

Ordered—That the third reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House.

#### ESTIMATES, 1894-95.

Report of Committee of Supply, with the Additional Estimates, adopted.

#### COMMITTEE OF WAYS AND MEANS.

The House resolved itself into a Committee of Ways and Means.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that, towards making good the supply to be granted to Her Majesty, a further sum not exceeding £526,600 18s. 4d. be granted out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Western Australia.

Motion put and passed.

Resolution reported.

Report adopted.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL.

Introduced by Sir JOHN FORREST, and read a first time.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Wednesday, 7th November, at half-past seven o'clock, p.m.

Motion put and passed.

The House adjourned at 11:40 o'clock p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 7th November, 1894.

Trial water boring in Eastern districts—Southern Cross Coolgardie Railway Bill: first reading—Mullewa-Cue Railway Bill: first reading—Scab Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Purchase of Perth Waterworks Bill: first reading—Leave of absence for Mr. Simpson—Boring for water between Darling Range and the coast—Removal of Mr. Sinclair, Postmaster, Coolgardie—Selection by Lessees of Leasehold Lands under Homesteads Act—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7:30 p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### TRIAL WATER BORING IN EASTERN DISTRICTS.

MR. THROSSELL, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works whether, in view of the growing scarcity of water for locomotive and general purposes in Northam and other Eastern district towns, the Government would cause trial bores to be put down, without delay, in the localities referred to?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied that the subject would be considered by the Government.

#### SOUTHERN CROSS-COOLGARDIE RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by MR. VENN, and read a first time.

#### MULLEWA-CUE RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by MR. VENN, and read a first time.

#### SCAB ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by MR. BURT, and read a first time.

#### PURCHASE OF PERTH WATERWORKS BILL.

Introduced by MR. JAMES, and read a first time.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion of MR. JAMES, leave of absence was granted to MR. SIMPSON for one fortnight, upon the grounds of urgent private business.

**BORING FOR WATER BETWEEN THE DARLING RANGE AND THE COAST.**

**MR. LEAKE:** Sir—I move “That, in view of the success attending the boring operations near Guildford, other bores should be put down, without delay, in various places between the Darling Range and the coast.” It is within the knowledge of members that recent boring operations have been made by the Government in the vicinity of the Midland Junction, upon a reserve which I believe was purchased by the Government on account of the facilities it offers for the possible construction of Railway Workshops. The success of that bore has been very marked, and has removed all doubts as to the existence of water in that locality, and demonstrated the possibility of carrying out an enterprise such as the Government, I believe, have in contemplation. I am told that the water obtained there is of first rate quality, and that it is also apparent that the water-boring stratum is of considerable depth. If water is found in such quantities in this particular place, it does not require any extraordinary stretch of the imagination to suppose that water in like quantities may be found at various other places between the ranges and the coast; and no one can gainsay the fact that a permanent supply of artesian water of the quality of this at Guildford would materially assist in the development of our coastal country. The advantage of these bores is not only that they result sometimes in the discovery of water, but that they also go a long way to test the geological formation of the country, and to enable us to tell what is beneath the surface. It is rumoured—I am not prepared to say whether it is well-founded or not—that even with this particular bore they have struck strata which bear a very marked resemblance to the coal measures at the Collie. If that be so, it would certainly repay the Government if bores were put down in various other places; and, although in the terms of this motion it is suggested that these boring operations should be conducted in the country between the Darling Range and the coast, yet I would urge upon the Government, if the resolution is carried, the expediency of putting a few bores down along the Southern coast, because rumour again informs me (whether rightly or wrongly

I am not prepared to say) that indications, and good indications, of coal have been discovered to the Westward of Albany. Where we find the coal outcropping as it does at the Collie River, it is not beyond the bounds of possibility that, by deep boring, we may strike the coal-bearing strata nearer the coast. The advantage to the country of such a discovery would be enormous. This resolution, I would remind members, does not commit the House to any very heavy expenditure; and it is certainly one which, considering the possibilities before us, should commend it to members, and I trust that the motion will receive a large measure of support. The resolution really speaks for itself, and it seems to me is worthy the attention of the Government. Of course the Government are not bound by any hard-and-fast rule to the exact wording of the resolution, and they can give effect to it in the best manner they think possible. If left to them, I am perfectly certain it is a matter which they will deal with in an able and comprehensive manner, to the best of their ability.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** This resolution is no doubt put forward in an attractive form, and will, perhaps, meet with a good deal of support from members; but it is nothing more nor less than a resolution for the Government to expend money. I do not wish to make any objection to it on that account, because I have no doubt His Honour the Speaker would have drawn attention to it if it is contrary to our Standing Orders. I do not know exactly to what amount of expenditure the House wishes to commit the Government in boring for water along the Darling Range. I believe that a good deal of success has attended the bore put down near Guildford, though I have not yet received any particulars. But that is of shallow depth. I do not know whether it is running out as strong now as it was at the beginning, but I certainly hope it will prove altogether successful. Of course it would be competent for the Government, under this resolution, to expend a large amount of money. The Darling Range is about 200 miles long altogether, and to put down bores without delay at various places between that range and the coast is a pretty big order, and certainly pro-

vision would have to be made for it. All these boring operations cost a lot of money. Probably before the session is over my friend the Director of Public Works will place before the House a statement of the expenditure that has already been incurred by the Government in trying to provide water; and if I say it will astonish members, I think I shall not be far out of the mark. The amount of money spent in connection with the development of our goldfields is enormous—getting up towards £200,000. We have voted in the Loan Act of 1891, and the Loan Act of 1893, and the present Loan Bill, nearly £200,000 for the development of our goldfields, and nearly all that money is either expended or is in course of being expended. I shall have to inform members more fully on this matter before we separate. Although this is a somewhat comprehensive motion, I am quite in accord with it, so long as it does not bind us to spend a lot of money at the present time. I say that because there are so many things to be done, especially in connection with the procuring of water on our goldfields. It is almost sad to think that we have expended so much money in providing for the conserving of the water, and that no rain has come to fill the magnificent tanks we have made all over the Yilgarn goldfields. But such is the fact, as members are aware. While, therefore, I do not oppose this motion, if it is within the competency of the hon. member to move it, still at the same time we must not spend very much money upon it just immediately. We might, perhaps, put down a few bores just to see the result, and, if the result is encouraging, the work might be extended; but to go trying about everywhere, and to spend a lot of money in that way is, I am afraid, more than we could undertake to do at the present moment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** In reference to what the Premier has stated, I wish to say that if this resolution should be looked upon as an authority for the Government to spend money, I should certainly have to rule it out of order; but it has been laid down most distinctly that spending money on the strength of a mere resolution is illegal, and, if the Government wish for authority to spend money for this or any other purpose, they must

bring down a Message from the Governor, and have an appropriation made for that purpose. I do not consider that this motion authorises the Government to spend money.

