you, sir, drew our attention to the way Victoria had dealt with the question when that colony obtained the right of self-government, where they practically compounded the matter. They recognised existing interests, and practically compounded with the Churches as regards the future. The same principle was adopted by the British Parliament in connection with the Irish Church some years ago; and I think if the same

principle were adopted here no one could urge that injustice was being done. I do not think anyone ventures to say that this principle of State aid to religion is in itself a sound principle. It is a significant fact that no attempt has been made to increase the amount of this Ecclesiastical Grant in this colony during the last twenty years. It is exactly the same now as it was when the population of the colony was only 25,000, or one-third of its present population. If it is sound in principle, why should it not have been increased as the population increased and the revenue of the country increased? Why should it not have grown step by step with the growth of the colony in wealth and population, if the grant was defensible on principle? There must have been some grave reason for this action on the part of successive Governments and successive Legislatures, that this grant should not have been increased one penny for the last twenty years, and the only reason that suggests itself to my mind is that it is acknowledged to be unsound in principle, and defensible only on the ground of expediency. The other colonies, as I have said, took early steps to put an end to this system of State aid to religion after the adoption of Responsible Government, and why should it be perpetuated in this colony? The only ground on which I have heard this grant defended has been that its abolition would cripple the work of the Churches in the rural parts of the colony. Nobody defends it on the ground that it is required to provide the ministrations of religion in our larger towns. But, what do we find from the returns recently laid on the table showing the allocation of the grant by the various denominations amongst whom it is shared? I pick out one particular communion, that of the Anglican Church, and I find that 21 per cent. of the grant to that body is devoted to Perth and Fremantle. Surely in Perth and Fremantle we are able to pay for our religion without State aid. We can and do support our own amusements; why cannot we also support our own religions? I should be sorry to suggest anything that is disrespectful, but it would be interesting to know how much the people of these two towns spend annually, and send out of the colony, in providing themselves with amusements, as compared with what

they spend annually in supporting their own Churches. Yet we find one denomination, and the most influential and most numerous as regards the number of its professed adherents, coming to Parliament to provide it with funds, 21 per cent. of which is allotted to Perth and Fremantle. Does any member of this House belonging to that communion, to which I have the honour myself to belong, mean to suggest that the absence of this annual dole from the State would injure the vitality of the Church of England in this country? I do not think anyone would suggest it. Another return—not quite in accord with the terms of my motion—has been furnished by the Roman Catholic body. The allocation of the grant, as regards the districts where it is spent—showing whether it is spent in the towns or in the country—is not given in this return, though the names of the clergy between whom the grant is divided are given. With regard to the return from the Wesleyan body, I am pleased to say that the grant to that body is almost entirely devoted to the country districts. The Presbyterian body, I believe, as yet, only has churches in Perth, Fremantle, Albany, and Geraldton, and the grant to that body is necessarily confined to these places. The Congregational body distinctly decline to have anything to do with the grant, it being contrary to the principles of that Church to accept any State aid for such a purpose, and relying solely upon the voluntary principle for the support of its ministers. I do not think it will be said that the vitality of that religious body has suffered because it refuses to receive any aid from the State. [AN HON. MEMBER: It accepts land.] I am not applying my argument nor my resolution to any other aid than monetary aid. Sir, it is unnecessary for me to labour this question, or to trespass further upon the time of the House at present, as I shall have an opportunity, at the close of the debate, of replying to any remarks that may require it. I have dealt with the question as temperately as I can, as I wish to give offence to no one, and I now beg to submit for the consideration of the House the motion of which I have given notice:—“1. That in the opinion of this House “it is inexpedient to perpetuate the system

"of monetary State aid to Churches. 2. "That, having equitable regard to existing "life interests, it is desirable to discontinue the annual Ecclesiastical Grant."

After a considerable pause,

MR. WOOD said: I should not like this motion to be settled without some discussion. If I understand the hon. member for Geraldton rightly, his object seems to be to have this Ecclesiastical Grant swept away entirely. I do not think it would be in the interests of this country, certainly not in the interest of religion and morality, if such a sweeping measure as the immediate and entire abolition of this grant were agreed to by this House.

MR. SIMPSON: I never suggested it.

MR. WOOD: Then I must have misunderstood the tenour of the hon. member's remarks. I wish to propose an amendment, which I think will meet the views of the hon. member, and probably be more acceptable to the House and the country. I move,—“That the Government be requested to bring forward, next session, a measure with a view to capitalising the whole Ecclesiastical Grant, and its distribution amongst the various Churches interested.”

MR. RANDELL: I did not come prepared to speak to this question this afternoon, having been considerably occupied during the past few days with one thing and another. Sitting up until 12 o'clock at night, listening to or taking part in debates in this House, is not a practice that gives one much opportunity for preparation, if one should require to address himself to other important questions. Of course it is well known that I have always been an advocate for the cessation of State aid to religion, on the ground principally that it is an indignity cast upon religion, and upon those who believe in religion, to have to come as paupers to this House for a grant of money for the upkeep of that with which the State has nothing whatever to do. The State is not a religious body. It is not a part of its duty to provide for the support of the religious beliefs of its subjects; its duty is rather to secure religious liberty for all its subjects. When the State comes to interfere with matters of faith, or to offer subsidies, or bonuses, or monetary grants of any kind for the support of religion, it

is likely, as has been already said, to get into troubled water. It is well known that the Church of England in the mother country has, for many, many years, been a State Church; perhaps it was only natural, under the circumstances, that this colony should have adhered to the English practice in that respect. It is known to members that we had a State Church here for a considerable time, and I believe it required several moves on the part of one of our late Colonial Secretaries before it was abolished, or rather before the Church was separated from the State as a State establishment. It was done in the time of good Bishop Hale, when the then Colonial Secretary—he was Mr. Barlee at that time—removed that bone of contention from our midst. It was considered an invidious thing that, in a new country like this, one particular Church should be recognised by the State as the Church of the State, while others were left outside the pale; though I think I am correct in stating that in England no assistance is given by the State to any other Church than that established by law. As members know, that Church has already been disestablished in Ireland, and strenuous efforts are being made to bring about its disestablishment in Wales, and no doubt these efforts will be successful when they can overthrow the overwhelming landed interests that are arrayed against its disestablishment in that principality. Here, as we know, another course was followed when the Church was disestablished,—a course which still seems to commend itself to a good many members as an equitable one, namely, to subsidise each denomination according to the number returned as its adherents. However, I oppose the principle on the ground that religion has nothing whatever to do with the State, and, as I have said, I think it degrades a Church or a religious body to come to the State for aid. It degrades it very much more to be a State Church, because in that case one of two things is almost bound to happen,—either the Church becomes the servant of the State, or (as often has happened in history) the State becomes the slave of the Church. I need not go into history to show members that. I think they will find that has generally happened; and the result in either case has not been beneficial either to the

Church or the State. Quarrels, as we know, have arisen, which had to be fought out with the sword, to the degradation of religion and to the great injury of the moral well-being of the State. I believe that in none of the other Australian colonies, nor in New Zealand, does this principle of State aid obtain at the present moment. In South Australia, owing I believe to a large extent to the commanding influence of the Rev. Mr. Stow, a Congregational minister, they never did have a State Church—I am not quite sure; but I think I am correct in saying that. The question of State aid in that colony was fought out some years ago, and I remember reading a speech of the late Bishop of Adelaide, delivered in England, in which it was stated that although its abolition created a great deal of heart-burning at the time, he was sure of one thing,—that not one of those who had been engaged in the controversy would then wish to go back to the old system of State aid to the Churches. The result there was very different from what many people anticipated. When State aid was abolished, it aroused the generosity of the people, who began to feel that it was their duty to support their Churches themselves, and, in the result, I believe the Churches greatly benefited in every way. I do not think any of us have a right to call upon the State to take money out of the public chest to support our own religious convictions. Moreover, I do not believe it really assists true religion one bit. I believe that the members of those denominations who are now receiving State aid in this colony are both able and willing to support their Churches without this paltry amount that is given to them by the State. I believe they would readily and cheerfully do so; and, that being the case, why should we wish to perpetuate this system? As we are receiving a large increase of population, there will be a still larger number ready and willing to support their own Churches. They will bring with them a feeling of independence of State aid, and will wonder to find in this colony a system which has ceased to exist years ago in all the other colonies. It is assumed by those who are opposed to the withdrawal of this grant that the work of the Churches in remote rural districts could not be carried on without this assistance

from the State. But I am loth to believe it. Circumstances have come to my knowledge which lead me to think that it would be in the best interests of these districts if a spirit of greater self-reliance were encouraged amongst them. I also believe that those in our larger centres of population would be quite willing to make some sacrifice, individually and collectively, for the purpose of sending out ministers to these outlying parts of the colony. We gather that at present a considerable portion of this grant is devoted to the upkeep of religious organisations in the towns of Perth and Fremantle, and the larger centres of population.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Not very much, I think.

