

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 20th December, 1893.

Meeting of the Legislative Assembly—Message from His Excellency the Governor—Electoral Rolls Bill: first reading—Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech—Adjournment.

MEETING OF THE ASSEMBLY.

The Legislative Assembly met at 3 o'clock p.m., pursuant to Proclamation of His Excellency the Governor, bearing date the 13th day of December, 1893, which Proclamation was read by the Clerk.

MESSAGE FROM HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR.

A message was delivered at the bar by the Usher of the Black Rod, requesting the immediate attendance of the Legislative Assembly in the Chamber of the Legislative Council.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, with members of the House, went to attend His Excellency, who then delivered the Opening Speech (*vide* p. 1181 *ante*).

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL.

FIRST READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, without notice, for leave to introduce a Bill intituled "An Act to authorise the immediate preparation of the new Electoral Rolls, to be compiled in accordance with the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1893."

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I rise to move that the Bill be now read a first time. In doing so, I desire to say a few words, on this occasion, in order to explain the provisions of the Bill. I think that on an occasion of this sort, perhaps it would be more convenient to members if the Government explained the provisions of this measure at its initial stage, rather than defer that explanation, which is usually given on the second reading. The Speech which members have just listened to from His Excellency the Governor has acquainted the House that this session is a special one, called for the particular purpose of considering the legislation which is necessary in order that the new electoral

rolls may be immediately compiled. By this Bill the Government seek to make the necessary provision for that purpose. It will be in the recollection of the House that during the session which has lately concluded, we passed an amendment of the Constitution Act, and also an amendment of the Electoral Act that was then in force. The two Acts I have named, and which were amended last session, were passed in 1889, and the Constitution Act Amendment Act of last session considerably extended the franchise, in performance of a promise that had been made by the Government that they would take an early opportunity of doing so. It also extended or increased the representation of the country in Parliament. That being so—the franchise being extended and representation being extended—it was only natural that the Government should desire to give an early opportunity to those who had been newly admitted to the franchise, and also to the electors in the newly created electorates, to exercise the privileges conferred upon them under the amended Act. But in order to do this under the Constitution Act Amendment Act of last session, it was found it would be obligatory on the part of the Governor to dissolve the Legislative Assembly at once, inasmuch as the second part of the Act in question only comes into force upon the dissolution of the Assembly. In other words, the benefits which that Act was intended to confer by extending the franchise and increasing the representation could not be availed of until the present Legislative Assembly was dissolved. The old franchise would remain in force, and the old electoral districts would remain as they were constituted under the Act of 1889. As it might lead to inconvenience if Parliament were dissolved at the present time, leaving the country for several months without a Legislature, it was considered inadvisable to dissolve the Assembly; but the Government, being anxious that the country should have the benefit of the extended franchise and extended representation as soon as possible, have brought in this Bill to enable the new Electoral Rolls to be prepared at once, without the necessity of dissolving Parliament, and before Part II. of the Constitution Act Amendment Act comes into

force. At present it would be impossible—while that part of the Constitution Act is not in force—for the Electoral Registrars to prepare the rolls of the newly-created districts, and of the districts whose boundaries have been altered; and it would also be impossible for the Registrars to place the newly enfranchised voters on the roll. To enable them to do that, the Assembly must be dissolved, so as to bring into operation Part II. of the Act, or an enabling Bill must be passed giving them the necessary power to do now that which the Constitution Act of last session empowers them to do only upon the dissolution of the present Legislative Assembly. It may be asked, what was done in 1889, when the qualifications of voters were extended, and new electorates were created, and how were the rolls prepared then? Well, I find that special provision was made in that case. Notwithstanding the fact that the Act which created the new districts, and which created the new qualification, at that time had not come into force, still special provision was made empowering the Electoral Registrars to compile the new rolls as if the Act were in force. But that provision was not made in the amending Electoral Act of last session, and the result of its not having been made is that, without special legislation, or without a dissolution of the Assembly, the new rolls under the new Electoral Act and the amended Constitution Act cannot be made up. Consequently the general election under the extended franchise and the extended representation would have to be deferred until the Assembly could be conveniently dissolved. I have, therefore, on behalf of the Government, to submit this Bill, which has for its object to enable the Electoral Registrars to prepare the new rolls as if the Act creating the new franchise and creating the new electoral districts were in force. We do not bring the new Act into force—to do that we would have to dissolve this House; nor do we seek to alter the provision that it shall not come into force until the House is dissolved. What we propose to do is to create these new districts at once, and to create the new qualifications at once, so as to allow the registrars to proceed with the new rolls. The desire of the Government—as it would be the desire of every Government

similarly situated—is to hasten the general elections as soon as possible, and not to defer it until the present Parliament is dissolved. If the Government desired to postpone the elections they could easily plead that under the Act of last session the new Constitution (so to speak) cannot come into force until they chose to dissolve Parliament; and in the meantime no new rolls could be prepared. But our desire is to hasten the elections, and, not only to hasten them, but also to have them conducted under the extended franchise and under the increased representation provided in the amended Constitution Act. Therefore, the second clause of this Bill provides that for the purposes of the preparation and compilation of the new rolls those clauses of the Constitution Act dealing with this matter shall be read and construed as if that part of the Act which provides for a dissolution of this House were already in force. If members will look at the Bill,—

MR. SIMPSON: We haven't got it.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): It is a very short Bill, and I will endeavour to explain it as far as I can.

MR. SIMPSON: May I ask, as a point of procedure, whether the Attorney General is in order in speaking at length upon a Bill that is not even before the House, and of which members have not had yet a copy?