**MR. TRAYLEN** (Chairman of Committees): I am quite in accord with the view that this motion does not warrant the Government in spending money. These kind of resolutions, if carried, are merely an intimation to the Government that they may bring in any necessary measure for our approval, in the direction indicated. I cannot say, however, that I am quite in accord with the hon. member for Albany in this motion. It is asking the Government to find water in those portions of the colony where they least need it, and where there already exists a good water supply. When we bear in mind that just now we are at our wits' end to get water for that immense population gathered on our goldfields, I do not think this is an opportune time to bring forward this motion. No doubt it involves some side issues, such as ascertaining the character of the strata between the Darling Range and the coast; and that in itself may be a very excellent thing. But to try to get at the nature of the strata, under cover of sinking for water, is not, perhaps, exactly the correct thing to do. When we are better supplied with water in the dry and arid interior, I think it will be a highly prudent thing to follow the lead suggested by the hon. member for Albany, and run the chance of getting the water, if it be needed, and also a knowledge of the strata in the immediate vicinity of the coast. But, for the present, I think we have our hands full in trying to find water for our goldfields population.

**MR. CLARKSON:** If the hon. member had moved to have these bores put down to the Eastward, where there is no surface water, I should have had much pleasure in supporting him. But when he proposes to spend money in this direction, in parts of the colony where there is already an abundance of water, I cannot support him; and it seems to me rather curious that we should be asked to do so. Let us first get water in that part of the country where people are perishing for the want of it, and not where there are plenty of running springs already, and where there is not

the slightest necessity for this expenditure.

MR. MORAN: The motion now before the House recalls to my mind that not long ago I brought forward a somewhat similar motion, but relating to a different portion of the country, and that motion was ruled out of order. If the same kind of motion was out of order a few weeks ago, I should think, arguing from analogy, that this motion also is out of order. Perhaps the Speaker will give us his ruling on that point?

MR. A. FORREST: He has already ruled.

MR. RICHARDSON: If the object of this resolution is to ascertain whether there are any coal deposits in that part of the country indicated, I think it would have been just as well to have said so in the resolution. But what justification can be alleged for the Government, at public expense, to test for water between the Darling Range and the sea, in country which consists, to a very considerable extent, of private property, and where we have never heard of any particular lack of water? I am afraid the Government would find it a very difficult matter to justify such expenditure before this House; and I think the hon. member who has brought forward this motion would be one of the very first to attempt to sit upon them for doing so. If a motion were brought forward to test for water where no water has yet been found, of course there would be some justification for it, but I cannot see why we should ask the Government to put down a number of bores to test for artesian water along the Darling Range, where there is no particular necessity for such water. No doubt the discovery of artesian water would be a very nice thing for the owners of property in that part of the country. I, for one, should have no objection to it, and would accord a hearty vote of thanks to the Government for their kindness; but I doubt whether the taxpayers of the colony would be inclined to do the same.

MR. RANDELL: I presume, if it could be ascertained without any great expenditure whether artesian water is procurable in this part of the country, it would be exceedingly useful, in view of future operations. But I could not support any large expenditure of money for the purpose of making this test in country

where there is no scarcity of water, though, perhaps, not of the best quality, so far as surface water is concerned. As an abstract resolution, indicating a question of policy for the consideration of the Government, I think no objection could be found to it; and, so long as it is understood that the Government is not to incur any large expenditure, it might, perhaps, be desirable some day to make this test. But, in view of the urgent necessity which exists for obtaining water on our Eastern goldfields, which is likely to absorb all the money we can spare, and all the energy we can put forward at the present moment, I do not think it would be wise to enter upon these experiments just now. I am doubtful myself whether we shall ever find artesian water at Coolgardie, or even at Northam; and I believe I am borne out in that opinion by geologists and others. Still, remembering the great interests that are involved, and the desirability of developing the country, not only from a mineral, but also from an agricultural and pastoral point of view, and of assisting to the utmost of our power these important industries, I think the public generally would be in accord with a reasonable and fair amount of expenditure in this direction in our Eastern districts.

MR. THROSSELL: I am in favour of every effort being made for the discovery of artesian water where it is required; and I take this opportunity of pointing out to the Government that the place, of all other places, where these experiments should first be made is in our Eastern districts, and particularly at Northam. For some time past the Government have been obtaining water for their engines from one of our permanent pools, and I am sorry to say that the water in that pool is now decreasing at the rate of nine inches a day. Though it is very problematic whether we shall strike artesian water or not, still if a bore were put down, and we did not get fresh water fit for human consumption, I believe that an abundant supply of water for engine purposes will be discovered at a moderate depth. It reflects no credit upon us that after 60 years of settlement we are to this day in entire ignorance of the possibilities of the district in this respect. I strongly urge upon the Government to lose no

time in putting down a bore in this locality, first of all. I believe I am justified in saying that unless something is done in this direction, and that soon, the Government will have to haul their water from the terminus of the railway. I am only voicing public opinion in Northam when I urge upon the Government the pressing necessity of putting down this bore without further delay. I have pleasure in supporting the motion, wherever the bore is to be put down.