MR. RANDELL: We have been told 21 per cent. of the grant to the Church of England is allotted to Perth and Fremantle, which is a pretty good slice of the grant. As to the distribution of the Roman Catholic grant, we do not know what it is. The Bishop, I believe, has the manipulation of the funds. I do not pretend to know the organisation of that Church, but we know it has a very compact organisation as compared with other Churches, even with the Church of England, and an organisation that can use its forces to very great advantage when it likes to do so, through having one recognised leader at its head. We had an instance of that very recently in the establishment of a semi-political association amongst them. Judging by the published rules of that association, it all comes to the one thing—the head of the Church is the head of that organisation as of other organisations connected with this body. In the same way, we find that in the distribution of this grant the head of the Church is supreme, and no one can interfere between him and the State, or between him and his people. The Wesleyans, I believe, pursue a very fair course in the distribution of this fund, the greater part of it—indeed, almost the whole—being given to the assistance of the Church in the small country towns. The Presbyterians, as we know, have not yet established many Churches here, and the grant, so far as they are concerned, is necessarily confined to the three or four towns where they have established themselves. I do not think I need go more

particularly into this question. I am strongly of opinion this grant could be done away with on the moral ground that it is not beneficial to the Churches themselves, that it puts into their hands a crutch which they get accustomed to lean on, instead of walking alone, as they ought to. At the same time I am very glad to find it suggested that no injustice should be done. No one ever wished, so far as I know, that any injustice should be done in connection with the withdrawal of this grant, the idea being that its reduction should take place gradually, or that the amount should be capitalised. I am not prepared to say at the present moment which would be the best. I do not think in any case this House would be justified at the present moment in going to extremes in this matter. It was not made a burning question on the hustings during the recent elections, although it was referred to; and some members, I believe, have pledged themselves to oppose the grant, while other members are pledged to support its continuance. But I think it is well worth the consideration of the Government and of the House, whether the time has not arrived when steps should be taken to do either one thing or the other,—to reduce the annual grant, or to capitalise it in the interests of those who now receive the benefit of this State assistance. I think I have said all that is necessary to say on the subject. I especially reiterate that I should be very sorry to see anything like injustice done to any of the Churches, but I hope the Government will see their way to take some steps in one direction or the other; because I believe that as time goes on it will become a burning question, and that if we settle the matter now, when public opinion is not very strongly pronounced, and no bitter antagonistic feelings have been aroused, it will be better for all concerned.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I hardly think it would be possible to arouse any great commotion over such a small amount as is involved in this resolution. I must confess I prefer the proposal of the hon. member for Geraldton to that of the hon. member for West Perth for capitalising the present grant. I do not think that this House is prepared, or that the Government would be able, even if it were so disposed, to

capitalise this grant, which would take a large amount of money to do it on anything like a liberal scale.

MR. RANDELL: £80,000.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I do not think it would be so much as £80,000, but it would take a great deal—about £30,000 I should say. I do not think the State has ever undertaken to grant this aid to the Churches in perpetuity; it is a vote that has to be decided year by year. At the same time I quite agree with the hon. member for Perth that it would be very unfair, and not acting equitably towards the various Churches, if we were to withdraw this grant without due notice. For my own part I see no occasion whatever for interfering with it at the present time. We are accustomed to this discussion year after year. Ever since I have been in the House I think we have had this subject cropping up for discussion; at any rate, so long as the hon. member for Perth has been in the House I think the hon. member has made a speech annually on this question. There are also one or two others; the hon. member for the De Grey generally has something to say about it, and the hon. member for West Kimberley, who is not here this evening. I, too, have generally had to get up and make a speech in defence of the vote. I really cannot take the view that is taken of this question by the hon. member for Perth. I go with him this far: I do not think it is the duty of the State to teach any religious dogma to its subjects, or any particular religious doctrine. But I do not look upon this grant as a grant to support the teaching of any dogma. I do not think that this small assistance granted towards providing the ministrations of the clergy throughout this immense territory can be looked upon in that light. I look upon it as some little aid towards teaching the people, and especially the young people of our outlying districts, the elements of pure morality rather than dogma. These ministers also perform other duties that are useful and necessary in a civilised community, such, for instance, as marrying people, and burying them, and christening the young, and performing other functions which, as Christian people, we consider necessary. No doubt, members who are opposed to this grant may

say that all these duties would be performed equally as well, if not better, if there was no State aid. But we have the evidence of the Churches themselves that they have great difficulty, even with this small assistance from the public purse, in providing clergy for the outlying districts of this immense country. The hon. member for Perth has referred to South Australia. But South Australia is not a territory like this. South Australia is more compact; the population is more concentrated; settlement is not so scattered. They have not 3,000 miles of coast line to settle and provide for, like we have. I think the State in a country like this has a certain amount of obligation cast upon it to see that the people, and especially the young, are taught the way they should go. I know, from my own experience, that in the country districts of this colony many of them scarcely ever see a clergyman; and if this grant is taken away they will see fewer still. What will be the result? Our young will grow up in ignorance of the most elementary teachings of morality, they will grow up in a state which we should be sorry and ashamed to see them grow up in. Small as is this grant, it is of great assistance to the various Churches struggling in our midst. The amount is so small that it really does not seem worth all this trouble we go to over it every year. But though it is a small matter so far as the State is concerned, it is, as I have said, a great assistance to the various denominations. It seems to me this is hardly the time for moving to withdraw this small grant. We are not pinching and screwing in other directions. We have an overflowing Treasury. Our growing revenue is certainly sufficient to warrant us in granting this small assistance to the Churches. If, however, it is to be done, the plan suggested by the hon. member for Geraldton certainly seems to me the best plan, though I do not think that either the Government or this House could at once arrive at an equitable arrangement with the various denominations who have been receiving this assistance for a good many years now. If the resolution were so worded as to suggest that the Government should endeavour to obtain full information on the subject, and consult with the Churches concerned as to the most equitable ar-

range ment for bringing about the object in view, I think it would be better. I am not aware what the views of the majority of members are in regard to the matter, but my own individual opinion is, that there is no occasion whatever to move in the direction indicated by this resolution at the present time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I think if this were simply a money question, or a question of whether we can afford to pay this small contribution out of the public revenue for what is recognised as a praiseworthy object in itself, I certainly should not rise to oppose the continuance of the grant. But I rise to support this resolution on different grounds entirely. If the State were itself a religious entity, or a religious institution, one and undivided, there might be a degree of fairness in appropriating the public funds for the benefit of the whole community. But we have to accept the situation, whether we like it or not, that the State is not a religious institution, and, what is more, that a great many of its subjects are not religious, and that a good number of them are not in sympathy with the religious organisations which are represented in the colony. The State, I take it, has no right to meddle itself with any question that has to do with the conscience of the individual. The State has no right to interfere in any way, either in guiding or in restraining a man's inner conscience; and a man's religious conviction is a question of conscience. The law has to do with the morals of people—we are constantly making laws that have to do with the morality of people—but we have no right to interfere with the consciences of people. The law may say, and very properly say, "Thou shalt not do this" or "Thou shalt not do that." Those are matters that come within the province of this House to deal with. But with the religion of people, which has to do with the conscience of people, this House has no right to interfere in any way. And this House, or any other legislative body, in my judgment, ought never to associate itself in any degree with the religious conscience of the people.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The moral welfare of the people; we have something to do with it surely?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We deal with the moral welfare of the people in our

statute book ; but the question of religion has to do with the conscience. We hear a great deal of talk about teaching morals, about teaching morality ; but members will admit, I think, that what Christian Churches are supposed to teach is what is contained in the Bible, and it is a strange thing that the word morality is not to be found in the Bible at all. What is involved in the question of morals is quite a different thing from questions of conscience. There may be room for a great deal of difference of opinion as to whether it is desirable we should perpetuate one religious organisation or the other ; and this is just where the difficulty arises. That is just where the trouble comes in. If the State begins to subsidise any religious body, that body becomes to that extent a State institution. We cannot in these days hope to establish a State Church here, and we do not propose or pretend to do so ; and the sooner we disassociate ourselves, as a Legislature, from all questions of religious beliefs or religious organisations the better. The statement has been made over and over again that some of the Churches have a difficulty in carrying on their work even with this State assistance. Members who have had any experience with the work of the Churches know that those which are the most independent of State aid, and the most self-reliant, are also the most liberal, and the most active, and the most aggressive in their ministerial work, and the most enterprising in their missionary labours in outlying settlements.