THE SPEAKER: I think the hon. member is quite in order in explaining the Bill.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): The hon. member for Geraldton may remember—comparing small things with great—that Mr. Gladstone, in moving the Home Rule Bill, made his whole explanation of the Bill on its first reading. I am only following this course in the present instance in order to facilitate the business of the House. The first clause of the Bill is merely the short title. The second clause, as I have already said, provides that “for the purposes of the ‘preparation and compilation of new electoral rolls, the provisions of ‘The Electoral Act, 1893,’ and of section 24 of ‘The Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1893,’ shall be read and construed as ‘though Part II. of the last-named Act ‘were in force, and had been in force on ‘and since the 1st day of November,

"1893." The 1st November is the date anterior to which nothing whatever was done towards the preparation of the rolls. Instructions were only issued to the registrars, and the registrars were only appointed since that date; therefore, we propose that the Act shall be construed as if it had come into force on that date. Since that date, certain appointments have been made of electoral registrars, and certain claims have been sent in already, and we propose to validate those claims, so far as they are in accordance with the provisions of the Act, but not otherwise. It will be seen that if a man claimed a vote for, say, the Yilgarn district—which is one of the newly-created districts—such a claim could not be entertained, because at the present moment there is no such electoral district in existence as Yilgarn, for the simple reason that that portion of the Constitution Act which is to create these new districts does not come into force until the Legislative Assembly is dissolved. Therefore, a claim to be registered for Yilgarn refers to a district that does not exist under the law at present. In order, then, to make that claim a valid one, and to make the appointment of the Yilgarn electoral registrar a valid appointment, we say in the 3rd clause of this Bill that "every appointment made, every claim to be registered as a voter, and every act and thing heretofore done in accordance with the provisions of the Electoral Act, 1893, shall be of the same force and effect as if Part II. of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1893, had been in force at the time of the making of any such appointment or claim, or the doing of any such act or thing as aforesaid." That section, therefore, will validate all appointments of registrars, and validate every claim made to be registered as a voter in respect of any new district, or of any other district, under the extended franchise. Clause 2 makes reference to the 24th section of the Constitution Act of last session. That section provides that wherever in the principal Act—that is, the Act of 1889—reference is made to Sections 39 and 53 of that Act, such reference shall be read and construed to be a reference to Section 21 (after the coming into operation of Part II.) and to Section 12 of the Amendment Act of last session—respectively. A little technical

difficulty arose there, because Section 21 does not come into force until the dissolution of the Assembly. Therefore that section is to be read as if it had been in force all along. The object is in order to give effect to Clause 40 of the Constitution Act of 1889, which provides that joint owners may claim a vote in respect of their joint ownership. In the Electoral Act this difficulty has arisen also: the electoral registrars have to transcribe from the present rolls the names of those on those rolls, and place them on the new rolls they are now making up. It may be asked, what is the roll for the Yilgarn District (for instance)? There is none. What is the roll for the Newcastle District, as distinct from the Yilgarn District, with which it is now incorporated? There is none. Nor can there be until Part II. of the Constitution Act of last year comes into force; and that cannot come into force until the dissolution of this Assembly. Therefore we have to make provision in this Bill to meet the difficulty. Sections 2, 3, and 4 of the Bill, I think, meet all the difficulties that have arisen in putting into force at the present moment the Electoral Act of last year, in consequence of Part II. of the Constitution Act not coming into force until this House is dissolved. We are also taking advantage of the present occasion to amend the Telegraph Messages Act, 1874, so far as it affects the transmission of messages relating to electoral matters. It was found at the last general election that considerable inconvenience was caused by reason of such messages having to be sent under the supervision of a justice of the peace or a notary public. If a registrar had to send a message relating to the election, or a candidate had to send a message relating to his nomination or advising the payment of his deposit, it could only be done in the presence of a justice of the peace. Not only had there to be a justice of the peace at the end where the message was transmitted, but also another justice of the peace at the end where the message was received. No writ could be telegraphed, nor a return to a writ, without its being done under the supervision of a justice or a notary public. If the Speaker had to telegraph a writ to Wyndham, or Roebourne, or any other distant part of the colony it could only be done in the

way I have described; and we propose to dispense with all that needless ceremony. It is useless as any precaution for the proper transmission of a writ to insist that the Speaker shall be accompanied by a justice of the peace, and that the receipt of the message can only be valid if received in the presence of another justice of the peace. There are parts of the colony—the district which I represent, for instance—where there may be a difficulty in obtaining the services of a justice to supervise the receipt or the despatch of these messages, as there is only one J.P. residing in the vicinity of the telegraph office, and he may be away.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Why don't you appoint more of them?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): The Act in this respect has been found to work awkwardly, more especially in the North, the Returning Officer sometimes being the only justice of the peace in the district. We now propose to amend the Act by omitting the words "in the presence and under the inspection of some justice of the peace or notary public," but only so far as relates to the transmission of any document authorised to be telegraphed by the Electoral Act, 1889. We do not propose to touch the Telegraphic Messages Act in any other respect, except so far as its provisions apply to the transmission of documents relating to electioneering matters. This difficulty is dealt with in Section 5 of the Bill, which repeals the words I have referred to. There are two more sections in the Bill. One of them, Section 6, refers to joint owners or occupiers claiming a vote. The Electoral Act of last year says nothing about joint owners or joint occupiers; but in the Act of 1889 provision will be found dealing with the subject of joint ownership. Unfortunately, that part of the Act of 1889 was repealed by the Act of last session, and the section relating to joint ownership was not re-enacted; consequently, unless the omission is remedied, an Electoral Registrar would be at a loss to know whether a man should be allowed to vote in respect of a joint ownership or not; or, if he were allowed to vote, the Registrar would be at a loss to know how to deal with it. Section 40 of the Constitution Act of 1889 allows the claims of joint owners, and provision is made for dealing with

such claims. But, as I have said, that provision has been repealed, and the Registrars would be at fault now to know how to deal with such claims. Consequently, we propose to enact a clause in this Bill which will take the place of the clause that existed in the Act of 1889, but which was repealed last year. Therefore we say, in Clause 6, that a person claiming—

POINT OF ORDER.

