

committee, when perhaps safeguards sufficiently strong can be set up. There is a vast amount of land in this country which I don't think can be settled unless purchased by the State; but except the operations are properly and honestly administered, as they will be no doubt by the present Government, I can see very great harm indeed. I have felt it my duty to point these things out, but I will go so far as to say that I am prepared to vote for the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6.36 o'clock, p.m., until next day.

## Legislative Assembly.

THURSDAY, 23RD JULY, 1896.

*Powers of Attorney Bill; third reading—Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill; third reading—Streets and Roads Closure Bill; second reading—Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill; in committee—Adjournment.*

The Speaker took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

### POWERS OF ATTORNEY BILL.

#### THIRD READING.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

### AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

#### THIRD READING.

Read a third time, and transmitted to Legislative Council.

### STREETS AND ROADS CLOSURE (EASTERN RAILWAY) BILL.

#### SECOND READING.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): In moving the second reading of the Bill, it is only just for me to say that most of the provisions in the Bill, which are included in the schedule, are merely formal; for the reason that these roads, especially those named in schedules 1, 2, and 3, have been, for a number of years, closed against traffic. A communication in reference to them has been made with the municipality of North Fremantle, and no objection has been raised by that body to the closure proposed in the Bill. I may say that where a closure will, in any degree, interfere with traffic, it is proposed to deal with the traffic by making provision for it. For instance, in Section 3 of the schedule, where it is proposed to close a portion of Pensioner-road, at North Fremantle, by diverting the traffic, another road to meet the requirements of that traffic will be made. With regard to Section 4 of the schedule, referring to the closing of part of Kensington-lane, in the city of Perth, no objection seems to have been taken to it by the municipality of Perth; but with regard to Section 5 of the schedule, a communication has been received from the City Council, asking that an overhead bridge be placed at the junction of this road with the railway, leading into Roe-street; but, owing to the very steep embankment which occurs there, and which prevents the carrying out of the City Council's request, an overhead bridge cannot be made. It is a lane that is not much used, and has, for a number of years, been blocked against traffic. What little traffic there is consists of people crossing from this lane and passing through the railway reserve, then getting through the fences which cut off the communication between Roe-street and other streets in West Perth. Therefore, it has not been found necessary to make an overhead bridge at that place. As I do not intend to ask the House to consider this Bill in Committee immediately, and as, no doubt, there are some hon. members here to watch the interests of the city, if there are any objections there will be ample time to consider them. With regard to Section 6 of the

schedule, it was proposed to close the portion of Claisebrook-street mentioned in the schedule, but since then some arrangement has been arrived at which, I think, will meet with the approval of the City Council, for closing a portion of Edward-street instead. I feel sure this arrangement will meet all requirements, and satisfy the City Council. I intend to lay on the table a plan shewing what is proposed to be done, and shall be glad to receive from hon. members any suggestion or objection which may be thought necessary, and will, as far as possible, answer them. Hon. members will see from the plan that the closing of Edward-street, and the opening of a street from Edward-street to Claisebrook-road, will meet the requirements of the city. Sections 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the schedule all refer to closures made some years ago, and are merely formal. They are included in the Bill now to enable the streets to be permanently closed, and the rights-of-way which have existed to be vested in the Crown. In asking that these streets be closed, I think no hardship will be inflicted on the public, for the reason that most of these streets have not been used for many years. With the exception of the portion of Claisebrook-road which I have mentioned, I think very little objection can be raised to the Bill in any particular. As I do not intend to ask the House that this Bill shall be considered in Committee until Tuesday next, there will be opportunity for hon. members to inspect the plan, and look into the particulars. I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. GEORGE: I do not propose to say, at this stage, very much in reference to this Bill as to its particulars, but I think it emphasises what I said in my few remarks on the Address-in-Reply, as to the great necessity for Bills of this nature to be circulated amongst members of the House before the session begins. With regard to particular streets affecting the city of Perth, it has been the desire of the Railway Department to close these streets for some considerable time past, and for something like nine or ten months the department has been in communication with the City Council, endeavoring to get their consent to the closure. But the

City Council, for reasons which, at the proper time, I will go into, have declined to give their consent. I think that when a Bill of this sort, that is likely to interfere with the rights of the citizens of Perth, or indeed of any other city, is prepared by a Government department, that Bill should be circulated amongst members at a much earlier date than has been done in this case. For my part, I can see no difficulty whatever in doing that in the case of a contemplated improvement that has been chewed over by the Works Department for many months past. With reference to No. 5 in the schedule, the Commissioner says the embankment is too high to permit of the erection of an overhead bridge. I do not think it is too high. I believe it is about four feet above the formation level, and four feet can make no difference whatever in the construction of such a bridge.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It will be preferable to put a subway.