MR. A. FORREST: With regard to the Burlong pool, referred to by the hon. member for Northam, I would advise the hon. member and the Northam people to adopt the steps that were adopted in some of our Northern districts for obtaining water. After many years of practical experience the settlers there were always under the assumption that in the sandy beds of the creeks and rivers no water would be found below the hard bottom, and the result was great loss and great suffering among the stock. But better advice prevailed at last, and after sinking 20ft. below the hard cement in the bed of the river, they got an artesian supply; and now there is no question about it that in our Northern parts a water supply can be obtained if you go below this hard stratum. I believe the same result would be found at Northam; and, if the strain on the Burlong pool is very great, and the supply is decreasing at the alarming rate which the hon. member says it is, I venture to say that if they were to put down a small bore, some 20ft. below the hard bed, there would be found a sufficient supply not only for Yilgarn but for the whole colony, because the drainage of the whole of the Eastern districts supplies this pool. With regard to the resolution now before us, I hardly think it conveys what we desire—that the Government should go to any expense in boring for water along the Darling Range, where there is more water than is required as a rule.

MR. LEAKE: Water is not mentioned in the motion.

THE SPEAKER: With reference to the question raised at the commencement of this debate, I should like to read what *May* says of the practice with regard to abstract resolutions of this kind, it being very difficult for the Speaker, at times, when appealed to, to distinguish between

motions which may be made properly without infringing the rules, and those which are out of order. This is what *May* says in reference to it: "Motions advocating public expenditure, or the imposition of a charge, if the motion be framed in sufficiently abstract and general terms, can be entertained and agreed to by the House. Resolutions of this nature are permissible because, having no operative effect, no grant is made or burthen imposed by their adoption." That is exactly what I explained before—that this resolution does not authorise any expenditure of money, and that before it can have any operative effect it will be necessary that an appropriation be made, on the recommendation of the Governor. That was the reason I allowed the resolution to be proceeded with.

MR. LOTON: A resolution of this kind is very well, in order that members may express their views upon it, but, as for giving any practical effect to it, as the Speaker has just said, unless this House is prepared to go further, and vote a sum of money for carrying it out, it appears to me it is absolutely useless to debate it beyond a certain point. The question is, are we prepared to spend money in this direction, in these particular localities, where there is already a fair supply of water, in all seasons, for ordinary purposes? If the intention is not to search for water, but to test the strata of the country that exists below the surface, I would suggest to the hon. member that he should move distinctly in that direction. But, as for spending money in testing for water along the Darling Range, I think the majority of members will say they are not prepared to do anything of the kind. We want to get water in other localities badly enough, and it strikes me it will take all the money we can spare to obtain it. As to the suggestion of the hon. member for West Kimberley about sinking below the hard bottom of the bed of the pool at Northam, in the expectation of finding artesian water, I suppose he means subterranean water. What I understand by artesian water is water which, when struck at a low depth, will bubble up to the surface and overflow. I do not suppose there is much chance of coming upon artesian water at 20 feet below the hard bottom; but, if the Government

are desirous of ascertaining whether water is obtainable at that depth, the present season is an excellent time for making the test, and they need not go to the Burlong pool or any other pool. They can put down a bore in plenty of dry localities in the bed of the river between Beverley and Newcastle.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I think the resolution is intended rather to create discussion, and to elicit an expression of opinion, than to commit the Government to any large expenditure of money in boring for water between the Darling Range and the sea coast. I am sorry the hon. member should have confined his proposal within the area indicated. I think it would be better to leave it to the discretion of the Government, and let them test where they consider best, in their wisdom, to do so, whether it be for artesian water or for coal deposits. I think a few thousand pounds might be well spent in that direction. If coal measures were discovered at a locality nearer a port than the Collie it would be an enormous advantage, to say nothing of the desirability of testing for water.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I think it will be seen that the feeling of the House is against the resolution in its present form, and, if the hon. member who moved it will accept an amendment which I will suggest, I think he will find that the feeling of the House may change in its favour somewhat. The opposition to it seems to me based mainly upon the localities where it is proposed to put down these bores. If I move that the words "between the Darling Range and the coast" be struck out, that will remove that objection. There is no doubt there are parts of this colony where it would be an immense advantage if water could be obtained by boring; and the question might be easily tested, at no great expense, if a suitable bore were available. The Premier indicated that the House would be astonished and alarmed if he was to tell them that the Government had spent £200,000 in endeavouring to find water for our goldfields. I do not think the House will be alarmed, nor that the country will be alarmed, at that announcement. Nor will it be prepared to deny that no money expended by the Government has been more properly expended.

I will not say more wisely expended, for I believe a great deal of it has been wasted, though their intentions have been good. I move, as an amendment, that all the words of the motion after the word "places" be struck out, thus indicating no particular locality.

MR. LEAKE: I am perfectly willing to accept that amendment.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn): It seems to me that the question, after all, resolves itself into a question of ways and means, and it is for this House to say whether it is prepared to find the ways and means. It is true we have an item on the Loan Bill for the development of goldfields, but the Premier has already told the House that this money is what I may call "ear-marked" already; and if the House desires that the Government should expend further large sums of money in boring for artesian water, it will be absolutely necessary to provide the Government with funds for that particular purpose. Administering, as it is my province to do, the Department of Water Supply, I can assure members it requires a very large sum of money indeed to keep the thing going. If the same process has to be gone through this year as last year, and the same difficulties have to be contended with, we shall certainly require a sum of money far beyond what this House has already provided for this purpose. I am in accord with the motion so far as this: that it would be well to try to set this matter of artesian water at rest, one way or the other, but not particularly in the Southern portions of the colony. Before that can be done, however, it will be necessary to supply the Government with funds.

MR. CONNOR: I cannot support the motion as it stands, nor can I support the amendment, because, in my opinion, it is not definite enough. It is pretty well acknowledged that an urgent necessity exists for our getting artesian or subterranean water on the goldfields, and I should have much pleasure in supporting the motion if it referred to the districts in which this water question is a matter of life and death. If the hon. member had suggested that the diamond drill should be put to work on the goldfields of Coolgardie and their off-shoots, I should have had the greatest pleasure in

supporting him. I will avail myself of every opportunity that I get to place before members the necessity there exists for boring for water in those parts of the colony where water is the only drawback to their development. I have already brought a motion to this effect before the House this session, and I shall never miss the opportunity of pressing it upon the Government. If the experiment is tried, and no water is found, there will be no one to blame; but, until it is tried, the public will never be satisfied.