MR. WOOD : I question that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The hon. member may question it. I have had some experience in other colonies—in Melbourne a great deal—on this point. However, without discussing that point at all, I rose to make a suggestion. I do not suppose this subject requires discussion. It is not one of those subjects which this House is very much interested in speechifying about, and I merely wish to throw out one little suggestion. We have had this difficulty in the colony I came from, and we dealt with it there a great many years ago, and the way we dealt with it was this : it was decided to abolish the grant within seven years, and the amount of the grant for the preceding year was taken as the basis of the annual

reduction. Say the grant was £49,000, the amount deducted the first year would be one-seventh, or £7,000 ; and so on each succeeding year, so that it died out in seven years. I would suggest to the hon. member for Geraldton that this would be an equitable arrangement to adopt here, rather than withdraw the grant at once. There are engagements existing, and the Churches have been leaning somewhat upon this grant, and relying upon it, and it would be manifestly unfair to take it from them without due notice, though, as a matter of principle, I would terminate it at once ; but, as a matter of equity, and in view of existing engagements, I would like to see the Churches have some warning, and be able to make other arrangements for carrying on their work without this grant. My suggestion, if the hon. member will accept it, is that he should fix some definite term—let it be five, or seven, or ten years—within which the grant shall cease, deducting a proportional part each year, whether it be five years or ten years.

MR. MORAN : Say a hundred years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : That is of course reducing the thing to absurdity. The hon. member always goes from the sublime to the ridiculous. Let us give them some reasonable time within which the vote shall cease, and in the meantime the Churches will be able to make other arrangements to make up for the loss of the grant.

MR. JAMES : I think it would be very desirable indeed if some scheme could be adopted for disposing of this constantly recurring subject of debate. There can be no doubt whatever that this question of State aid to religion is one that is very distasteful to many members of this House, and to many sections of the community who may not be represented in this House. Year after year it crops up for discussion, and the longer it is left before it is disposed of the more irritation will it cause. Even in the interests of those who benefit by the grant, I do think the sooner it is settled the better for them ; for the longer it is put off the stronger will be the opposition to it, and the result will be that a settlement that could now be amicably arranged, and on liberal terms, will, in a few years, give rise to a feeling

of acrimony, with the result that the whole grant will be cut off suddenly and remorselessly. I believe that at every successive election we shall find a larger number of members returned pledged to abolish a grant which I do not hide from myself is not defensible on principle. The proposition of the hon. member for Geraldton embodies, I think, to a certain extent what is in the mind of the hon. member for West Perth. I understand the hon. member does not desire to abolish the grant at once, but that some scheme be adopted for its gradual withdrawal, either by capitalising it or dealing with it in some other way, so as to enable us to get rid of this ever-recurring bone of contention. I think every member is prepared to acknowledge that it does some good, but they are opposed to it because on principle it is not defensible, and because they believe that the sooner it is done away with, the better for those who have anything to do with it. I shall support the motion.

MR. THROSSELL: The motion in itself is, I think, a most reasonable one. I think every one nearly is in favour—in theory, at any rate—of the voluntary principle. I believe that all members, if they were to express their real sentiments, would admit that, in theory, the principle of self-help in religion, as in other matters, is an excellent one, however difficult it may be sometimes to put the principle into practice. There can be no doubt that the feeling in favour of withdrawing this State aid is growing every year, and I would urge upon the Churches, in their own interests, to recognise that the time has arrived when they should endeavour to come to some amicable arrangement with the Government in the matter. We have now a Government that is kindly disposed towards them, and we have a Parliament that recognises the equitable claims of these bodies; but events move very fast in this colony in these days, and it is hard to say what the future may bring forth. The hon. member for West Perth suggests that this question should be dealt with next session. I would urge upon the Churches concerned to take counsel with the Government at once, and see whether it cannot be dealt with during the present session. We cannot say what will happen even within the next year

for a certainty. At the next general election we shall probably have a more Radical Parliament returned, the members of which will share the views entertained by our friend the hon. member for Nanaimo, coming as they may do from colonies where there is no sympathy with State aid to religion. Holding this opinion, I think it would be good policy and wise policy on the part of the heads of our Churches if they were to take counsel with the Government, and come to some arrangement on the subject. So far as I can gather, that is exactly what the hon. member for Geraldton is in favour of. He does not intend that we should deal harshly with the Churches, or do anything that is not fair. [MR. SIMPSON: Hear, hear.] As we all know, the necessity for this grant first arose under peculiar circumstances which we should all be most anxious to forget and wipe out for ever. Year after year we have it cropping up for discussion, and from many members there has been a strongly expressed desire to see the vote wiped out. As the hon. member for the De Grey said on one occasion, it is quite time this fusty old grant should die out and be forgotten. While I believe every member would be strongly opposed to its being suddenly wiped out, I think everyone would gladly hail an opportunity of getting rid of it by dealing with it liberally, fairly, and justly, and disposing of it say within ten years. When we consider that the Churches have been relying upon this grant for many years, and when we consider the obligations they have contracted, and also the scattered population they have to deal with in this vast territory, I think it would be a matter for regret if this grant were suddenly withdrawn. I have always held that the whole of this vote should be devoted to the country districts, towards the support of itinerating ministers in our back settlements, and I am glad to find that the bulk of the grant is appropriated to country places. Believer as I am in the principle of self-help, I am also glad to take this opportunity of saying that the various Churches of the colony are evincing a larger feeling of self-reliance and greater activity, and I shall be very happy indeed to see them treated liberally in this matter by the present Parliament,

recognising as I do that the time is at hand when we shall have a much more Radical Parliament, comprising members coming from countries where State aid has been abolished, and whose sympathies will be entirely opposed to the continuance of State aid in this colony, and who may not be inclined to deal with the Churches in the same spirit of justice and fair play as the members of the present Parliament are.

MR. MORAN: I think it is generally admitted that the greatest difficulty the Churches have to contend with is in providing suitable places of worship in the outlying districts where settlement is extending, rather than in supporting their ministers, who, as a rule, are men of great self-denial, and who, themselves, are no great burden upon their congregations. If this grant were capitalised, and continued for the next ten years, I think, so far as my judgment guides me, it would place the Churches in a position to erect places of worship in such outlying places as are likely to become centres of population, and so help them over what, I believe, is at present their greatest difficulty. I am sure, if this question were disposed of once for all in that way, the annual recurrence of these semi-ecclesiastical utterances, which some members are so prone to indulge in, would not be much missed in this House.

MR. SOLOMON: I merely rise to say that I agree with the amendment, and I trust that when this House meets next session the Government will be prepared to bring forward some scheme for disposing of this grant, for I have no doubt in my own mind that in years to come the feeling against the grant will be much stronger than it is at present, and, possibly, a future Parliament may be inclined to deal with it in a very summary manner. I, therefore, think it would be prudent policy on the part of the heads of the various Churches concerned to take counsel with the Government, and endeavour to arrange some way of settling this question on an equitable basis.

MR. PIESSE: We have heard a great deal of what is involved in this Ecclesiastical Grant, but there is also another principle involved, and that is whether it would not be expedient, as has already been pointed out by the Premier, to let

the matter rest as in the past. I think it is generally admitted that this grant has been of great service to the Churches, especially in country districts. I believe even those who oppose it admit that much; and, I think, that for some time at least, we might let the matter remain as it is, and as it has been for many years. The hon. member for Northam, no doubt, is right when he says that, in the future, we shall probably have a more Radical Parliament—

MR. MORAN: It does not follow that because a man is a Radical he is necessarily opposed to religion, does it?