MR. GEORGE: The Commissioner will find the objection to an overhead bridge is likely to be a departmental objection, rather than a practical one. A bridge can be placed there if the department chooses to put it there. With regard to Claisebrook-road, I will go into that question when I see what the department proposes to do; but from the way the matter has been dealt with hitherto, I am very dubious as to what the department really intends to do.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE BILL.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 6, inclusive—Agreed to.

Clause 7—Governor may purchase lands:

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he intended, if the Government would consent to this amendment, to propose other amendments which would be necessary if this amendment, which affected the principle of the Bill, was adopted. Of course, if the Government or the Committee were not favorable to the principle of his amendment, it would not be necessary for him to move the further amendments; but, if the Committee accepted his suggestion, he would ask that progress

be reported, in order to make the necessary amendments, with the concurrence of the Attorney-General. Seeing that it would not be sufficient for the Land Purchase Board to report on the suitability of lands proposed to be purchased, the amendment he proposed to be made in the principle was that such purchase should not be finally confirmed until it had been submitted to Parliament. It was absolutely necessary, in his opinion, that this amendment should be inserted in this clause, for there was nothing in the Bill to safeguard a position of things that might happen. They had to deal with things as they might possibly arise; and, while he did not wish to suggest any reflections whatever, yet under this Bill as it stood it would be possible for the Government—not this Government, but some other perhaps—to appoint a committee, to be called the Land Purchase Board, which would have power to recommend the purchase of lands belonging to friends of the Government, or relatives of the Government, or lands which members of the Government themselves might be financially interested in. This Board was simply the Ministry, for it would be appointed by the Governor-in-Council, and the Governor-in-Council was the Ministry. He was aware there was a feeling in favor of a Bill of this kind, not only here but elsewhere; but, at the same time, it was one of those measures that should be carefully safeguarded. If there was to be an expenditure up to as much as £200,000 for the purchase of land under this Bill, and if this money was to be obtained from people's savings, such as the Post-office Savings Bank moneys, it was not too much to ask that the documents and all particulars with regard to each purchase should be laid on the table of the House before the purchase should be finally completed. Therefore, he moved, as an amendment, in line 6 of the clause, after the word "may," to insert the words "subject to confirmation by Parliament." He desired strongly to urge this amendment on the House, being perfectly satisfied that, although this Bill was calculated to do a great deal of good, it might do a certain amount of harm, and might open the door to suspicions of corruption that might be very serious in their effect. Therefore, they

could not be too careful in safeguarding its provisions.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS** (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said he could not help thinking the hon. member was raising another bogie, for the sake of dispersing it again. He would ask whether this little Bill was the only opportunity which Governments had of doing anything extraordinary or corrupt. Governments were placed in a position which enabled them, if so disposed, to do lots of things. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: They do them.] The point was that Governments had to answer to Parliament afterwards.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** When the mischief is done, and then it is too late.

**THE PREMIER:** We have been buying land now.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS** (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said he was afraid that they had been buying a good lot, and they had to account for it. He was afraid the object of the hon. member was to make the Bill inoperative—a dead letter—and that would be a pity. Hon. members had kindly stated they would not have so much fear of what might be done under this Bill if they knew the present Government would always be in power, and if sure that a corrupt Government might not come in at some time; but the practical answer to that was that the present limit of the Bill was £200,000, and when further money was required for extending its operations, Parliament would have an opportunity for reconsidering the question, so that the Government could not go beyond the limit prescribed in the Bill. They were hopeful that a great portion of this £200,000 would, before long, be applied profitably for the purposes contemplated in this Bill. He hoped that hon. members would not take the same ghastly view of the subject that the hon. member for Nainine took, but would give the Government credit for a desire to do that which was right, and in the interests of the colony. He could not help thinking there was nothing in the hon. member's objection.