MR. DEHAMEL: I must really rise to a point of order. It seems to me we are having a long discussion on this Bill on its first reading. Rule 30 of our Standing Orders provides that "before the Governor's Speech is reported to the House by the Speaker, some Bill shall be read a first time *pro formâ*." But this is not a *pro formâ* reading of the Bill, but the opening of the whole thing for discussion, which I submit is out of order.

THE SPEAKER: It seems to me it depends upon what interpretation is put on the words *pro formâ*; but I may say that it is not an unusual thing in the House of Commons for the Minister introducing a Bill to make a speech explanatory of the provisions of the Bill, on the first reading.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Perhaps their standing orders on the subject are not the same as ours. Our Standing Order distinctly says that the Bill is to be read a first time *pro formâ*; therefore I do not think it is competent for anyone introducing a Bill at this stage to explain the details of the Bill, clause by clause, before the Governor's Speech is read or discussed.

MR. LOTON: It seems to me that if the hon. member objects to the course adopted in this instance he has waited rather long before stating his objection, as I understand the Attorney General has now got to the last clause of the Bill. I think, having allowed him to go on so long, we may as well let him finish, and not have the whole thing over again.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: The question is whether it is regular or irregular, and I should like the Speaker's ruling, so that we may know whether the course now adopted is to be accepted as a precedent, hereafter. Personally, I have no wish to obstruct the business of the House; but

I submit that the hon. member has no right at this stage to discuss the details of the Bill.

MR. CANNING: I submit that the reasonable interpretation to be put upon the words "*pro formâ*" in this case is that the Bill may be read a first time in such a way as the mover may think fit, but that there shall be no debate upon it.

MR. SIMPSON: I may point out that, according to the Standing Orders dealing with the first readings of Bills, it is provided by Rule 264 that on every order for the first reading of a Bill the title only shall be read.

THE SPEAKER: No doubt it is sufficient to read the title only when moving the first reading, but the point raised by the hon. member for the Gascoyne has reference to the rules relating to the opening of Parliament, one of which says that "before the Governor's Speech is reported to the House by the Speaker, some Bill shall be read the first time *pro formâ*." The hon. member having drawn my attention to that Standing Order, I am bound to say that I think he is right in saying that the words referred to do preclude any discussion of the Bill at this stage. At the same time, I think the course adopted has been adopted on this occasion simply for the convenience of members, in order to facilitate the business of the session. Therefore, although I must rule in accordance with our Standing Orders, that a discussion of the provisions of the Bill at this stage would be contrary to the rule, still it will be for the House to say whether they wish the Attorney General to conclude his speech on the first reading or not.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Would it be competent to suspend the Standing Orders?

THE SPEAKER: Not without notice.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): It seems to me it is simply a matter of convenience. Some members may have a good deal of time on their hands, while others may be desirous of getting over the exceptional business of the session as soon as possible. Some members may desire to offer every obstruction in the way of the business of the session being got through; others may be anxious to

facilitate the business. Of course, if there are members present who wish to inconvenience their friends, they are at liberty to do so.

MR. LOTON: I understood, myself, that when the Attorney General rose to make his remarks on the first reading of this Bill he asked permission to do so, in order to facilitate the business of the session; but I understood there was to be no discussion of the Bill at this stage, and that the discussion should be on the second reading. I think, under the circumstances, the Attorney General, in whose charge the Bill is, might be allowed to conclude his explanation of the Bill at this stage, instead of on the second reading; and it seems to me he is not very much out of order in doing so, so long as no discussion is allowed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): It will give me pleasure not to say anything more about the Bill. As I said, I merely wished to facilitate the business by explaining the Bill now, instead of on the second reading, as I thought it would be more convenient to members. There is only one more section of the Bill to explain. I was dealing with the section relating to joint ownership, and I was explaining that—

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I must again ask the Speaker to rule whether the hon. gentleman is in order or not.

THE SPEAKER: I have already ruled that it is not in order to discuss the Bill upon the motion for its first reading, at this stage, unless the House gives its consent for that purpose. But, so far as my ruling is concerned—objection having been made to the course adopted—the hon. gentleman in charge of the Bill cannot, at this stage, proceed to discuss the provisions of the Bill any further.

MR. PIESSE: Would I be in order in moving that the Attorney General be heard?

THE SPEAKER: That would be against the Standing Order. I think the Attorney General had better move the first reading at once.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I move that the Bill be now read a first time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a first time, and ordered to be printed.

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

MR. SPEAKER reported that the House had attended His Excellency the Governor in the Chamber of the Legislative Council, when His Excellency was pleased to make a Speech to both Houses of Parliament, of which Mr. Speaker said he had, for greater accuracy, obtained a copy, which he read to the House (*vide p. 1181 ante*).