MR. PIESSE: Perhaps not. At the same time I think it would be a wise course, perhaps, to try and get this matter so settled that the grant may be continued in some form for a term of years. I am afraid it would come to a very large amount if we were to capitalise the amount, basing it upon the ordinary actuarial tables, and I think a better way would be to let the grant continue for a certain number of years, and let the Churches know that at a given date the grant would cease. I think, for the present, the question might be left to the Government, who could consult with the heads of the Churches, and bring forward some scheme next session for dealing with the matter on a fair basis. If I were expressing my own wish I should say let the matter rest as it is; but, of course, I am open to reason, and I can quite understand the longer we leave the question unsettled the more difficult it will be to deal with it when there is a stronger feeling against it than there is at present. Speaking for the country people, I am sure that their verdict would be entirely in favour of continuing the grant as it is. Whatever may be the feeling on the subject in the larger centres of population, I know the country districts would be very sorry indeed if they were deprived of the benefits they have derived in the past from the expenditure of this grant. I must say I was always under the impression, when supporting the item on former occasions, that the grant was expended in the country districts, but we find from the returns laid on the table a few days ago that 21 per cent. of the grant to one of the Churches is spent in the towns of Perth and Fremantle. I think these towns, with their

comparatively large populations, ought to be able to support their own Churches, and that this money should be devoted to the rural settlements.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): There is no doubt that the time is hastening when this grant will have to disappear. I did not rise to argue the question, though a great deal may be said for the grant, so far as the outlying districts are concerned, but some suggestions have been thrown out as to the best method of dealing equitably with the grant. The resolution itself does not assist us much, beyond saying that we should have an equitable regard for existing interests. An amendment has been proposed that we should capitalise the amount,—a suggestion which, as the Premier says, is open to some objection, as it would be a very large amount to have to pay down. Another suggestion has been made, and one that seems to strike my mind as a very fair one, and certainly a most simple method of dealing with the subject; that is, to make a certain deduction from the grant every year. I think the general opinion of all who have spoken is that we should deal quite justly with the Churches, and, perhaps, I may be permitted to say a little liberally. [MR. RANDALL: Hear, hear.] The suggestion that we should deduct one-tenth of the grant every year, until the whole grant disappears, appears to me a just and equitable and also a liberal proposal. No one suggests that the grant should be withdrawn at once, and inasmuch as the Churches are not prepared for any sudden reduction in the grant this year, would it be too much to suggest that the Government should give an assurance that on next year's Estimates, as a first step, a deduction will be made from the grant? I do not think it would be fair to cut it down this year, as the Churches, in making their engagements, have no doubt calculated upon receiving the same amount from this grant as they have been in the habit of receiving hitherto; and, if we were to deprive them of a portion of it, we might, unwittingly, be doing them an injustice. My friend the Colonial Treasurer suggests to me that we might give that assurance this evening, namely, that this amount will be reduced by one-tenth on next year's Estimates, if that is agreeable to the House.

MR. WOOD: In that case I beg leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. SIMPSON: I am very glad indeed to hear a suggestion coming from the Premier which I think pretty nearly voices the views of the House that this amount should be divided into tenths—that one-tenth of the grant be deducted annually. If I might be allowed to say so, my own idea would be to multiply the present amount of the grant by ten, and divide it into ten sums, to be paid annually to the Churches on the present basis. The grant would thus disappear in ten years. The present grant, I think, is £3,200; if we multiply that by 10 it will give us £32,000, and as it seems to be the general opinion that ten years' purchase is about a fair price, this sum might be distributed among the Churches in equal annual proportion, during the next ten years. That would ensure a grant of £3,200 a year for the next ten years, after which the grant would vanish. I think that is the idea which seems to commend itself to the House.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: No, no.

MR. SIMPSON: Is not that the idea?

SEVERAL MEMBERS: No.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Reduce it one-tenth every year.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): So I understood.

MR. SIMPSON: Then it appears I am inclined to act more liberally towards the Churches than even the supporters of the grant are. It would distinctly be in the interests of the Churches that they should have a positive and determined income of £3,200 a year for the next ten years, rather than have this grant reduced one-tenth every year: £3,200 this year, £2,880 next year, £2,600 the following year, until the grant disappeared. If we adopted that plan, what would the amount of the grant for the last year be? One of the Churches, I believe, would receive the magnificent sum of 4s. 6d. On the other hand, if we adopt the plan I suggest—give them ten years' life interest in £32,000, which would give them a positive income of £3,200 a year—the Churches could, in the meantime, so arrange their affairs, build their churches and extend their ramifications, and work up the voluntary efforts of their adher-

ents, that by the time the grant disappeared altogether, ten years hence, the Churches would themselves be prepared to do without it. I really think that would be more in the interests of the Churches than the other plan. I think it would be complying with the suggestion of the Attorney General and of the Premier if the House now were to affirm this resolution. After what has fallen from the Ministry—and I understand they are prepared to give us an assurance in connection with the matter—I think, if we affirm this resolution, we may leave the matter in the hands of the Ministry. I am quite content myself to do so. They have suggested ten years as the period during which this grant shall continue, and I am quite prepared to fall in with the suggestion. I have to thank the House for the way they have received the resolution. I only have one object in view, and it is this: that, as a matter of principle, I want to keep the State clear of this Church business; I want to keep the State clear from meddling with people's religion. I think one of the most amusing speeches I ever listened to was that of the Premier on dogma. We know the hon. gentleman has distinguished himself as a politician, but I do not think he is yet qualified to add "D.D." to his name as a theologian.

Resolution put and passed.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I understand the idea is to keep up the present grant for another ten years?

MR. SIMPSON: Yes.

MR. RANDELL: I understood the proposal was to reduce the amount every year by one-tenth.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Would I be in order in moving an amendment?

THE SPEAKER: Not now; the hon. member has already spoken. He can move in the matter another day.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is only in order to place the matter in the light in which I think most of us desired it to be placed.

MR. RANDELL: I certainly understood the proposal was that the Government should next year reduce the grant one-tenth.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The mover does not say so, but that the grant should remain at the present amount for ten years.

ROTTNEST ISLAND AS A PLEASURE RESORT.

MR. SOLOMON, in accordance with notice, moved—"That, in the opinion of "this House, taking into consideration the "present small number of native prisoners "at Rottnest, and with a view to throwing "open the island as a place of summer "resort and recreation for the public, it "is desirable that no additional native "prisoners should be sent there." He said: In bringing forward this motion I do so with some confidence that I shall receive a good deal of support from members. I am sure it has been recognised by the Government that there is a growing feeling in the minds of the people of the colony, more especially at Perth and Fremantle, that this island, now used as a native prison, should be thrown open and utilised by the public. Though it cannot be denied that the climate of this colony is on the whole a very good climate, still we know that during the summer months the heat is very enervating, more especially to those who are living more inland than we are at Fremantle or Perth, and it is as much on their behalf as it is in the interests of the residents of these two towns that I bring this matter forward. Rottnest Island is, I think, more suitable than any other place that we have for purposes of recreation, or as a summer resort. I think everyone will concur in that, and that if the island were thrown open to the public it would be a great boon and a great advantage. It will no doubt be said by the Government, or suggested, that there is no other place for these native prisoners except Rottnest. I would suggest that the better class of these native prisoners should be kept in their own districts, where they could be employed in some useful work, while the worse class—as we have plenty of room now in the convict prison at Fremantle—might be located there. Anyone who has lately visited that prison will have noticed that a large portion of it is unutilised, and that it contains a large number of cells that might be made suitable for the reception of native prisoners. This establishment at Rottnest is costing the colony a deal of money annually. The expenditure for last year, up to the end of June, 1894—without taking into account the Reformatory—was £2,674 13s. 11d., whilst

the revenue derived from the products of the island only amounted to £599 13s. 7d., leaving a deficit of £2,075 0s. 4d. I see that the estimated expenditure for 1895 shows a considerable increase over the expenditure for this year, being no less than £2,985, whilst the estimated revenue is put down at £650, or a debit balance of £2,335. At present there are only 42 natives on the island, so that it will be seen at once that the cost of keeping up this establishment is a very great expense to the colony. It has struck me that, even as it is, the island might be made more useful. I visited it yesterday, with others, in the discharge of a public duty, and it occurred to me that a great deal of the land there might be utilised; and, from the evidence of many of those who reside on the island, it was ascertained that there is really some very good agricultural land, which will produce wheat, barley, oats, chaff, and rye. It appears to me there must be some mismanagement somewhere, that the quantity of produce is not considerably more than it has been. Wherever you go on the island you will see large crops, self-grown, almost knee-deep; and, when sown in the ordinary way, the crop is really worth your while looking at it. With regard to the salt works, I think if the island were thrown open to the public the Government would be able to make more money out of these works if they were to let them to a company to work them on a royalty. The price they now get for the salt is £2 10s. a ton. In Liverpool you get salt put on board ship at 15s. or £1 a ton, so that if the local salt is equal to the imported article there must be a good margin of profit; and no doubt if these salt works were in the hands of a company, and worked by free labour, it would be far more profitable to the colony. Again, I think that a model farm might very well be established on the island. Speaking to many there, they all seem to approve of the suggestion. Being away from the mainland, there would be very little interference with the experimental work conducted there. Of course, these are matters which will require some consideration from the Government, but I feel sure, if they went into the matter thoroughly, they would find it would be advantageous to the colony in many ways if this island were thrown