**MR. SIMPSON** said he could not understand the objection to this amendment. It was an exact copy of a provision which had been made in a Land Bill then

before the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales. He did not know whether the measure had been passed yet. The provision was inserted by the Ministry of New South Wales, after a careful inspection of the system ruling in South Australia, also as the result of their own observation, and the conclusion arrived at by various committees and by a commission. He really could not see any objection to the insertion of the provision for safeguarding this Bill. It would be an immense safeguard in the transactions which might take place under the Bill, and would relieve the Ministry of a lot of responsibility. He would support the amendment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest) said the hon. member for Nannine was raising an objection in this case which might be raised against almost everything the Government proposed to do. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Two wrongs don't make a right.] The hon. member seemed to think that a Board consisting of five persons, together with five or six members of the Government, were all going to conspire together in order to purchase land belonging to some friend or relative. That was what the hon. member suggested, for he argued that the members of the Board and the members of the Ministry might conspire together for the sake of doing some friendly turn to a relative or a friend, or even to a member of the Government. Might it not be said that members of Parliament could be got at, if the confirmation of any proposed purchase had to be referred to the House? [MR. GEORGE: Never.] His idea was that it was ridiculous and absurd for the hon. member for Nannine to contend that members of the Government, responsible to this House, and also an independent Board, the members of which would not be appointed the same every time, though the Board would no doubt be a permanent body, could not be trusted to do what was right. At any rate, the clause as it stood in this Bill found a place in the Queensland Act, of which this Bill was to a large extent a copy. The Queensland Act was passed in 1894, and he had asked for particulars showing the operations which took place under the Act. The Premier of that colony had replied that the Act had been

so short a time in operation that he was unable to give any information as to the working and results of the measure, other than the figures which he forwarded in the following form:—

"PURCHASES MADE UNDER THE AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT OF 1894  
(QUEENSLAND).

- "Glengallan estate, 6,301 acres, at 55s.
- "an acre. 4,387 acres selected.
- "North Toolburra, 10,983 acres, at 40s. an acre. 3,959 acres selected.
- "Westbrook, 9,886 acres, at 48s. an acre. 5,338 acres selected.
- "Rosewood, 6,160 acres, at 72s. 6d.
- "an acre. 610 acres selected.
- "Clifton, 9,226 acres, at 55s. 5d. an acre. Not yet opened to selection.
- "Cryna, 3,973 acres, at 50s. an acre.
- "Not yet opened for selection."

These six large estates (continued the Premier) represented 46,529 acres purchased by the Queensland Government, under the powers of that Act; and this result showed that, although the Act was passed only in 1894, its powers and advantages had been availed of to some extent. It seemed to him that the objections of hon. members to the Government dealing with this matter of the purchase of lands was based on some misapprehension as to the power of the Government. The Government did not want power from that House to incur liabilities. In England the Government could make war against all the world, or they could make a thousand peers to-day, and as many more to-morrow—they could do anything, almost, without applying to Parliament, and yet they did not do it. The Government for their actions were responsible to Parliament and also to the country, and the Government were very careful not to do anything in which they would not be thoroughly justified. The amendment proposed by the hon. member for Nannine would altogether spoil the Bill, as it would prevent any business being done, and he hoped therefore that the House would not listen to the suggestion. If the Government could not make a contract to buy land until it had been placed before Parliament, people who had land to sell would say that they could not afford to wait while this was being done. The Bill provided that land

should only be purchased upon the recommendation of an independent Board; and, in placing this provision in the Bill, he thought the Government had adopted every safeguard that was necessary.