THE ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

MR. RICHARDSON: In rising to move the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, which has just been read to us, I do not know that anything very much is expected to be said. This being a special session, for a special purpose, perhaps any remarks of a general character would be out of place. There is but very little in the Speech itself to take hold of, except, perhaps, the statement contained in paragraph 4—that "the prospects of the colony are in every way satisfactory." I can only hope, and no doubt every member in this House hopes, that may be true, though possibly some members—or perhaps several members—may be inclined to question it. Possibly those who are of a pessimistic turn of mind may not only question it, but flatly contradict it, and deny point blank that the prospects of the colony are in "every way" satisfactory. But I think, without going into the matter too deeply, and without admitting that things are in "every way" satisfactory, it may be admitted that our prospects, generally speaking, are encouraging. There are exceptions to every rule; there are spots even on the sun. A great deal has been said and written of late about this question of the prospects of the colony, and divers opinions have been put forward. We have some individuals who speak as if the colony were going to ruin pretty straight; while, on the other side, we have others who say that we were never so flourishing at any period of our history. Possibly the truth may be found midway between these two extreme statements—that we are doing as well as can be expected under the circumstances. Certainly we are not going to ruin, and possibly we are not flourishing from every point of view. There is this to be said: we find that

although our public revenue has increased, and that our imports and exports have increased, still there are some features in the financial prospects that do not look quite so well at the first glance, and which require some explanation. I notice that the Customs revenue has slightly decreased, though the general revenue has increased under most heads, and particularly under the head of railways and land—two very important items. I think that so long as we can congratulate ourselves that the revenue from our land, from our railways, and from postages and telegrams—from those pulses of our trade—show a healthy increase, we need not be apprehensive of any serious trouble. On the other hand, there is no doubt a considerable increase—perhaps even an alarming increase from one point of view—in our public expenditure, which has leapt up during the past year very considerably. It has leapt up from £487,000 to £629,000, which is a pretty good jump in one year. I believe the reply—and perhaps there is a good deal in it—is that the Government having the money in the chest spent it, and spent it, as they believed, wisely, in necessary public works, calculated to advance the prosperity of the colony. Possibly the only debateable point is whether the money has been spent in the best interests of the colony, and in the wisest possible manner. If they had not expended it at all, but allowed it to remain in the chest, there would have been a loud outcry, possibly from the very same quarters that now blame the Government for spending it; so that, in whatever way they acted, they would be open to criticism. I maintain it is a good thing to spend money when we have it in the public chest, so long as it is judiciously expended; because we must remember that we are now borrowing money, and for what reason? Because we have not sufficient on current account to meet all the requirements of this vast territory, in the way of public works, roads, bridges, surveys, and the thousand and one things we require for developing the resources of the country. Therefore we find ourselves resorting to borrowed capital, to enable us to undertake these works; and I maintain it would be a contradictory sort of policy, while we are borrowing money in this way, to hoard up our own money in the public

chest. It would be almost childish to borrow with one hand, and hoard up with the other. The mere fact alone of our having spent more money in a given time than we actually received from public revenue within that time is nothing to be alarmed at, so long as we have not incurred a deficit. That is the point. I find that a large portion of this expenditure from current revenue and from the accumulated surplus, has been spent upon useful public works—roads, bridges, railways, tramways, and public buildings; and I maintain that if we had not expended this money upon these necessary works it would only mean that we should have had to take so much out of Loan money for the same purpose. Possibly that is the shortest and best explanation that can be given of what looks at first sight an alarming increase in the public expenditure of the colony, to the amount of some £150,000 in one year. I will say no more on this point, but merely add that, on looking around us, I think we have a great deal to be thankful for and to congratulate ourselves upon. The season we have been blessed with this year, compared with previous years, is something to be very much pleased with indeed, when we think of the terrible drought of recent years, which caused such disaster all through the colony, and especially in the Northern parts of the colony, which I am happy to say are showing signs of recovery. Our pastoral prospects at the present moment are most encouraging, our flocks and herds are increasing, and this important industry may be said to a certain extent to be flourishing. Then, again, there is the marvellous output of gold, and the probability of a still further increase—a reasonable prospect of a very large increase; and many other indications of prosperity that are visible all around us, if we only look for them. We cannot expect to have all these favourable indications without also having some drawbacks; still I think that, on the whole, there is good sound reason for congratulating ourselves upon the prospects and prosperity of the colony. At the same time, I think it behoves the Government to be careful. I am entirely in accord with those politicians who warn the Government to be careful and cautious, and not to be led away with the idea that there is no end to our financial

prosperity. I would like to keep them up to the mark in this respect, and to inculcate upon them the necessity of prudence and caution. I think that honest criticism can only do them good. Whatever amount of criticism is directed to that end, so long as it is honest and fair, it cannot be reasonably objected to. It may be as vigorous as possible. I do not object to vigorous criticism—perhaps I am inclined to be somewhat too vigorous at times myself, but I think that good, healthy opposition, and vigorous criticism of the financial policy of the Government, so long as it is fair and above-board—[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear]—cannot be reasonably resented by any honest Government. That is all I would say in counselling the Government to be careful of the finances—to see that every pound expended is expended upon something that is, either directly or indirectly, reproductive, and not upon useless and un-reproductive works, upon mere bricks and mortar, upon needless decoration and ornamentation, marble pillars, and extravagances of that character. So long as the money is available, and so long as it is wisely expended upon reproductive public works and in opening up the country districts, I do not think we need fear the result. I beg to move that the following Address-in-Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech to both Houses of Parliament be agreed to by this House:—

*"To His Excellency Sir William Cleaver
"Francis Robinson, Knight Grand Cross
"of the Most Distinguished Order of St.
"Michael and St. George, Governor and
"Commander-in-Chief in and over the
"Colony of Western Australia and its
"Dependencies, &c., &c., &c."*