MR. MORAN: Taking into consideration that two months ago a similar motion was brought forward by myself, stating that in view of the difficulties of providing water on our goldfields the Government should at once take steps in this direction, and that I got no support, I am somewhat surprised that the present motion is generally accepted, and ruled to be quite in accordance with our Standing Orders, and with parliamentary practice. The Premier on that occasion got up and said they wanted something more definite. I took his word for it, and, a few days afterwards, brought forward a very definite motion dealing with the question of granting water rights; and I told this House, and also told the Premier privately, that there were men in this town at the time who, if the Government would give them reasonable water rights and proper protection, were prepared to bore for water at Coolgardie, and would not ask even for a bonus. But that motion was ruled out of order, and there has been two months lost. It seems to me there is a want of consistency on the part of the Government if they are prepared to support this resolution, after declining to support a similar resolution a few weeks ago, relating to the very part of the colony which stands in most need of water. The all-important question, at the present moment, is to discover water for our goldfields population, and for the railway about to be constructed to those goldfields, and it strikes me it will tax all the energies of the Department, and all the money we can afford, to provide this water. Therefore, what is the use of a motion like this, which, as amended, is made to apply to every part of the colony? It appears to me downright nonsense to talk about putting down bores in localities where there is plenty of water, and thus

take away the resources of the Department which are taxed to the utmost to provide water where it is an absolute necessity of existence. Why should we ask the Government to attend to generalities, and to allow urgent business to go by the board? I hope the Government will not shilly-shally with this important question.

MR. LEAKE: I am glad that the hon. member, who has just sat down, has had another opportunity of flaunting his Coolgardie bogie before the House, which seems to give him infinite satisfaction, though it is getting a bit stale, and the House is pretty well tired of him and his bogie. There is this difference between his motion and mine: mine is in order, his was not. That makes all the difference in the world, if the hon. member only knew it. The object I had in view in submitting this resolution was not merely the boring for water; what I consider is of paramount importance in this coastal country is the possibility of striking coal. I think all will agree with me that if we were to put down a bore, and struck either water or coal, it would in either case be of the greatest advantage to the colony. I have no wish to commit the Government to any large expenditure of money; I am quite prepared to accept the suggestion of the Premier to have a few bores put down in different places, by way of testing the ground, at a cost of a few thousand pounds only. We know there is £70,000 on the Loan Bill for the development of goldfields and mineral resources, and £40,000 for the development of agriculture, &c.; and I think it would be quite open to the Government, particularly in the face of this resolution, to allot a few thousand pounds of this money for the purpose suggested by the resolution. It is impossible for me, not sitting on the Government benches, to come down with a definite resolution for a vote of money. We on this side of the House can only generalise, but, if the House approves of the resolution in this general way, it will be for the Government to find the means. If the House supports this resolution it naturally follows it will support the necessary resolution to give effect to it.

Amendment put and passed.

Motion, as amended, put, and a division called for, the numbers being—

Ayes ...	...	6
Noes ...	...	17

Majority against ... 11

**AYES.**  
Mr. Clarkson  
Mr. Illingworth  
Mr. James  
Mr. R. F. Sholl  
Mr. Throssell  
Mr. Leake (Teller).

**NOES.**  
Mr. Burt  
Mr. Connor  
Sir John Forrest  
Mr. A. Forrest  
Mr. Harper  
Mr. Loton  
Mr. Marmion  
Mr. Moran  
Mr. Paterson  
Mr. Pearce  
Mr. Richardson  
Mr. H. W. Sholl  
Mr. Solomon  
Mr. Traylen  
Mr. Venn  
Mr. Wood  
Mr. Lefroy (Teller).

Question thus negatived.

#### REMOVAL OF THE COOLGARDIE POSTMASTER (MR. SINCLAIR).

MR. MORAN, in accordance with notice, moved, "That this House is of 'the opinion that, considering the very 'unusual difficulties surrounding the administration of the duties of postmaster 'at Coolgardie, no blame should attach to 'Mr. Sinclair, nor should his future be in 'any way prejudiced by his removal from 'Coolgardie.' It would be in the recollection of members that this matter was before the House last week, when the Estimates were under discussion, and there was a distinct feeling amongst the majority of members that something in the nature of an injustice, wittingly or unwittingly, had been done to this officer; and it was understood that the Premier would make further inquiry into the matter. Naturally, everyone thought it would be an impartial inquiry, and that Mr. Sinclair, himself, would be allowed an opportunity of stating his own case. The correspondence had since been laid on the table, preceded by a letter to the Postmaster General from the Premier, as follows:—

Premier's Office,  
Perth, 19th October, 1894.

#### THE POSTMASTER GENERAL,

In the Legislative Assembly several members referred to the transfer of Mr. Sinclair from Coolgardie, and expressed themselves that Mr. Sinclair had not been well treated.

Mr. Moran, M.L.A. for Yilgarn, stated that Mr. Howlett, the Chief Inspector of Mails, when at Coolgardie, informed Mr. Sinclair "that he was astounded at how well he had

"managed," and that, since his return to Perth, Mr. Howlett had informed him "that he had been very harshly treated" by being removed from Coolgardie.

As Mr. Sinclair has not complained to me, I was astonished to find that he had been interviewing members of Parliament in regard to the treatment he had received from you, as it would have been better if he had addressed me in the matter, before taking such a step.

I shall be obliged if you will call on Mr. Howlett for a report, and favour me with your views on the subject of Mr. Sinclair's transfer from Coolgardie to Perth.

JOHN FORREST,  
Premier

Was that the kind of inquiry they expected? It was distinctly understood that an impartial investigation of all the circumstances would have been made, and not that Mr. Howlett should be called upon to make a one-sided report. The least they expected was that the ordinary justice of allowing Mr. Sinclair also to state his version would have been observed. He thought the Premier's letter to the Postmaster General rather prejudiced Sinclair's case, instead of helping him. Although Howlett, in his report to the Postmaster General, denied having told Sinclair that he was astonished how well Sinclair had managed at Coolgardie, Mr. Sinclair had informed him (Mr. Moran) distinctly that Mr. Howlett had told quite a different tale to what he told the postmaster. One said one thing, and the other said another thing. He himself did not wish to say he disbelieved anyone; but he believed Sinclair. That was sufficient. He believed him because his statement had been backed up by a lot of correspondence he (Mr. Moran) had received from the fields, and amongst others from the Mayor of Coolgardie; who had urged him to take up Sinclair's case, and bring it before the House, in the interests of justice. He now wished to state that the Premier had since promised him that Sinclair would be allowed to write a reply, stating his own case, or that a commission of inquiry would be appointed.