open to the public for a summer retreat and a place of recreation, while at the same time it might be utilised as a site for an agricultural college, or an experimental farm. At present, although boys are sent to the Reformatory or industrial school on the island, there are no industries for them to learn. There is only one carpenter there, and he teaches them a little carpentering, which is all they are taught in the way of manual training. They go to school two hours a day, while the rest of the day they are thrown on their own resources. I think if this matter were looked into by the Government it would be seen it would be advantageous to have some trades or industrial occupations for these lads, so that they might be more profitably employed and trained to become useful members of society. Of course the principal object I have in view, in bringing forward this resolution, is to have the matter ventilated, and to give members an opportunity to express an opinion as to the desirability of preventing any more native prisoners from being sent to the island, and of throwing it open as a place of summer resort for the public. With these few remarks, I beg to leave the motion in the hands of the House.

MR. JAMES: I should like to see Rottnest thrown open to the public as soon as possible, and I think the arguments put forward by the mover of the resolution must commend themselves to the minds of most people. I do not see why an island like this, which is admittedly a very charming summer retreat—though I have never been there myself—should be kept for the exclusive use of black prisoners, be they few or many; and I hope the resolution will be carried, or, if not, that some other proposal of the same kind will be brought forward and adopted.

MR. CLARKSON: I have much pleasure in supporting the motion. I think this is about the only inhabitable island we have on the coast, and it does seem a pity to turn it into a prison for natives. I take it for granted, from what I have heard—like the last speaker, I have never been there myself—but I have heard that it is a beautiful place, in summer, at any rate; and it does seem a pity to convert it into a native prison, and exclude the

public from it. The expense of keeping up this establishment also seems very heavy, and it would be a saving to the colony if it were broken up. I suppose the Government would be prepared to find another billet for the gentleman now in charge of the island. There has been some difficulty about that matter, I believe, in the past, but, surely, the Government could find him some other appointment. However, I certainly do think this island should be turned to some better account. I also think the natives should be turned to better account. They are gradually diminishing in number, I believe; there are only about 40 there at present, and I think their labour might be better utilised elsewhere. I would suggest that the natives at the North should be employed in these Eastern districts, ringbarking, and doing useful work of that kind, and that those convicted from these districts should be sent to the North, to be employed up there. There would be no fear of their running away; they would be afraid of meeting other tribes. I think it is a pity to keep up this expensive native prison, just for the sake of confining a few blackfellows. I am not prepared to say whether or not the island would be suitable, as suggested by the mover of the resolution, for an experimental farm. Perhaps it might be devoted to the home-stead block system. I have heard of hay and corn being grown there, and I know that at one time the Government used the island for horse breeding purposes. If it will breed horses, there must be something there besides sand and seaweed.

MR. THROSSELL: I cordially support the motion, and regret that the hon. member did not go further, and ask the Government to lay out a township on the island. While the Government are very anxious to make the capital city attractive and a pleasant place to live in, I think they might also take some steps to provide summer resorts for the people. We have a large influx of population coming to our shores, attracted for the time being by our goldfields; and amongst them are men of wealth and culture, some of whom, if sufficient attractions were offered, would make Western Australia their home. Some of our own people, too, are in the way of becoming millionaires, and we should do what we can to make the colony

a place worth living in. Amongst the wants of the colony is such a place as this island, admirably suitable for cutting up into residential blocks for the summer season. I believe the adjacent island (Garden island) is not now in the possession of the Government, but I think they would do wisely to repurchase it. I can conceive nothing more attractive than a residence on one of these islands during the heat of summer, with steam-boats and pleasure boats going backwards and forwards from the mainland. I hope the Government will at once lay out a township at Rottneſt, and, if possible, repurchase Garden Island for the same purpose.

MR. RICHARDSON: Like the hon. member for Northam, it causes me a good deal of anxiety what we are all going to do with ourselves when we become millionaires. I hope, at any rate, we shall not be sent to Rottneſt. At the same time I think it is hardly fair that the public should be kept out of what might be made one of the most pleasant summer resorts. It might take some little time, perhaps, to get rid of the associations connected with the place as a native prison. There is also the difficulty of transit to and fro. But once it became a fashionable watering place, no doubt means of transit would be soon established, and we should have excursion boats running backwards and forwards regularly. No doubt, too, a great deal could be done in making the industrial school on the island a better institution than it appears to be at present for teaching the boys sent there something more useful than they appear to be taught there now. In a few words, I think this island might be put to very much better purposes than a prison for natives. I do not think anyone will gainsay that.

MR. PEARSE: I know there is a very great desire, in Perth and Fremantle especially, that this island should be thrown open to the public; and I see no reason why it should not. What earthly difference would the presence of a few natives make? As to sending them to the prison at Fremantle I certainly should object to that, because we know very well that natives are not accustomed to such confinement as that. They would simply die. That is the only objection I have to

the reſolution—that it ſuggests that the iſland ſhould be diſcontinued as a native priſon. I do not ſee the neceſſity for it. The natives do no harm. We at Fremantle do not object to the priſon there, and why ſhould people at Rottneſt object to have a priſon on that iſland? I think that, in the intereſts of the public, the Government ſhould conſider the deſirability of throwing open the iſland for a ſummer reſort. I am ſure a great number of people would be glad to avail themſelves of it for that purpoſe.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Members who ſay they have never been to Rottneſt may, perhaps, like to know ſomething about it from one who has been there. I went to Rottneſt twenty-one years ago, and I have never been there ſince—except on one occaſion recently, on buſineſs—nor have I any deſire to go again. I think the idea that Rottneſt would become a great pleaſure reſort is quite a miſtake. If people once ſaw the iſland they would never think of going there for pleaſure, either ſummer or winter. There is nothing on the place. You cannot keep cows there. There may be a Government cow; but it is not a ſuitable place for either cows or horſes. Certainly there is nothing like firewood there except a few ſticks. [MR. RICHARDSON: The Collie coalfield.] You would have to boat it, and the paſſage acroſs is a rough one at the beſt of times. I know people talk about the place as a ſummer reſort, and the Government have been adviſed to cut it up into reſidential blocks. I am ſure thoſe who bought a block of land there would repent it. But this reſolution does not aſk the Government to throw open the iſland, but that no additional native priſoners ſhall be ſent there, with the view of ultimately throwing it open I ſuppoſe. I do not ſee any reaſon for aſking us to do that. If the intention is that the iſland ſhould be thrown open, ſay ſo, or aſk the Government to pledge themſelves to do ſo; but do not reſtrict the number of priſoners to be ſent there until a deciſion is arrived at as to throwing the iſland open to the public. It is our only native priſon now, and, until it is thrown open to the public, there is no reaſon why natives ſhould not be ſent there to the full capacity of the priſon there. The mover of the reſolution himſelf muſt ſee there is a difficulty in the

way of diſpenſing with this iſland as a native priſon, though the hon. member has made a ſuggeſtion with regard to ſending a certain claſs of natives to Fremantle. I ſuppoſe he means that the tame natives ſhould be kept at Fremantle, and that the wild ones, the dangerous fellows, ſhould be kept in their own diſtricts. I can quite underſtand the hon. member for North Fremantle objecting to theſe blackfellows being ſent to the priſon in that town. The hon. member ſays they would ſimply die. I expect they would. I don't ſuppoſe they would live long if you made them waſh themſelves. Then there would be the difficulty of getting warders, whoſe ordinary duty was to ſupervize white priſoners, to look after theſe natives. And what would you do with them? Before Rottneſt is given up as a native priſon, we muſt find a priſon ſomewhere elſe for the natives—unleſs they are to be kept entirely in the diſtricts where they are convicted. People down here would not tolerate the working of theſe natives in chains, as they do at Roebourne or Carnarvon. It is all very well up there, becauſe the ſenſes of people in thoſe places are not offended at the ſight, having become accuſtomed to it; but I am ſure if you attempted to work native priſoners in chains down here the public ſentiment would be ſo offended that there would be ſuch a howl againſt the practice that it would have to be diſcontinued. Therefore, we muſt provide ſome other priſon for theſe natives if we give up Rottneſt as a priſon; and, until the Government are able to come to the Houſe and ſuggeſt where this priſon ſhould be, and what other arrangements are to be made, it is ſomewhat premature to aſk them not to ſend any more priſoners to Rottneſt, and to throw open the iſland to the public. The reſolution only aſks that no more native priſoners ſhall be ſent there. That being the caſe, I have no hesitation in ſaying that I am bound to vote againſt it.