*"MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—
"We, Her Majesty's loyal and dutiful
"subjects, the members of the Legislative
"Assembly of Western Australia, in Par-
"liament assembled, beg to assure Your
"Excellency of our loyalty and affection
"to our Most Gracious Sovereign."*

*"We thank Your Excellency for the
"Speech you have been good enough to
"address to us, and shall give it our most
"careful consideration and attention."*

MR. PIESSE: In rising to second the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech, while regretting the necessity that has occurred for summoning Parlia-

ment at this time of the year, I think, after hearing the remarks of the Attorney General in explanation of the Bill which has necessitated our being called together, it must be admitted that in acting as they have done the Government have been actuated only by a desire to give the newly enfranchised and all parties an opportunity of taking a part in the approaching elections, and of preventing the colony being deprived of a Parliament during the long interregnum that must otherwise occur. With regard to the Speech itself, it does not call for much comment; at the same time I would like to pass some few remarks with regard to the subject mentioned in paragraph 4 of the Speech, with reference to our goldfields. There is no denying the fact that we have before us evidence that there are within the boundaries of this colony goldfields of an almost unbounded extent. We have evidence before us daily that these fields as yet are in their infancy, and that it is to her goldfields that Western Australia must largely look for a great future. It cannot be denied that these gold discoveries have been the turning point in the history of this colony. Had it not been for these discoveries, we should no doubt have gone on in the even tenour of our way, as in the past; and it would have been years before we could have hoped to attain the prominent position we now occupy in the eyes of the world, and the still more prominent position that we are likely to occupy in the near future. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the fact that we have also other resources that may be coupled with our goldfields, and that it would be suicidal policy on our part to neglect those resources. Unless we become producers, unless we are able to feed these multitudes that are coming into the colony to develop our goldfields, what will be the use of these rich discoveries to us? If we are to go on, as in the past, importing our food supplies, what benefit will our goldfields, and the population which they are attracting, and are likely to attract, confer upon us? The result will be that the wealth that is wrested from our soil will be sent away to enrich other countries, instead of going into the pockets of our own hard-worked toilers who have taken up land in the colony. Unless we do something

to help these people, and unless agricultural development goes on hand in hand with the development of our goldfields, we shall not reap the advantages we ought to reap from our vast auriferous wealth. The richness of the fields is undoubted. I have had ample evidence of that from those who have visited the fields, persons who are directly interested with myself in commercial ventures, and who are of opinion, from what they themselves saw, that these fields are only in their infancy, and that they will yet astonish the world. All that is required is the necessary capital for their development. There can be no doubt that wealth is there for those who wish to seek it. At the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that we must do something else besides developing our goldfields, if the colony is going to derive any substantial benefit from these discoveries. As I have already said, unless our own farmers are in a position to supply the population attracted to these fields with the necessities of life in the way of food for themselves and fodder for their stock, the people of this colony will not reap that advantage from these goldfields which we have a reason to expect. We are told that public works in the shape of railways have been pushed ahead to such an extent that most of the outlying parts of the colony are now brought, or about to be brought, into direct communication with the centres of population, and that these railways afford our producers a means of bringing the products of the soil to market. But, if those who have watched the course of these railways will just consider a few moments, and take a note of the lines already constructed and extended, they will find that agricultural development has not kept pace with railway extension. We have not far to look for the reason. The reason is that unless you help the farmers more than you are helping them at present, by further protecting them from outside competition, the same thing will go on for ever. Foreign competition will drive our farmers to the wall. Although some additional protection was provided for the agricultural interests by the tariff passed last session, still the fact remains that it has not had the desired effect, so far as the farmer is concerned.

MR. SIMPSON: No, the miller got it.

MR. PIESSE: We still continue to import flour and other produce, and shall continue to do so unless some further steps are taken for shutting out these foreign importations and protecting our own farmers. The markets of the world may now be said to be in a state of bankruptcy, and what is the result so far as this colony is concerned? The colony is simply a dumping ground for the products of other countries, to the detriment of our own producers, the men who ought to reap the benefits and advantages of our goldfields, instead of the money going away to enrich the people of other countries. The only remedy for this state of things is to protect our own producers. You would soon bring that about if you did what I suggested you should do, afford still further protection to the farmers of the colony. A duty of £5 a ton on flour—it is no use arguing about it—would bring about the desired result in a very short time. It may be said that this would leave the consumer at the mercy of the local producer. I think it would soon be found that local competition would very soon level prices. That has been the case elsewhere. Take Victoria, South Australia, New South Wales, and Tasmania, with their protective tariffs, and what do we find? We find the price of produce in those colonies lower than ever, simply because competition within their own borders has brought about what we want to bring about here. Until you assist the farmers of this colony to develop the land, and encourage people to settle upon it, it is no use going on with public works in the shape of railways, or trying to push forward the colony. Railways alone cannot do it. You must encourage the cultivation of the soil by settling people upon the land, and protecting their industries. Of course I do not forget that we had before us last session a Homesteads Bill having this object in view—the settlement of the land; but that Bill has not yet been put into operation, though I hope it will soon; and the result, no doubt, will be that we shall see more settlement going on. But what encouragement is there for our farmers to go in for cultivation of wheat when South Australia and other colonies can land their produce in this colony at a cheaper rate than we can produce it, although we have thousands of acres capable

of producing larger crops than they have in Victoria. Those colonies being longer established, and possessing greater facilities and greater wealth than we have, are in a position to undersell our own farmers on their own ground, and they simply make Western Australia a dumping ground for the whole of their surplus supplies. Talk about building railways, what inducement is it to the settler or the farmer to offer him a railway, when you flood the market with foreign importations? It is simply offering him a moral sham. A man living 150 miles away is simply tabooed at once. That man cannot possibly compete with the man living only 40 miles away. The railway rates should be differential rates, so as to give those residing long distances away some chance of competing with those who are more favourably situated. We all know that most of the land in proximity to our towns has been taken up long ago, and what inducement is there to people to go farther into the country, and settle down in the hope of being able to make a living out of the soil? All the land in the Avon Valley within reach of the railway has been taken up—

MR. RICHARDSON: Is it all cultivated?