MR. A. FORREST opposed the amendment, and said the recommendation of what was to all intents and purposes a Government Board, together with the approval of the Executive Council, would be sufficient to ensure the safe working of the Bill. The members of that House, the representatives of the people, would not sell the country for a pound of flesh. His feeling on the subject was that there was sufficient faith in the honesty and integrity of the Government to trust them to buy land. The Executive was already trusted to buy hundreds and thousands of pounds' worth of land, in and about the chief towns of the colony. The hon. member for Nannine had laid great stress on the statement that the money with which it was proposed to buy agricultural lands would be taken out of the savings of the people, and that therefore it should be safeguarded in every way. That argument could be knocked clean off, because the people who put their money into the Savings Bank had the principal and interest guaranteed by the State. He hoped the House would not listen to the amendment, because, as the House sat for only four months in the year, a very good purchase might fall through because the vendors were not prepared to wait for the approval of Parliament being obtained perhaps six or nine months afterwards, especially as it was known that some members of the House were totally against this Bill and against the interests of agriculture altogether. Those members had only one object in view, and that was the interests of the goldfields. He had lately seen a paragraph in a Coolgardie newspaper, for instance, in which it was urged that every sixpence of public money should be spent on the goldfields. But hon. members would agree that a great deal was being done for the goldfields, especially if two and a half millions were to be borrowed for a water supply. The House was justified in trusting the Board that was to be appointed under the Bill, and members could fairly trust the Government to buy some estates, the

purchase of which was recommended by the Board. Anyone who had any practical experience would know that neither the Board nor the Government would dare to give more than the actual value of the land. It was well known to every man in the colony that country land was not like city property; that it did not rise in value from one thousand to five thousand in a day. Country land had a certain commercial value, which was generally known, and it would not be feasible for anyone to give for it more than would yield interest if the land was worked.

MR. MORAN said it would have been better if, in accordance with the Queensland practice, some information could have been given to the House as to the lands it was intended to purchase under the bill. In Queensland, before a similar Act was passed, it was known throughout the colony that the intention was to buy back fertile lands on the Darling Downs; and much would be done to remove the objection which the hon. member for Nannine made if the Government could say where they proposed to buy land under the provisions of this Bill. As far as he knew, the most desirable land to acquire was to be found in the Avon Valley, or, roughly speaking, land lying between Perth and Northam, also between Perth and Beverley. There were estates in those districts on which it would be well to settle people in small holdings, and he did not think it would be difficult for the Government to say they intended to purchase land in those districts. It was about time that challenges between members who represented agricultural districts, and those representing the goldfields, should cease to be thrown out. The goldfields members had supported agricultural interests in nearly every instance, and he challenged the hon. member for West Kimberley to say that he (Mr. Moran) had ever opposed a single measure which was designed to help those who were settled on the land. Every member should look upon himself as a citizen of Western Australia, while of course battling for his own particular industry, and should not throw out recriminations about class interests. The hon. member for Nannine had shown no hostility to the agricultural districts. This Bill could be discussed without such references as those which the hon.

member for West Kimberley had made. There was no doubt great force in what the Premier urged, that, if the land could not be bought until the contract had been confirmed by Parliament, it would not be bought at all, because the vendors would want cash for their land, and would want the transaction settled. Let the Government give a reasonable price for the land, and he would approve of purchases made in suitable localities.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the hon. member for Yilgarn must have a short memory when he said the hon. member for Nannine had never shown any hostility to the agricultural districts. He (the Attorney-General) remembered that the hon. member for Nannine had styled the Ministry a "mangel wurzel" Government.

MR. MORAN: That was the member for Geraldton.

MR. SIMPSON: Yes, I was the party who said that.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he rose to point out that, under the Bill, only land situate within 20 miles of a railway could be purchased. At the present time the land which the Government had in view was, no doubt, that lying within the districts mentioned by the hon. member for Yilgarn. That land and other lands lying between Perth and Bunbury would most readily suggest themselves as belonging to the strictly agricultural portions of the colony. Therefore the operation of the Bill was restricted to lands near a railway.

MR. THROSSELL pointed out that within thirty days of the meeting of Parliament, a report had to be presented to Parliament, as required by this Bill, showing the particulars of any land which had been purchased and the price given for it. If that clause had not appeared in the Bill he would have supported the amendment of the hon. member for Nannine. The Government were dealing with the expenditure of huge sums of money on the goldfields, and the House had a sufficient guarantee for the honest expenditure of the £200,000 named in the Bill to promote settlement. He would, therefore, oppose the amendment.

MR. GEORGE asked whether the Government had entered into negotia-

tions for the purchase of any particular estate, or whether they had any particular estate in view.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) assured hon. members that the Government had no particular estate in view. He might say that, as Parliament sat only four months in the year, great hardship might be done by waiting until Parliament met before a purchase could be carried out.