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

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

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I would aſk the hon. member to withdraw this motion, which does not ſeem to me

to suit the circumstances of the case; and, if he desires to move again, he might move to the effect that it is desirable that a portion of Rottnest should be surveyed and thrown open for sale. I do not think the present motion is desirable. There is no other suitable place available for native prisoners, and even at the present time I know that a number of native prisoners from Wyndham are being brought to Rottnest. They are bad characters, and as it is impossible to secure them with the means at present available at Wyndham, the magistrate there has been instructed to forward them to Rottnest. The island is somewhat bleak for native prisoners brought from Northern districts; but it is fairly healthy, and it has one great advantage, that the natives, being separated from the mainland, can be allowed a good deal of freedom, and they are not able to escape. I know that many hon. members think that native prisoners do not improve at Rottnest, but it must be an advantage to have them civilised a little, especially when they are principally from the unsettled portions of the colony, like those now coming from Wyndham. The discipline may do them some good, and it teaches them, at any rate, to obey the law. I am aware that many native prisoners are kept at Carnarvon, Roebourne, Derby, and Wyndham; but they are kept there under circumstances we would not like to see existing in these Southern parts. I do not think the restraint at Rottnest does them any harm, for they are still in their own country, in a climate they are accustomed to, and they are not compelled to work too hard. I do not think that, under these conditions, they suffer at all beyond the restraint on their freedom. It seems to me better to keep them at Rottnest, rather than keep them elsewhere chained in gangs, as they have to be while kept at work in their own districts. As to throwing Rottnest open to the people of the colony, I have no objection to that part of the motion. I think that would be a good thing, but I am not sanguine that the island will be very attractive as a popular resort. It is in an isolated position, somewhat difficult of access, and the sea passage is often rather rough. It would also be an expensive place to

live in; for if a citizen had a house there, it would not be convenient to reach; he might be detained there inconveniently by rough weather, and supplies are not easily obtainable. Of course, hon. members obtain their impressions of Rottnest during pleasure excursions for a day or two, at times when the sea passage is smooth, and they may stay, perhaps, at Government House—a beautiful place, with pleasant surroundings, and the charm of isolation from the affairs of the mainland. In such circumstances one can enjoy a visit to Rottnest for a few days, the monotony being varied with good fishing in the harbour boat, visiting the rocks in a dingey, or riding or driving on shore, and one comes away from Rottnest with the feeling that it is a delightful place to visit. But if you take away all these aids to pleasure, I do not think the visitors under ordinary conditions would find the place so attractive as it may have been to some hon. members on special occasions; for if we were merely put down on shore at Rottnest, with a small house, and no horses to ride, and no boats to sail about in, I do not know that any of us would care to be isolated there very long, and I am inclined to think we would soon want to come back to the mainland. Still, I see no reason why a portion of the island, somewhere between Government House and the native jetty, should not be laid out in allotments, and leased or otherwise disposed of to persons who wish to build residences. It seems to me that it would still be a great advantage to have the native prison on the island, because the Government would be able to supply wood to the white residents, and, perhaps, in other ways assist those who chose to reside there. I cannot see that it would be any disadvantage to the public if the native prisoners were kept on the island. I am quite ready to admit that Rottnest, as a native prison, is not the success I should like to see it. It is not carried on at a great expense, but there is a loss to the colony, and it seems rather too much of an establishment for the small number of natives who are kept there. So many other matters have required attention, during the last year or two, that I have not had time to give much consideration to this subject; but I think something might be done to place the establishment

on a better and less expensive footing, and this matter will engage the attention of the Government. As far as I know, there is no objection whatever to some allotments at Rottnest being laid out and disposed of on some terms; and that being so, the hon. member will, perhaps, be content to withdraw his motion. If, however, he likes to place on record, as the opinion of this House, that it is desirable that some allotments of land at Rottnest should be laid out and offered to the public, on terms, I do not think the Government would have any objection to that motion being placed on the records of the House.

MR. PIESSE: Every one will admit the hon. member for South Fremantle should be commended for bringing forward this motion. It has been admitted, for a long time past, that it is very necessary that a place of public resort, such as Rottnest will afford, should be provided for public enjoyment, and I think that at the present time this want is felt more than ever. As has been pointed out by the hon. member for Northam, there are numbers of persons coming to the colony who look for and would appreciate such a facility for occasional enjoyment; and although the Attorney General has pictured to us the island as a howling scene when visited by him some years ago, I think that objection would soon be removed by enterprising persons who are desirous of making it an attractive place of public resort. As to removing the native prisoners from the island, I think the Premier has shown this cannot be done until some other place as suitable can be found. The hon. member for South Fremantle has suggested that native prisoners could be sent to different parts of the colony—for instance, that natives of the North could be sent somewhere to the South; but I am afraid that plan would not be workable, because these prisoners would be a source of trouble wherever they were kept on the mainland, and it would be unwise to give them much liberty on shore, even if they could be located at places remote from their native districts. The motion commends itself to everyone, and possibly the requirements may be met by an amendment, which I now propose, as follows:—"That all the words "after the word 'Rottnest,' in line 2 of

"the motion, be struck out, and the following words be inserted in lieu thereof: "it is desirable that the island should be thrown open to the public, as a place "of summer resort and recreation." I understand that the Government will not object to a resolution in this form.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Not throw open the whole island, I should think.

MR. RANDELL: If this amendment were withdrawn, one more in accord with what the Premier has suggested, and in accordance with the general sense of the House, might be adopted. It is very desirable that a portion of the island should be thrown open to the public. After what has fallen from the Premier, I hope the Government will not be induced to sell any portion of the land in the island, but will deal with it by legislation, and retain the entire control of the island. It is very undesirable that the island should be open to speculators, or to acquisition by private individuals. Some of the land might be let on long or short leases. There is a growing desire that persons should be able to reside at Rottnest in the summer months, but no one would care to remain there very long. The island is not large enough to be a desirable place of residence, and I know those who are obliged to live in it complain, from one cause or another, that it is injurious to their health. I do think that the island may be retained as a prison for natives, to a limited extent, and that, at the same time, a portion might be thrown open to the public. If this amendment is put and lost, some hon. member might move to the effect that it is desirable that a portion of Rottnest should be opened as a summer resort and a place of recreation for the public.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: If the island is thrown open to the public at all, it should be opened entirely. Duck-shooting and snipe-shooting are to be had on the island, and if you admit the public there you will not be able to keep them off the places where recreation is to be found on the island. This question requires more serious consideration than we are likely to give it upon either the motion or the amendment. We have to consider whether it is wise to keep up this island establishment in the way we are doing,

as a summer residence for the Governor, and as a prison for a few natives. I think the island is worked at a loss, and we are not deriving compensating advantages for the cost it is to the colony. It would be as well to cut the whole of the island up into blocks, and sell them to the public, so that the island might be used as a summer resort for the people of Perth and Fremantle. If that were done, no doubt capacious hotels would be erected there, and fast steam-boats would run from Fremantle and back frequently. In other colonies there are places where citizens can get away from Friday till Monday, to obtain a blow of fresh air. I do not think it is of much advantage to the colony, at present, to have a little salt made at Rottnest, or to have a few native prisoners confined there, and as years go on the number of native prisoners will decrease. It is a mistake to bring native prisoners from the far Northern parts and locate them on that island, when their services can be better utilised in the places they come from. On the whole, it would be a pity to deal hastily with the question before the House.

MR. PIESSE: If the amendment does not meet with the approval of the House, I ask permission to withdraw it, with a view of substituting another.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. PIESSE moved, as an amendment, that all the words after the word "House," in line one of the motion, be struck out, and that the following words be inserted in lieu thereof:—"it is desirable that some allotments should be laid out at Rottnest, in order that it may be available as a place of summer resort."