THE PREMIER (HON. SIR J. FORREST): I said you could bring the matter before the House, and that you could move for a select committee if you thought it was important enough.

MR. MORAN did not think it was important enough to move for a select committee; he would be satisfied with the



Premier's promise that Sinclair would be allowed to make his defence. At present Sinclair did not absolutely know what he was charged with; but if he got an opportunity of knowing what the complaint against him was, and also have an opportunity of replying, he would be able to put a different complexion upon the matter. According to Sinclair, the Postmaster General was not seized of all the facts, and that Mr. Howlett had not acted fairly towards him; and he wished that the Inspector of Posts and Telegraphs be requested to give his opinion on the subject. If that request were complied with, and Sinclair was allowed to make his own defence, he thought he ought to be satisfied. In view of the promise of the Premier, he would be glad to withdraw his motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

#### SELECTION BY LESSEES OF LEASEHOLD LANDS UNDER THE "HOMESTEADS ACT."

MR. HARPER: I beg to move the resolution of which I have given notice: "That any lessee of Crown lands within the South-West Division of the colony may take up lands within his leasehold, under the provisions of Part II. of the Homesteads Act of 1893, provided that the said lessee consents to the remainder of such leasehold being declared open for selection under the same provisions; and further, that in the opinion of this House it is desirable that vacant Crown lands may be selected under the same provisions." The portion of the Act which this motion refers to has, so far, remained a dead letter, and it seems to me it is very desirable it should not continue so, as the Act itself is discredited thereby, and it may do the country a great deal of harm. The matter has been discussed in the House more than once this session, and the objections which the Government have raised to the proposals made may, I am sure, be overcome by following the course which I now suggest. It is possible that many leaseholders would object, and naturally so, to their land being taken away from them *volens volens*, and thrown open for selection; but, on the other hand, there are many leaseholders, I fully believe, who would be quite prepared to consent to the remainder of their lease-

holds being thrown open for selection if they were first allowed to take up such portions of their leases as they wished, under the provisions of the Homesteads Act. There are also very large areas of Crown lands in the South-West division which at present are unoccupied, and I have some reason for believing that some of this land would also be applied for, if it could be taken up under the same provisions. In this way the land would come into use and have a chance of being developed, instead of lying idle as it does at present, and has done since the foundation of the colony. There may be some little difficulty with regard to the law as it stands now, but I think the ingenuity of the Government would be quite equal to overcome the difficulty, with the two classes of land referred to here, and that they would be able to deal with them under the Act. The objection raised by the Government was that it was necessary to give so many months' notice to the present pastoral lessees before any of their land could be thrown open for selection. Of course the object of giving them notice is to afford them some protection. But if the lessees themselves are willing to allow this to be done, the notice prescribed by the Act might surely be waived in some measure, there being no one to oppose it. As there would be no one to benefit by following the course prescribed by the Act or the regulations, and no injustice could be done to anyone, I see no necessity for insisting upon the prescribed notice being given when those applying for the land are the lessees themselves. Therefore, I think the Government might very well accept any applications for lands as proposed in this resolution, classifying the land afterwards, as is done in some of the other colonies. That would save unnecessary expenditure, and at the same time would result in the opening up, and improvement of a large quantity of land which is at present locked up and lying idle, and likely to remain so. I think, if the Government would accept this resolution, and make an earnest endeavour to carry out its object, it would lead to a considerable amount of desirable development as regards the second and third class lands of the colony.

MR. RICHARDSON: I have much pleasure in seconding and supporting

this resolution. I think it is of a very mild character, being simply suggestive; and the Government, in my opinion, would not be acting wisely at all in offering any opposition to it. I think that, on the contrary, they should give it their cordial support. It shows the way out of the difficulties which they say stand in their way in administering this Homesteads Act as regards leases. I cannot, myself, understand the apathy or the inactivity of the Lands Department with reference to the administration of that Act. I do not understand what it is they are frightened of in it. There seem to be some subtle elements working underneath the surface, which deter them from putting the Act into operation. It is rather a strange spectacle, after initiating and bringing into existence a wise and useful land measure, and raising great expectations as to the benefits it was going to confer upon the country, to find the Government allowing it to lie dormant and inoperative for over twelve months. It is said they must give the present pastoral lessees six months' notice, and, I believe, no such notice has been given, so that all lands now held under lease are practically locked up so far as this object is concerned. It seems to me they are in this predicament: on the one hand they fear that, perhaps, too much land will be monopolised under the leasing operations of this Act, that there will be too many homestead leases taken up under this improvement clause and deferred payment system, or, on the other hand, they feel some little tenderness and regard for the security of the pastoral lessee, and do not wish to see his holding cut up into smaller sections and occupied by another class of holders. It appears to me that the two considerations are mutually destructive. I hope, if the Government positively decline to put the Act into active operation, for fear of interfering with the security of the pastoral lessee, they will at least comply with the very mild request made here, and that where the lessees themselves desire that their leases shall be brought under the operation of the Act, and are willing to carry out the provisions of the Act, they will have the opportunity of doing so, and, in that case, allow the remainder of their leases to be thrown open to other intending occupiers. I