MR. GEORGE said that, while he could not support the amendment, he would prefer to see a number of small estates purchased, rather than that all the money should be devoted to purchasing one large estate. He was glad to be assured that the Government had not negotiated for the purchase of any estate in anticipation of the Bill being passed.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: Not the slightest.

MR. HARPER said that the amendment of the hon. member for Nannine only contemplated the shutting of one little door, while there were thousands of doors open for corruption. If it were considered desirable on the part of the country to acquire these lands—a question about which there might be two opinions—it was desirable that the Government should have discretion to deal fairly and reasonably with the purchasers. One matter which should not be overlooked was that there were large estates owned by railway companies, and, if it were intended to buy any of the lands of those companies with this money, he would certainly oppose the Bill. Parliament should say distinctly that the lands of railway companies were to be excluded from the operation of the Bill. It would be most undesirable, in the present condition of those companies, that any overtures whatever should be accepted from them.

THE PREMIER: We have not the slightest intention.

MR. HARPER said this point should be made clear, or future trouble might arise. It should be distinctly understood that the companies would get no relief whatever from the Government under this Bill. He hoped the Government did not intend to deal with any land that was not within a reasonable

distance of a railway, and of centres of population. It was not at all desirable to purchase the remnants of old estates, at a considerable distance from a railway.

MR. LEFROY hoped the Government would appoint a number of really practical men to deal with the valuation of land when a purchase was contemplated; and he hoped that the valuation would be based upon what the land would produce, and not be based on the price of wheat calculated at five shillings a bushel, or chaff at £8 a ton. The valuation should be something considerably lower than that; otherwise the people who purchased this land from the Government would inevitably "go to the wall," and the money of the State invested in the purchase would go there with them. It seemed strange that the land which it was proposed to acquire should not have been sold already. Why was it that, if people were prepared to sell their land, the purchasers had not come forward to buy it? It seemed to him that the only reason was that the Government would be expected to give a higher price for it than anybody else would give; therefore he hoped the Board which would be appointed would be careful not to give too high a price. Some people placed a fictitious value on their land; but the value of agricultural land in Western Australia at the present time should not be placed at too high a rate, as produce would not always bring the price that it did now. He hoped that, if the country continued to prosper, there would not be any antagonistic feeling between the mining and agricultural interests. Let all interests of the colony work together; and, while everyone fought for his own interest, let that be done with a due regard for the other producing interests.

MR. COOKWORTHY said the reason why some large estates were not sold was that they could be sold only in one block, which was too large a transaction for one buyer to have to handle. In the South-West, he knew of one large estate for which there were many buyers if it could be subdivided. The Bill would enable the Government to subdivide such an estate and sell at a reasonable price to small holders, thereby enabling many settlers to be supported on it,

whereas only two or three families were now on the land. He had no doubt that what he had said on this point would apply to other parts of the colony. With regard to the amendment, there was a great deal to be said; but Parliament made the Government, and, as long as Parliament was not corrupt, the Government would not be corrupt. He would not have pleasure in supporting the Government if he thought they were corrupt, and he did not think there was any need for the amendment which had been proposed.

MR. JAMES said one strong argument in favor of the Bill was that it would open up land which was now locked up, and enable it to be cultivated. The owners of such land complained that they could not get reasonable prices for it, whereas the men who wanted to buy it said they were not able to get it at a reasonable price. If the amendment were passed, it would afford an object-lesson as to what values were placed upon lands in different parts of the colony; but the Government could be safely trusted to spend the £200,000 provided by the Bill. He would strongly support any project that had for its object the settlement of the land. If this object could be promoted, he would support a vote for five times the amount named in the Bill.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said this Bill would not be one that the Government would with any pleasure look forward to administering. It seemed to him that it would be a troublesome measure to carry out, because, whatever the Government might do, some of their critics would tell them they should have done something different. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: The amendment would relieve you of that.] It would relieve the Government of trouble, but it would not work.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said the Premier had admitted that the only objection to the amendment was that it would not work; but, as it had been pointed out that the Government would be the only buyer for the particular estates which were to be acquired, there was no need to hurry the transaction. It would be different if city property was to be purchased. There being only one purchaser, there could be no competition;