MR. SOLOMON: As that amendment will meet the object I had in view in the motion, I shall be glad to accept it. My object is to affirm the principle that the island should be thrown open to the public. I beg to withdraw my motion.

MR. WOOD: I rise to endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Randell). It would be unwise to alienate any land on the island, as it may be required for defence purposes, and many other purposes. It is now known as the real Island of Patmos, according to the commander-in-chief, and there may be traces found there of the lost tribes of Israel. To my mind we have places better suited for public recreation,

such as Cottesloe and Freshwater Bay, and parts of Fremantle. I think the member for South Fremantle should try and improve his own town, and induce people to go there for summer recreation, instead of proposing to send them to Rottnest. I feel sure that, at the end of a short lease, the people who might occupy houses at Rottnest would be glad to get away.

MR. LEAKE: It is refreshing to hear this system of leasing advocated by members who sit on the other side of the House. When the question of leasing was brought forward recently, in a more general and more national manner, the idea was scouted, not only by members of the Government, but by nearly every member of the House; but I am happy to find now that some members on this and the other side of the House are willing to accept my political principle for dealing with Crown lands. I shall certainly support the motion, because it would be an advantage to persons residing in Perth and the neighbourhood if they could, at a slight expense and in a very short time, get over to Rottnest, where they could enjoy a breath of fresh air in summer time. The place is locked up at present because the whole island is a prison; but there is no reason why a defined portion of the island should not be declared a prison, so that the public might have access to the parts of it not so proclaimed. I would suggest that the Government should certainly retain the absolute control of all the lands on the island, and should direct their attention to the need for establishing a properly managed and efficient reformatory, not only for boys but for girls also. A suggestion was lately made in the local press, by a number of persons who are entitled to the greatest possible credit, and who pointed out that there is absolutely no provision made for girls who may be ordered to a reformatory; and I think no better place than this island could be set apart for that purpose. I hope the Government will consider this matter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I rise to make a similar suggestion. Some of the suggestions made by the hon. member for South Fremantle might be worked into a scheme. I notice that the next motion on the Notice Paper for to-day seems to open a door for the suggestion that has

already been made. The fee simple of the island should be retained by the Government, for many reasons. I see no objection whatever to leasing, but I would be very much opposed to seeing any portion of the island pass out of the hands of the Crown. It may be desirable that the island should be appropriated almost wholly for the purpose of a reformatory school; that there should be something of the nature of reformatory and industrial schools on the island, so that the young persons sent there could be taught agriculture, which we are so anxious to promote in this colony, and be taught a trade. So, while within a reasonable distance of this city, they could still be completely isolated from the rest of the people, and yet have a degree of freedom which it would be impossible to give them if they were confined on the mainland. I hope the Government will see to retaining the fee simple, and yet arrange to give ten or twenty years' lease, if necessary, for allotments of land on the island. I support the motion on the understanding that the land to be thrown open to the public should be leased in some way, and not alienated.

MR. LEFROY: It is desirable that the island should be thrown open to the public, but I do not think it is likely to be availed of to a great extent. Some hon. members seem to think the island is not easily approached, and the reason why they think it is such a charming place may be because—

Distance lends enchantment to the view.

I suppose they think that, because the island has not been thrown open to the public, there must be something beautiful there worth preserving exclusively. I think that, if the public do desire to go to Rottnest, some means should be available for their doing so. But now that railway facilities can be used all along the coast in this part of the colony, the people who want excursions are not so likely to go to Rottnest as to some of the towns along the coast, such as Bunbury, the Vasse, and Albany. If the island is to be thrown open to the public, I sincerely hope the Government will not follow the suggestion of the member for South Fremantle that a model farm or an agricultural college should be established there, because to those who know

something about the island, as I do, there is no good farming land at all on the island, and no live stock would do there—neither horses, cattle, nor sheep. Even the sheep that are taken over there have to be killed off within a certain time, or they decline and die. So I hope the Government will not entertain a project of that sort. If the public desire to spend a few weeks at Rottnest in summer, they should be allowed to go there. I have not the hope that some persons have, that this island is likely to be a great place of resort for the public. I shall support the amendment.

MR. MORAN: It is pleasing to notice that hon. members on this side of the House are advocating the leasing of land, especially when we know that two cows over there died, and were found to have died of a broken heart; also, after the remark of the last speaker that sheep there have to be killed to save them from dying, it is very wise that the land should be leased. The suggestion that an agricultural college should be established there must be strongly supported by the same argument. The cultivation of salt-bush might, perhaps, thrive very well on the island, and if it proves successful in preparing the way for an agricultural college, no doubt Western Australia will become a huge success as an agricultural country.

Amendment put and passed.

Motion, as amended, agreed to.

CARE OF NEGLECTED CHILDREN.

MR. TRAYLEN moved, "That in the opinion of this House some suitable provision should be made for taking care of neglected children." He said: In moving this motion I have only to state my case, and have no need for elaborate arguments, because the whole matter will commend itself to hon. members the moment the case is stated. It will be in the recollection of some members that when the Industrial Schools Act was passing through this House, the Government intimated that they would be able to make arrangements, for some little time to come, for the neglected children, by placing them in the care of the different orphanages already in existence, and partially supported by State funds. I think we all fell in with that view,

somewhat forgetful of the fact that there is a difference in character between orphan children and neglected children. The orphan children may have had an excellent training, under very exemplary parents, and, through the death of those parents, may be deprived of any means of subsistence, and be thrown entirely on the benevolence and charity of the community. Those kind ladies and gentlemen who have been taking charge of children of this class have, I think, with great show of reason, evinced a reluctance to take into the same places, and to mingle with these orphan children, those others who are properly classed as neglected children. The very name implies that they have not had a careful training, that they have had very unwholesome, unsavoury surroundings, that their minds are to a great extent already polluted, and that they are not such as we could desire to place as companions with those who are merely orphan children. This indicates that we must have some separate establishment for taking care of these poor little waifs of society. It was pitiful to observe, two or three days ago, in the Perth police court, three little mites brought up charged—for that was really the only way in which their case could be dealt with—charged as neglected children. One of these had reached the mature age of eighteen months, and was not able to stand; the other two were just a little older, the elder girl being able to play the part of nurse to the little thing. It will be evident that, for many years to come, these children—who are truly and really neglected children, for both parents are now in prison—will have to be cared for by the State, or they must be allowed to grow up almost as curses to society. That necessity involves our doing something more than continuing the present provisions for such cases. It is at present almost necessary to send to prison those children who are, not for any fault of their own—or at least in some cases so—properly classed as neglected children; and I think I have only to call the attention of the Government to this state of things in order to lead to their doing something immediately to provide for such necessitous cases. I believe that at the present moment these three little creatures are lodged in the Women's Home in Perth; but it must be evident that

many of the inmates of a Home like that are themselves degraded women, who are not likely to train up these children in such a way as we should desire, but are much more likely to injure them. It will be better to lodge such children in some separate place, where some kind and considerate person could be employed to take care of them, with a view to making them useful members of society when they reach that age which will enable them to go forth into the world on their own account. If the Government have no suitable building at present available—and to provide the funds for erecting one would need some little time—I would suggest that for the neglected children already under their charge they should engage a cottage or some such building, and forthwith arrange to place in charge some careful person who can take care of the children. There are at present comparatively few under the care of the Government, but I believe there are scores of neglected children in Perth and Fremantle who ought to be thus cared for. We may all realise the difficulty of dealing with such cases; that they ought not to be sent to a prison or reformatory; that there is no suitable place to which they can be sent at present; and I believe many children are now at large and entirely neglected in our towns, so far as everything that is good is concerned, who might be placed, with great advantage to themselves, and with infinite advantage to the future of the community, under some careful training. I do urge on the Government to immediately provide some suitable premises, and place some suitable person in charge of them; and, rather than let the matter remain as it is, it would be well to invite the benevolent aid of some ladies, who would, perhaps, form a committee of management and take charge of the institution. So, I have much pleasure in moving the resolution, which refers more especially to girls, for whom there seems to be no provision whatever.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I rise to second the motion, and in doing so I would offer a suggestion to the Government, which has been found to be of great practical benefit in another place; that is what is known as the boarding-out system. That is a means within the reach of the Government for immediate