MR. PIESSE: A great deal of it is, and a great deal more would be, if our farmers were protected as they ought to be. I say it is no use talking about building railways, unless you also encourage people to settle on the soil, and to cultivate it, and place them all on the same footing by adopting differential rates, to enable those at a distance to compete with those who are nearer to market. Unless you do this, it means simply ruin to those who put their money in the soil.

AN HON. MEMBER: What do they do it for then?

MR. PIESSE: Another thing: we talk a great deal about the conservation of water for our goldfields; but what about conserving water in the arid country where our agriculturists are struggling to eke out a living, wrestling with the heavily timbered land, and clearing it for cultivation? Are these people not entitled to some consideration as well as the miners on our goldfields? Unless you do something to ameliorate the condition of the man who is struggling to settle himself on the soil, and to

make his life a happy one, by providing him with the necessary means to enable him to settle down in some comfort, and with some prospect of success, how can you expect him to develop the land? There is no doubt that the colony is making progress; and, being largely interested as I am in the colony, it is a pleasure to me to watch the advancement which it is making; at the same time we must not lose sight of the fact that we ought to do something to endeavour to make the prosperity general. It is no use continuing to do what we are doing now—simply helping one side to pauperise the colony, as we certainly shall do if we drive those who are on the soil off it. It is our duty to do something to try to keep the wealth that is raised from our soil within our own borders, and let our own settlers derive some benefit from it. If we want people to settle down in the colony we must give them every possible encouragement to do so. We know we have not the attraction that the other colonies possess, in the way of amusements and diversions of that kind, to make the place attractive, though I trust we are within measurable distance of the time when we shall be able to offer these attractions and inducements to people to make the colony their home. In the meantime everything we can do should be done to encourage people to settle on the land, and to cultivate it. The agricultural interests of the colony are, I am sure, second only in importance to its gold-mining interests. The hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) is always twitting me with looking very closely after the interests of the agricultural industry. I think I might retort by saying that the hon. member himself looks equally closely after the interests of the gold-mining industry, being largely interested in that industry. More power to him, I say. I am sure the hon. members earn what he wrestles from the soil, and earns it very hard, and deserves everything he can get in return. At the same time, I think our object should be to keep as much as we can of this golden harvest in the colony, by giving every possible encouragement and protection to our local producers. I would go in for out-and-out protection myself. Once I was a free trader, but I have become a protectionist of late. I have turned round and changed my opinion, like my friend

the hon. member for Albany does. With regard to His Excellency's Speech, there is not very much in it to remark upon, but I thought I might avail myself of the opportunity of ventilating my feelings with reference to my pet subject—agriculture. I trust members will pardon this digression on my part. With these remarks, I beg to second the Address-in-Reply.

MR. DEHAMEL: The Government asked the hon. member for the Williams to bless, but it seems to me he has risen rather to curse than to bless. The hon. member has told us one or two peculiar things. He has told us that protection is the best thing for the farmer, whereas the merest tyro in political economy knows that free trade, all the world over, is the best thing for the farmer, and that protection is good only for the artisan or to the mill-owner. Do we find the hon. member telling us these things from the point of view of the farmer? No. From the point of view of the mill-owner? Yes. I hope the day is far distant when the daily food of the people, out of which the hon. member makes a portion of his living, shall be taxed to such an extent as the hon. member, as a mill-owner, would like to see it taxed. We have also been told, and truly, that looking after our land is the great thing for us—the cultivation of the land. No doubt that is so, and that our goldfields are merely an incident. Unless we encourage our farmers—not by protection but by free trade—our goldfields will not have that beneficial effect which they otherwise would have upon the colony. The Speech tells us—and for this the Government are responsible—that the prospects of the colony are in every way satisfactory. It seems to me that the Government of this colony must go about like the ostrich with its head in the sand, when they put such a statement as that in the mouth of the Governor. Speaking for myself, I know that if you go from one end of the colony to the other you will find that ninety-nine out of every hundred you meet will tell you that the position and prospects of the colony were never worse, that money was never tighter, that the difficulty of providing food and other necessities was never greater than it is at the present moment. Go into any of our small towns, and see the houses and

shops standing idle. Ask the small traders and storekeepers in Perth, and what will they tell you? Go to our large merchants and ask them about it, and they will all tell you that during the whole twenty years they have carried on business in this colony they have never known business to be in such an awful, such a rotten, such a terrible state as it is in now.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Where is all this?