and if there were no competition, there would be no loss in waiting until Parliament met for the ratification of a purchase. If the Government were going to be competitors in the land market, then the Bill should not pass at all. If the Government were going to purchase land which someone else would purchase and subdivide, it was the last thing the Government should do; but if there were some large estates which no one but the Government would buy and cut up into small holdings, they would have no competitors, and the matter could afford to wait until it was brought before Parliament. He hoped hon. members would vote for the amendment. He would vote for it if he had to vote alone.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS** (Hon. A. R. Richardson) asked the hon. member for Nannine, as a man who had large dealings, how much business he would do if all the details of his business were to be made public. He (the Commissioner) was sure the hon. member's transactions would be reduced very considerably in such a case. If all purchases of land by the Crown had to be brought before Parliament to be ratified by hon. members, he would sooner leave the matter alone.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH**: There is only one buyer.

**MR. SIMPSON** said that, as there was only one buyer, the Crown, for the land which the Government proposed to purchase, nothing would be lost by adopting the amendment.

**THE PREMIER**: No one would resell the land without a profit, except the Government.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH** said that, as to the Board being independent, it would be extremely difficult in these days to get a Board that would be independent of outside pressure. He ventured to say that, in a small community like this, one of the difficulties of administering the Bill would be the getting of a board of level-headed men who were not imbued with the "boom" spirit that was abroad at the present time, and which was very likely to get into land dealings. If the contracts were to be submitted to Parliament the Government would be relieved of an unpleasant duty, and hon. members would be able to see that too high a price was not being given

for the land. The powers proposed to be conferred by the Bill were not in operation in other places; and now that the State was starting to settle small holders on resumed land, caution should be observed. The history of the resumption of land in the other colonies had shewed that Australian Governments had simply been an "Aunt Sally" for the careful, judicious old speculator to have a shot at. The amendment would strengthen the hands of the Government, while it did not interfere with the principle of the Bill. He wished the Government would see their way to accept the amendment. It would save them trouble, and be a safeguard for the interests of the people.

**MR. SOLOMON** said that, if a man had 100,000 acres of land to sell, it would be unjust to publicly discuss his offer, as he might not be able to sell it elsewhere. If it were decided to amend the clause as suggested, offers of land, when referred to Parliament, should be discussed in private by a committee.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH** said it would be a first-class advertisement.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the Government had a double responsibility in the matter, in having to decide not only on the price, but to purchase land that would be re-saleable. The people would not lose a single penny. Sufficient was added to the price to pay expenses, and in these transactions there was generally a commission of 20 per cent.; but the Government would purchase and sell without profit, and would have to be very careful to abide by the terms of the Act. People would not be willing to submit all particulars of their property to the House; they would say: "You can take it at my price, or leave it." The Government hoped that the land selected, being near railways, would soon be taken up. He asked the hon. member to withdraw his amendment.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH** said he would not withdraw his amendment.

Amendment put and negatived, and the clause agreed to.

Clause 8—Disposal of land acquired under this Act:

**MR. ILLINGWORTH** moved, as an amendment, that the words "disposed of," in line three of Clause 8, be struck out, and the words "leased for fifty



years" be inserted in lieu thereof. He said the Government, having acquired the lands, should retain and lease them for 50 years. He was altogether opposed to absolute sale. The estate would continue to be improved by public works and railways, and if the Government wished to re-purchase at a future date, they would have to pay the increased value resulting from the expenditure of public money. 'There was not the same necessity here as existed in other countries for the purchase of large estates; in fact, the Government held too much land.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the hon. member had somewhat departed from his own principles in asking the Government to become landlord; for when opposing the Goldfields Water Supply Bill he said there would be great difficulty in obtaining payment, and, if that were so, the argument applied to the collection of rents for land. It would be even worse than in Ireland, for the Government would not be able to eject. There was enough difficulty in collecting the present land rents without the Government undertaking fresh responsibilities. They were not yet educated to the stage of nationalisation.

MR. A. FORREST: The rents are too high.

MR. COOKWORTHY favored the principle of the Government getting the benefit of the "unearned increment" instead of the individual. There was no fear of the tenant not paying. The tenant would feel more secure. He (Mr. Cookworthy) favored the leasing system, and revaluation for giving the tenants renewals at higher rentals. In India, the Government ownership of land had proved a success.