action. The method in vogue is to advertise for certain persons to take charge of children at various ages; the Government provide a certain sum for their maintenance; and a committee of ladies have usually, in another colony, volunteered to take a regular oversight or charge of these little waifs of humanity. The system has been found to work very successfully. Homes have thus been provided for these children, who have been carefully tended and brought up to be useful members of society, and that on a small allowance of money, so far as the State is concerned. In some cases, for an allowance of 5s. to 10s. a week, sometimes less, comfortable homes have been provided and careful training ensured, by the committee's oversight, for many children who had been left as waifs of society. This suggestion does not involve the immediate establishment of a reformatory school, which will have to be provided sooner or later; but, in addition to the suggestion of hiring a cottage for immediate use, I think the boarding out of neglected children in this way would prove a vast benefit to the children, and some help to the people who take charge of them in their homes, while the cost to the State would be small. The children would also have the benefit of home companions and surroundings. I hope the Government will take a note of this suggestion, and work out some practical scheme.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): There is no doubt a necessity for the Government to take care of these neglected children, under the Industrial Schools Act, which provides everything that is necessary for the purpose. In such cases as that of the three children alluded to, if the justices before whom these children are brought would only communicate with the Government, I am sure the certified managers of the present industrial schools—that is to say the orphanages—would in many cases be quite willing to take over these children. The three children referred to, I am in a position to say, have been taken over by one of the managers. With regard to the boarding-out system, that is fully provided for under section 15 of the same Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is for older children. My suggestion refers to quite young, neglected children.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): This provision in the Act is for girls under 16, and for boys under 16 years of age. Any boy or girl brought up and charged with being a neglected child—which is really no crime, and the Act shows it is not, for the charge is one of being neglected—and if the child properly comes under the denomination of a neglected child, a magistrate may order the child to be sent to an industrial school; and if the Government cannot induce the manager of one of the existing industrial schools to take in that child, the Government must then provide an industrial school for such cases, under the Act. But in order that there may be no question about the existence of an industrial school in the future, the Government are now taking measures to rent at once a fair-sized house in the outskirts of Perth, and to form there an industrial school under the present Act, until there is time to erect some suitable building for the purpose elsewhere. Therefore, for the future, hon. members may be assured that every care will be taken of these children.

Motion put and passed.

DENTISTS BILL.

SECOND READING.

MR. JAMES: In moving the second reading of this Bill, I may state that the object of the Bill, as explained by its title, is to provide for the registration of dentists in this colony. At present there is no law dealing with the registration of dentists, and any person who thinks he can pull out teeth, skilfully or otherwise, is entitled to put up the name "dentist" over his door, and entrap the unwary public. That, of course, concerns the unwary public; but as, in various directions, the law provides that persons who set up as having certain qualifications shall be subject to certain professional rules, and shall be compelled to show that they have the qualifications which they profess to have, I ask that the principle of such legislation shall be extended to dentists. There have been many cases in this colony in which, on account of the incompetency of professed dentists, serious injury has been done to people by persons who were not qualified to carry out the operations they professed to be

able to perform. A similar Act exists in Victoria and several other colonies. This Bill provides for the creation of a board, which in the first instance will be nominated by the Governor-in-Council, and after three years have expired the nominated members will cease to act, and a new board will be nominated by the registered dentists for the time being. Clause 6 gives power to the board to make various by-laws. Clause 7 gives power to appoint an examiner, a registrar, and other officers. Clause 8 enables the board to sue. Part II. deals with the registration of dentists, and provides, in Clause 9, for the keeping of a register. Clause 10 sets forth the persons who are entitled to be registered, and provides that any person who is registered as a dentist now in the United Kingdom is entitled to be registered in this colony. Sub-section (b.) provides that any person who is now practising as a dentist in Western Australia will be entitled to be registered under this Act, but he must apply for registration within twelve months. Sub-section (c.) deals with the cases of students who are serving their articles in this colony; and sub-section (d.) deals with the qualifications of persons who come to the colony, this sub-section being practically the same as the corresponding provisions of the law in England and in Victoria. In fact, the whole of this Bill is substantially the same as in the Victorian Act of 1878, with the exception that this Bill is framed differently; and in this respect I have followed the precedent set by our Attorney General in one of his Bills, which contains in half-a-dozen words what in an English Act often runs into half-a-dozen sections. If any person is refused registration under this Act he has the right to appeal to the Minister in charge of its administration, and the Minister is empowered "to make such order as to him seems just, after hearing such person and the board." Therefore, the board will not exercise autocratic powers. Clause 12 provides that if a dentist is guilty of felony his name shall be struck off the register. Part III. of the Bill deals with penalties, and, of course, the Bill would be useless without penalties. I think it will be seen that these penalties are by no means unjust. Clause 15 prevents those who are not registered from pro-

fessing to be registered, and from advertising themselves as such. Clause 16 provides that an unregistered person cannot sue as a dentist for fees. Clause 17 empowers the board to require the attendance of any person who applies for registration. Clauses 18 and 19 are practically the machinery necessary in suing for offences. I hope the House will pass this Bill. If, in committee, any member desires to make amendments, I hope he will communicate with me, and I shall be glad to meet suggestions coming from any part of the House. The desire is simply to provide that when persons advertise themselves as dentists, they shall be qualified dentists; and in asking the House to accept this Bill, I want nothing more than that.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I have no objection to the second reading. A measure for the registration of dentists is in the interests of the community; and I am sure the House will agree with me that, if the dentists in the colony desire this Bill, they are entitled to have a Bill for their registration the same as are the legal practitioners. Legal practitioners are registered; so are medical practitioners; and it is the rule generally to register professionals of this nature. I do not see any harm in providing a system of registration for dentists if they desire it. With regard to the details and the drafting, they can be examined in committee.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

REGISTRATION OF BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND MARRIAGES BILL.

COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Report of committee considered.

Amendments made by the committee, up to and including the fourth item of the second Schedule, read and agreed to.

Second Schedule, fifth item:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the amendments in this part of the Schedule concerned the fees payable to assistant registrars, and he appealed to hon. members to allow him to put back in the Schedule the same amount of fees as was in it before the committee reduced the fees; because the Assistant Registrars were

appointed in the out-districts for the convenience of people who lived far away from populous centres, so that persons might always be able to register a birth or a death; and if, by paying a higher fee to register in their own locality, they chose to do so instead of travelling a great distance to the Registrar for the district, they should be allowed to register locally. The Assistant Registrar, knowing the people in his locality, and having an eye to his payment by fees, reminded them as to the necessity for registering a birth or a death which he knew had happened; whereas the Registrar for the district, living a long distance away, might not be aware of such cases, and the registration system in sparsely settled places would be less complete. The Assistant Registrars in out-districts were paid by fees, and this fact sharpened their attention when the fee was 2s., while a fee of only 1s. would not be enough; therefore, if the fee was made less than 2s., as the Schedule originally provided, it would be necessary to pay them by salary, and as the incentive to vigilance would be taken away by the absence of a sufficient fee, the registration would often be left undone. The fee was only 1s. in the item as amended, and as there would be very few cases to register in an out-district, the 1s. fee would not be a sufficient payment in itself to induce vigilance. It might be a serious inconvenience, in after-life, if a person becoming entitled to property could not trace the registration of his or her birth. Therefore, he moved, as a further amendment in the Fifth Item, that the amount "one shilling," placed opposite the item, be struck out, and the amount "two shillings" be inserted in lieu thereof. If this were agreed to there would be some consequential amendments.

Further amendment put and passed.

Amendment made by the committee in Sixth Item agreed to.

Seventh Item:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the same reasons he had stated previously would apply to the amendment in this item. He moved, as a further amendment, that the amount "five shillings," placed opposite the item, be struck out, and the amount "ten shillings" be inserted in lieu thereof.

Further amendment put and passed.

Tenth Item:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the same reasons applied in this case. He moved, as a further amendment, that the amount "one shilling," placed opposite the item, be struck out, and the amount "two shillings" be inserted in lieu thereof.

Further amendment put and passed.

Remaining amendments made by the committee agreed to.

Report, with further amendments, adopted.

FRIENDLY SOCIETIES BILL.

COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Amendments made by the committee, up to and including Clause 42, read and agreed to.

New clause, 43:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, as an amendment, that the words "and carried on" be inserted after the word "instituted," in line 1.

Amendment put and passed.

New clause, 44:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, as an amendment, that the following new sub-clause be added to the clause:—“(g.) Providing for the election of trustees of such boards, and “the election of a new trustee to fill any “vacancy occurring in the number of “trustees from time to time.”

Amendment put and passed.

Report, with further amendments, adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 8:55 o'clock p.m.