MR. DEHAMEL: The Government are never tired of trying to persuade people that the policy of the present Ministry has made the colony prosperous. But I say that their policy has failed altogether in making the colony prosperous, and that the colony was never really less prosperous than it is at the present time. With reference to that bungle which has necessitated Parliament to be called together on this occasion, it is my intention to say but very few words. I hope, however, that what has occurred will act as a warning to the Government to treat the suggestions which come from the Opposition benches a little more courteously in the future than they have done in the past. It is no part of the duty of the Opposition to help the Government out of any holes into which they may get. It is the duty of the Opposition simply and solely to criticise the actions and measures of the Government, and to modify them if necessary, and so bring them into accord with what they believe to be the wishes of the people, and the true interests of the colony. But the responsibility of their measures rests with the Ministerial benches, and I trust that this little incident will have a good and wholesome effect upon the present Ministry, and will lead them in the future to treat more courteously any suggestions which are offered from this side of the House, so that there may be some inducement for members sitting here to do what they can to help the Government in carrying on the business of the colony for the good of all. Having said that, I cannot let pass the opportunity afforded by this session of Parliament without condemning in the strongest terms that I can find to condemn them, the utterances of the Premier as delivered at Newcastle, in October last. I find that the Premier of the colony on that occasion said—

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It is very stale that.

MR. DEHAMEL: It may be stale, but this is what he said: "Party Government in other places meant that favours which the Government had to bestow were given to those who supported it, and this would be the effect sooner or later here; and the electors should not lose sight of this in choosing their members for the new Parliament."

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member has quoted, but I deny the accuracy of his quotation. I do not think I am bound to sit here and be misrepresented. I never said anything of the sort with regard to the coming election, or about giving favours to those who supported the Government. I hope he will take my assurance that I did not say so.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Didn't you take your own reporter?

MR. DEHAMEL: I am quoting from the *Daily News* report. Whether the report is right or wrong I cannot say, for I was not present. I have only before me the printed report, and these are the exact words of the report. It is no misrepresentation of mine at all, but the exact words as published in the *Daily News*.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): You went to get an accurate report of what I did say, and the reporter said he hadn't got it.

MR. DEHAMEL: Whether these words are literally and actually the words of the Premier or not I cannot say, but I refer for confirmation of them to the statement—the corrected statement—which appeared in the *West Australian*, and which embodies the same sentiments in even a stronger form, though in other words. I refer to that for confirmation of the words I have quoted.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Point to some act, not words.

MR. DEHAMEL: I never listened to anything more pernicious, to anything more untrue,—

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Why, its been going on for years.

MR. DEHAMEL: I say I never listened to a more pernicious doctrine than is contained in these utterances of the Premier. They are sentiments which every right-minded man, whether a member of this

House or one of the general public, must emphatically condemn. I hoped at first that I might attribute these utterances to some "irresponsible babbler," but can we speak of the Premier of the colony as an "irresponsible babbler"?

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Certainly.

MR. DEHAMEL: I trow not; I hope not. The Premier has himself ventured to refer to one member of this House as an "irresponsible babbler"—[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear]—forgetting that the "irresponsible babbler" of to-day may be the Minister of to-morrow. If we cannot regard these words as the words of an "irresponsible babbler," they must be taken in all seriousness; and if we want confirmation of them I turn to the words of the Attorney General on the same occasion, who is reported in the same paper as follows: "The Attorney General spoke neatly and with dry humour, saying the inevitable effect of party Government must be for supporters of the Ministry to insist on getting the plums, leaving to Opposition members only that poor kind of Northern cake called 'brownie'—the plums in it being very small."

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Quite right, too.

MR. DEHAMEL: I am glad to hear that the Attorney General at all events does not attempt to go away from his words. He admits that that was, and that that is, the theory and the policy of the present Government.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): No, no! That is another matter altogether.

MR. DEHAMEL: I say also that the actions of Ministers generally have endorsed this very policy which was given vent to by the Premier at Newcastle. We have witnessed one of the most unusual spectacles that I think were ever witnessed in any part of the world, when we have seen every agricultural show dinner in the colony transformed into a political arena by Ministers. I say it is most unfair and most improper to make use of these social gatherings for purely party and political purposes.

MR. RICHARDSON: It is never done anywhere else, is it?

MR. DEHAMEL: No. I say that these gatherings were simply prostituted to serve and benefit the Government of the day to their own advantage. In every

other part of the world, at agricultural meetings and other social gatherings of this kind, two things—politics and religion—are absolutely and entirely, and rigourously excluded. It has been left to us in Western Australia to see a new era inaugurated.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It always has been done here.

MR. DEHAMEL: Will members think for a moment what this kind of thing must portend? It must portend that the presence of the Governor at all these meetings must be absolutely prohibited. It will be impossible for the Governor of the colony, filling the position that he does, to attend any meeting where party politics are going to be discussed as the order of the day. It means that these social gatherings, which are gatherings of concord, must be turned into gatherings of discord; and I certainly, for my part, reprobate any such action in the very strongest terms possible. But the present Government have not only used these occasions for party purposes, and for magnifying their power and their office, they have also used the people's money for the same purpose. They have used the people's money by having special trains to take them down to these show dinners in order to cadge votes for purely political purposes.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): "Cadge" is hardly Parliamentary, is it?

MR. DEHAMEL: This false system was commenced at York, but when it was introduced at York it was at a public banquet given by the electors to their member; and at that banquet the discussion of politics was perfectly right and perfectly in order. If the thing had ceased at York nothing could have been said about it. But it went on at every gathering. On every possible occasion the action of the Ministry has been the same, to convert these bucolic social gatherings into political gatherings; and I say they showed the greatest want of taste and the greatest breach of hospitality in doing so. For my own part, I will use every endeavour possible to prevent a repetition of conduct such as this on the part of Ministers. With reference to the interjection of the hon. member for the DeGrey, who asked isn't it done anywhere else, I may say that in England there is only one public banquet at which

politics are always looked for, and that is the Lord Mayor's dinner, on the Prince of Wales' birthday. From time immemorial, I believe, Her Majesty's Ministers have gone down to Guildhall on that occasion, and that occasion only, to declare their policy. It has become a custom, and it is looked for. That is the only exception that I know when it is permitted for social gatherings of this character to be turned into a political forum.