MR. GEORGE supported the amendment as the thin end of the right wedge. The Government had a moral right to resume unimproved land. There must come a time when the State should own the land. Earth hunger was the curse of Australia. He knew of cases in the old country where land had been in possession of families for three or four hundred years, and, when changing hands, had been reassessed at a higher value. He welcomed the amendment as the fore-

runner of complete State ownership in the future.

Amendment put and negatived, and the clause agreed to.

Clause 9—Minister may improve lands purchased under this Act:

MR. ILLINGWORTH said this was an exceedingly dangerous clause, and was made more dangerous by its indefiniteness. It read: "The Minister may, if he shall think fit, with the approval of the Governor" (he supposed the Governor-in-Council was meant) "clear, drain, fence, or otherwise improve," etc. What did "or otherwise improve" mean?

MR. SIMPSON: Paint on a fence, perhaps.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said, although it might be desirable to drain certain lands, fencing was another thing, for, if a man was not able to fence the land, he should not take it up at all. He moved, as an amendment, that the words "or otherwise improve," in line 2, be struck out. Why should the Government compete with men who were now settling on the land? Suppose a man bought some land, erected a building, and put up a fence at his own expense, and someone with all the resources of the Government in his favor were placed next to him; would that be fair? How could the Government sell their uncleared land, as people would naturally say, "Wait until the Government clear, drain, and fence it"? He would have asked that the words "clear, drain, fence" be struck out also, only there was no chance of carrying it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the words proposed to be struck out were very necessary, as it was impossible to enumerate all the improvements. If the hon. member had read further, he would have seen that the cost of improvements was to be added to the selling price, so that the buyer, and not the Government, paid. Land partly improved might be bought, and was the property to go to ruin because of the want of this saving phrase, "or otherwise improve"? Indeed, the Government might not be able to sell certain lands for want of this discretionary power.

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked if the words "shall not be less," in Sub-section 2, applied to the whole estate.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said the price was averaged.

MR. LEFROY asked if the cost of survey was included in the one-tenth added to the selling price.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said it was included.

Amendment put and negatived, and the clause agreed to.

Clauses 10 to 21, inclusive—agreed to. Schedule—agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the Bill be recommitted.

Agreed to.

#### IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 5—Lands may be surrendered in terms of this Act:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved the following amendments:—(1), That the words "Subject to the provisions of this Act" be inserted at the beginning of the clause; (2), that the words "situate within twenty miles of a railway," in line 2, be struck out; and (3) that the words "upon the conditions hereinafter prescribed," in line 3, be struck out.

Amendments put and passed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, as a further amendment, that the following proviso be added to the clause:—"Provided that all such lands be situate within twenty miles of a railway."

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

Clause 6—Land Purchase Board to report:

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, as an amendment, that the words "which shall not exceed twenty miles" be struck out of sub-clause (4).

Agreed to.

Bill again reported, with amendments.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6:30 o'clock, p.m., until the following Tuesday.

## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 28th July, 1896.

Question: New Supreme Court Buildings—Question: Railway Workshops at Midland Junction—Question: Water Supply for Eastern Goldfields—Motion for Adjournment: Administration of Stock Diseases Act at Fremantle—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women) Bill: third reading—Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill: amendment on report—Streets and Roads Closure (Eastern Railway) Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

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

#### PRAYERS.

#### QUESTION—NEW SUPREME COURT BUILDINGS.

MR. MOSS, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works,—  
1. Whether the site for the new Supreme Court House had been selected, and, if so, where the same was situate. 2. Whether plans had been prepared for the work, and whether they had been submitted to the Judges, and also to the heads of departments for whom accommodation had to be provided. 3. When tenders would be invited for the erection of the buildings.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—  
1. Yes. Reserve No. 1151, being Perth Town Lots L 15, 15½, and 16, fronting St. George's Terrace and Bazaar Street, occupied at present by the Government Boys' School. 2. Preliminary plans have been prepared and sent to the hon. the Attorney General, requesting that a committee be appointed, to include the Judges and heads of the departments for whom accommodation has to be provided. 3. Cannot at present state the date when tenders will be called.

#### QUESTION—RAILWAY WORKSHOPS AT MIDLAND JUNCTION.

MR. SOLOMON, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, Whether it was a fact that the plans for the Midland Junction Railway Workshops, made by Mr. Allison Smith, had been put aside, and that a committee of railway engineers was now engaged in making entirely new plans.