think they may also go further, and allow all Crown lands now lying idle in the South-West division to be dealt with in the same way. The resolution asks for no more. I think it does not go far enough myself. It might be said that the present lessees have no protection at all, because all their land is open for selection at a rental of 6d. an acre for twenty years. If it is alleged that not very much land is taken up under that clause because the rental is to a certain extent prohibitive, it proves that the land is not good enough to be taken up under that regulation. If it has remained open all these years, and not taken up, that seems a reasonable deduction to make. And if it is not good enough to be taken up and occupied upon those terms, should we not be anxious to see it occupied under some other terms, more favourable to the holder? Would it not be better to see it taken up almost under any conditions than that it should lie comparatively idle? Would it not be much better to see this land under conditions which compelled the owner to fence it all in, and to spend a considerable sum of money annually upon improvements, and pay a rental for it equal to ten times what he has to pay under the existing regulation? I think it is rather a standing disgrace, when we are always crying out about settling people on the land, and encouraging settlement and cultivation, that we should at the same time stand by with our hands folded, and, when we have a good Act, actually refuse to put it into operation.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** I do not think it would be possible to do what this resolution suggests, under the law as it stands at the present time. I think some alteration of the law would be necessary, and I do not see that there is any chance during the present session, at this late stage of the session, of dealing with that question in the way we would all desire to deal with it, that is, after careful consideration of it and looking into the matter from all points. I must confess I did not understand the motion at first so well as I do now, after hearing what has fallen from the hon. member for the De Grey. I can now see it does not bear the interpretation I first thought it did. But we must remember this,—that nearly all the best land in the South-West

division is already leased. If we except some portions of the very thickly timbered portions to the South, most of the first and second class land in this division is now leased from the Crown by pastoral tenants. Those pastoral tenants have had their opportunities under the present Land Regulations to acquire the freehold of a considerable portion of the land. They have an advantage over the ordinary selector, inasmuch as they can secure 3,000 acres of the best land within their holdings—not the second and third class portions of the land, but the very best portion—by paying 6d. an acre for twenty years.

AN HON. MEMBER: That has lapsed years ago.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I must confess I have not familiarised myself much with these regulations lately. At any rate, I have no hesitation in saying that, speaking generally, all the lands that are not already leased by pastoral tenants in the South-West division must be classed as second and third class lands; I do not think there is any first class land worth speaking of that is not already leased for pastoral purposes, and what is now left is comparatively inferior land. Therefore, something might be done in the direction indicated, in so far as these unoccupied lands are concerned. But the main object of the homestead lease provisions in the Act of last session was to encourage pastoral occupation, and not agricultural occupation; and, as I at first understood this motion, I thought it was branding all the land in the South-West division as second and third class. But I see now that what the hon. member intends is that the lessee shall select out of his lease the second and third class lands, and take them up under the homestead lease regulations. Well, I am not sure whether that would be a wise provision; though I am not prepared to say that something might not be done in the direction indicated. But it would have to be very carefully looked into, and it would have to be provided for in the Act. Now that I understand it, there seems to be a good deal in the motion which commends itself to me; but I really have not had that time to look into it which I would desire. Nor do I think the hon. member can expect this House to deal with it this session, though I shall be

glad if members will express their opinions on the subject to-day, in order that we may consider the question during the recess, and see whether we can make this portion of the Act more workable than at present. I admit that the lands we now throw open, as second and third class lands, are not very good; but they might be improved upon, and made better than they are. The difficulty in the way of allowing the selector to classify the land he applies for is the probability that he would classify it below what it would afterwards be qualified when it came to be surveyed. I expect, if this proposition were carried out to-morrow, we would have many applications from lessees for first class lands which they would designate as second or third class. There is a great deal of difficulty about it. But it has been urged upon me by the Lands Department that something in this direction will have to be done, as the trouble and expense of survey and examination before selection are so great, and the delay so great, that the object we had in view in passing this Act is defeated. I thank the hon. member for bringing this matter forward for discussion. At first I did not like the resolution at all, but after the explanation I have heard it does not appear so much open to objection as I first thought it was, and I do not see any reason why, during the recess, the Lands Department should not deal with it, and put the proposition in a shape which, perhaps, would be more acceptable, and make the Act more workable and more availed of than hitherto.

MR. CLARKSON: I do not think any harm could be done by adopting this motion, although I admit we would be taking away what little security of tenure the Crown lessee has at present. All his land is now open for selection, and, if people want it, why do they not take it up under the existing regulations? This motion proposes to give the lessee the right of first selection, and then to throw the balance of the lease open to the public. I cannot see the slightest harm in that. We have a great deal of land in this South-West division, and not far from Perth, which I think might be thrown open under this Homesteads Act.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): All private land.

MR. CLARKSON: Nothing of the sort. Within a couple of miles of the Eastern Railway there is any amount of similar country, consisting of Crown lands, which I would throw open under the most liberal regulations possible. I never thought, myself, that the Homesteads Act would result in settling a large number of people on the land.

MR. RICHARDSON: They have never had the opportunity.

MR. CLARKSON: I have seen a number of areas advertised in the *Gazette* as being open for selection under the Act, but I believe they have been very little availed of.

MR. THROSSELL: To whatever causes it is attributable, it seems to be that the Government have not done what they might have done to put the homestead leases portion of the Act into operation. It is now thirteen months ago since the Act became law, and not a single homestead lease has been granted under it up to this date—not because no applications have been sent in, for I know that abundance of applications have been made, many from my own district, and by the right class of men; but the reply always has been that the land has not yet been gazetted, and was therefore not open for selection. It seems to me we have called into existence a system of land settlement which the Government are actually afraid to tackle. I know that a number of applications for sand-plain country and salmon gum country have been sent in by practical men, whose object was to utilise it, but in every instance their applications were without avail. The department simply turn a deaf ear to them. Surely there must be something wrong somewhere. Whatever may be the result of this debate, I am in a position to know there are many *bonâ fide* applications waiting to be dealt with; and if they had been granted when they were applied for, months ago, we would have had a large amount of this sand-plain country now fenced in and otherwise improved. I have pleasure in supporting the motion before the House, and I trust the Government will do what they can to carry it out.