MR. SIMPSON: What about the other colonies?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): It rests with the societies themselves.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: They won't interrupt a guest.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): They always look for it. They say they like it.

MR. DEHAMEL: Here the Government have not the excuse that they avail themselves of this opportunity for enunciating their policy. As a matter of fact they enunciate no policy. If you read their speeches they simply amount to this: "Put in the member you have got; he is a capital fellow, and a supporter of ours, and you cannot do better than put him in again." That is the sum and substance of their utterances. As for declaring a policy, they never said a word that indicated what their policy was. In that respect their speeches were as barren as barren could be.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): As barren as your speech at Albany.

MR. DEHAMEL: And why? Because they have absolutely and literally no policy of any kind or description to place before the country, except that policy set down in the Premier's Newcastle manifesto—"the spoils to the victors." I trust, for my own part, that the country will repudiate any such American doctrine as that, and I trust that every member will do the same. I trust that members will consider what we are sent to this House for. Are we sent here simply as representatives of narrow parochialism? I say no. We are sent here to perform two special duties. One is—and the main one—to do our duty to our colony, our duty to our country, irrespective of what constituency we may by accident be representing. We are also here, in a minor

capacity, to see that those things which we consider rightly and properly due to our constituencies are not overlooked or neglected. These are the objects for which we are sent to this House; and I do hope that members will not adopt—I hope they will all repudiate—that fatal and pernicious policy which was announced by the Premier at Newcastle. We are now on the eve of a dissolution, and I trust that during the approaching Parliamentary struggle, a high moral tone may prevail throughout the colony, that no feeling of petty parochialism will be displayed, that we shall have none of that "sop" or Newcastle policy put before the people, and that the electors will treat the whole question on the highly moral ground of returning men only who will enter Parliament for the good of their country, and not to serve the particular interests of the particular place they may happen to represent. I hope sincerely that even the hon. member for the Williams, between this and the next election, will change, and will remember that there is something higher in life even than making a little money out of increased taxation placed upon the food of the people.

MR. SOLOMON: It is not my intention, on this occasion, to say more than very few words; in fact there is no occasion for it. The principal object which the Government had in calling us together, I take it, was to facilitate the holding of the elections, and to give those who have been newly admitted to the franchise an opportunity of exercising the privilege conferred upon them. I think the Government did perfectly right in calling the House together, under the circumstances. With regard to the prospects of the colony, referred to in the Speech, no doubt our prospects are improving, and, if everything is not as satisfactory as we could wish, still we have every reason to congratulate ourselves upon the general outlook. There is one subject, however, which I should like to refer to, although it is too late now to remedy it: I refer to the long period of exemption granted by the Government to those engaged in gold-mining. There can be no doubt that the public are not pleased with the action of the Government in this matter. I think, taking into consideration the circumstances of the

colony, and that every penny spent by these gold-diggers in the colony would have been a real benefit to the colony—I think the Government would have acted more wisely if they had limited the period of exemption to a few weeks, instead of affording these men an opportunity of going to the other colonies to spend their money. I do not think there was any necessity for this prolonged exemption, more especially as we have been fortunate enough to have had some rains on these goldfields, which has enabled a great many of the men to remain on the field. I think the Government themselves must now see that in this matter they committed somewhat of a mistake. Beyond this, I see nothing in the Speech or the actions of the Government to say much about; and with these few remarks I beg to support the Address-in-Reply.

On the motion of Mr. R. F. SHOLL, the debate was then adjourned until the following day.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eight minutes to 5 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 21st December, 1893.

Address-in-Reply: Presentation of—Suspension of Standing Orders—Suspension of Sitting—Electoral Rolls Bill: first reading: second reading—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 2 o'clock.

PRAYERS.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION OF.

At ten minutes past two o'clock, p.m., the Council adjourned to present the Address-in-Reply to His Excellency's Speech.

The Council re-assembled at twenty minutes past two o'clock.

The President resumed the chair, and announced that the Address adopted by the Council on the 20th instant had been presented to His Excellency the Governor, in accordance with the resolution of the Council; and that His Excellency had been pleased to express his thanks for the said Address, and for the assurance of the Council of its desire to consider and deal with all matters brought before them.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS.

THE HON. J. G. H. AMHERST, in accordance with notice, moved that during the current session, so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as may be necessary to pass any Bills through their different stages.

Question—put and passed.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING.

At half-past two o'clock, the sitting of the Council was suspended until five o'clock p.m., when the President resumed the chair.

ELECTORAL ROLLS BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly, and was read a first time.

SECOND READING.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton): Before the hon. member moves the second reading of this Bill, I may say that there is nothing, now that the Standing Orders have been suspended, to prevent the Bill being passed through its remaining stages at once; but I think time should be given between each reading, so that hon. members may have an opportunity of looking through the Bill.

THE HON. J. G. H. AMHERST: I beg now to move that this Bill be read a second time. I may explain that the reason the Bill is brought forward is fully set forth in His Excellency's Speech. If hon. members will look at Part II., Section 14 of the Act of 1893, they will see that it cannot come into force until after a dissolution of the Assembly, and this means that the Electoral Rolls, which I believe have already, to some extent, been prepared, are *ultra vires*, unless some