MR. LEFROY: I think nothing would be more likely to conduce to that end which has just been referred to than the taking up of homestead leases under the

Homesteads Act, and I think it is a great pity that the Government have not been able to let Crown lands on those conditions. I do not think the Government has anything to fear from putting the Act in operation. I believe if half the land now held under pastoral lease could be leased under these conditions, it would be very much to the advantage of the colony. If the required improvements under the Act were carried out properly, the country would be in a much better position at the end of thirty years than it would if the Act remained inoperative. We want our Crown lands occupied and improved—that is always our cry—and I am quite certain that under the present system of leasing they never will be improved to the extent we all desire. Therefore, holding these views, I may say I have very much pleasure in following the hon. member for Beverley in this motion. I do not see that any wrong would be done to the present lessee if the motion were put into operation, because the present lessee would, under this resolution, be the first person to set the Act in motion. If the Government were to let the whole of my lease under this Homesteads Act, I believe it would be of great benefit to the colony, and the same applies to other leases. Figuratively, we would soon have what is now a howling wilderness turned into a smiling garden. If we could, by insisting upon these improvements, make our lands carry three times the quantity of stock they do at present, surely that would be largely to the benefit of the colony. Our population is increasing rapidly, and that population must be fed, and it behoves us to do all we can, by increasing our flocks and herds, to enable us to supply the wants of this increasing population. People at present are complaining loudly about the price of meat in the colony, especially new comers, and one of the main causes of that is that we have not sufficient stock to supply the market.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marnion): Not sufficient good land to feed stock; that's the proper way to put it.

MR. LEFROY: Then it is our duty to endeavour to improve our land, and that would be one result of this resolution. I am firmly of opinion that if all the immense areas of leasehold land now held

could be cut up and occupied as 5,000 acre blocks under this Homesteads Act, it would be greatly to the advantage of the colony. The Government would also benefit by it, as they would receive a much higher rental from the land. The carrying capabilities of the land would be trebled, and a great many people would settle upon the land. For these reasons, and feeling sore and grieved as I do sometimes to see the lands of the colony remaining so unimproved, and believing that if there were some more liberal regulations encouraging improvements, these lands would be improved, I have much pleasure in supporting the hon. member for Beverley in this instance, and I hope that before long something may be done to encourage the leasing of these lands under the Homesteads Act.

MR. A. FORREST: The motion now before the House is one that has my entire support. I have already said it seems to me that the Government are afraid to put their own Act into operation, and I never could understand the reason for it. We all know this land cannot be carried away, and we all know that the man who improves it is a public benefactor. I see no reason why the whole of the South-West division of the colony should not be leased under the Homesteads Act. That Act was passed over twelve months ago, and it has been a dead letter to this day, so far as the leasing part of it is concerned. How is that? Not because no applications have been made to take up land under it, but because the Government refuse to entertain these applications, which their own Act provide for. As I have often said before in this House, the moment the present Commissioner of Crown Lands receives an application for land he begins to suspect there is something behind it. He thinks because the land is applied for it must be very valuable indeed. He thinks that every application for land means that the person applying for it is going to rob the country. If the hon. gentleman were to take up some of this land himself, he would soon find out it was not all profit, and that the land in this colony is not overflowing with milk and honey. What we want to encourage people to do is to improve their land. Let them have it at any price, so long as they improve it, and increase its carrying capabilities, or its

productiveness. If a man takes up his 5,000 acres under this Homesteads Act, and makes it carry six times the amount of stock, he surely deserves some credit. What is the good of land in this colony unless it is improved? Take the whole of the leased land in the South-West division. We know very well—the thing has been proved—no one, under the present regulations and the present tenures, cares to fence, or to ring-bark, or to sink for water, on his land, because he knows he is liable to have his land taken away from him at any moment.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): And get paid for his improvements.

MR. A. FORREST: That is not what a man wants after making a home for himself and his family. He does not want his home taken away from him. When this Homesteads Act was before Parliament many of us thought that the leasing part of it would do more good to the country than the farming part; but, instead of that, the leasing portion of the Act has been allowed to remain a dead letter, although there are a great many people who hold pastoral leases who would be glad to take them up under conditions of improvement, and pay a higher rent for them, provided they could get better security of tenure. But the present Commissioner is so jealous of people who want to take up land, that the moment a man sends in an application the Commissioner shrugs his shoulders and thinks that man wants to rob the country.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Rubbish!

MR. A. FORREST: If a man applies for what he thinks is second class land, the Commissioner, or the experts in his office, think at once that land must be first class land. I am sorry to say the present Commissioner of Lands is under the impression that all the lands in this colony should be classed as first class land, and that there is no such thing in Western Australia as second or third class land. Why he should run away with that idea, I don't know; but such is the case. I do not want to hurt his feelings, because he is a personal friend of mine; but I am only telling what is a fact. We have passed a good Act for encouraging the improvement of the land,

but the Commissioner won't put it into operation. This question now before the House resolves itself into this: not whether this House passes the resolution, but will the Commissioner of Crown Lands throw these lands open for selection under the Homesteads Act afterwards? If not, then the Government had better bring in a Bill to repeal—

AN HON. MEMBER: The Commissioner.

MR. A. FORREST: To repeal the Act, and not hold out false hopes to people any longer. What use to the colony is this land unless it is improved? What is the good of saying that the rent is low, or that you have only to pay 6d. an acre for twenty years, when we know that it is not sufficient inducement for people to go on improving the land? If we could only get people to improve their land, they would be benefiting the country as well as themselves. I know I hold 24,000 acres in the Eastern part of the colony, and the whole of it would not carry more than 1,000 sheep; but I fenced in about the half of it, and did some other improvements, and that land now carries four or five times the number of sheep that the whole block did before. That is a practical proof of what can be done with the land, if you encourage people to improve their land. It was second class land too. Without those improvements, that land was almost valueless. It is useless talking about developing the lands of the colony unless you give those who take up the land greater security of tenure than they have now as pastoral lessees. This Homesteads Act was intended to carry out that object, and to compel people to improve their lands; but what is the use of having an Act like that on the statute book, if the Government are afraid to put it in force? It is all very well to talk about building railways and giving increased facilities to people. Building a railway does not improve the land, unless the occupier is encouraged to spend money upon his land, and make it more productive, or make it carry more stock than it otherwise would; and, to induce people to do that, you must give them every encouragement, and better security than they have at present under our ordinary Land Regulations. As I have said before, every man who attempts to improve the land of the colony is a public

benefactor, and not a robber. And that man ought to receive every inducement. Improving the public estate is not one of the best paying "specs.," I think, a man can put his hand to—in Western Australia at any rate.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): It is most interesting to listen to my friend the hon. member for West Kimberley.

MR. RICHARDSON: It is so; he has made a very sensible speech.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): I am glad the hon. member thinks so. Probably the hon. member thinks it was a sensible speech, because the ideas put forward are in accord with his own. But it may possibly occur to these hon. members that other people may have different ideas. The hon. member for West Kimberley is very fond of talking about what money will do, in improving land or anything else. Of course, it is all very well for the hon. member to talk about spending money—a gentleman who (figuratively speaking) lives in the Fifth Avenue of the financial world; but those who apply to take up land in this colony are not, as a rule, so flush of money as the hon. gentleman who is generally denominated as the "Sixth Minister." Though they are very ready to take up as much land as they possibly can, and a great deal more than they can utilise, they are generally very chary about spending money upon that land. In their eager anxiety to take up land, they manage to pay one year's rent, and then drop it; and, in spite of the glowing anticipations and the glorious future which the hon. members for West Kimberley and for the De Grey conjure up if this Homesteads Act were more largely availed of, I may say that as a matter of fact very few applications have been made, up to the present time, for homestead leases.

MR. RICHARDSON: You won't receive them.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): He says I won't receive them. I can tell the hon. member there have been but very few to receive. People generally do not consider it is good enough. I believe, myself, that when this Act is brought into full force, into full operation, he will

find that very few people will take advantage of these leasing clauses.

MR. RICHARDSON: What does that prove?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): It proves that those who forced this part of the Bill upon the Government were mistaken, that is all. I say most distinctly, if you were to throw open these lands to-morrow, under the provisions of these homestead lease clauses, it would be very few people who are already lessees of pastoral lands that would apply for them. It is all very well for gentlemen whose purses are well lined, and who have no difficulty in paying the rent, year after year, to take up these homestead leases. The fact remains that in a great many cases these pastoral lessees are unable to pay their present rents. If you look at the *Government Gazette* you will find that a majority of leases for which only £1 per 1000 acres is charged are forfeited annually. I am perfectly satisfied, myself, that the one secret at the bottom of the whole thing is the quality of our land. It is not the regulations, nor the administration of the regulations, but the poor quality of the land. If you think that those who are only paying £1 per thousand now will be eager to pay £5, you are very much mistaken. This homestead leases part of the Act was not my Bill, nor that of my colleagues; many of its provisions were forced upon me by those who had certain fixed ideas in their head that these leases would do a great deal of good. I do not believe, myself, it will do as much good as they anticipated. Still, the Act is now law. But at the present time it is found simply impossible to carry out some of its provisions.

MR. HARPER: We told you that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Unless you are prepared to throw open the whole of the South-West division of the country. Those who forced this part of the Bill upon the Government thought it would be advantageous, I suppose, and that it would do a lot of good. No doubt it will help a few members and a few other people to increase their estates, and to add to their broad acres.

MR. RICHARDSON: Name them.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): I want to name nobody. Perhaps I was a little bit rash in mentioning it would help members. But the fact remains, it will help them, and it will help others who are desirous of enlarging their estates. My experience is that many who apply for these lands are people who desire to increase their holdings, but who do not care one straw for the welfare of the country or the success of the Act. Of course, when people say that these homestead leases are going to be of great benefit to the country, I hope it may be so. I believe it will in certain cases, where those who take them up have the means to carry out the necessary improvements as required by the Act. But for every solitary case it may do that, there will be ten cases where these lands are taken up and the improvements will not be made, and the land will simply revert to the State. As a general rule you will find that land taken up under these homestead leases will, after a year or two, be thrown up. It is so now, under the existing regulations, with the best of the land taken up upon most liberal terms; in the majority of cases the land is afterwards thrown up. It will be the same under this homestead lease system. It will only be very few people in the country who will benefit by it. When this part of the Act does come into operation—as of course it must, being the law of the land—it will be attended with a large amount of disappointment. I do not think for a moment, myself, that people are going to throw up land which they can now hold at the rate of £1 per thousand acres, land which they say is not fit for agricultural purposes—and what better security can these pastoral lessees have than the fact, if fact it is, that their land is not fit for agricultural purposes—I say these people are not going to throw up land which they now hold at the rate of £1 per 1,000 acres, and pay £5 per 1,000 acres for it for the next thirty years. No; they may do so for a year or two; but their children, or those who follow them, will find it is not good enough, and will throw it up. Therefore I say those who are so anxious to see this part of the Act carried into effect will be disappointed in their expectations as to the results. That is

my opinion. Members will, of course, accept it for what it is worth, though perhaps in my position I have had quite as much experience on the subject as the hon. member for West Kimberley has.

MR. LOTON: It would be rather difficult from his remarks to arrive at what the ideas of the Commissioner of Crown Lands are, with regard to the administration of the land laws. He tells us distinctly, as I understand him, that under the law, as it stands, no satisfactory advancement will ever be made as regards the settlement and development of the country.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Under the law as to homestead leases.

MR. LOTON: The hon. gentleman also referred to the liberal nature of the ordinary regulations, and said that the result was a failure, that many people only took up leases for a year or two and then forfeited them. If his arguments amount to anything they mean this: that the terms upon which these lands are taken up are too high for people to make anything out of them. That is the only logical conclusion I can arrive at from his statement; in other words that the present system is not a satisfactory one.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): I did not say that.

MR. LOTON: Perhaps you didn't mean it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): I didn't say it.

MR. LOTON: The hon. gentleman said so many contradictory things that it would be hard to understand what he did mean.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): I said that under the existing regulations there were large areas taken up, and afterwards forfeited. I never said the present system was not a satisfactory one.

MR. LOTON: The hon. gentleman now says that areas are taken up and afterwards forfeited. That is under the present regulations—6d. an acre per annum for twenty years. If land is taken up at that price and then forfeited because people find they can't make anything out of it, I should say that the only reasonable conclusion to arrive at is

that the system is not a satisfactory one. With regard to the motion before the House at the present moment, the proposal is that present lessees, in the South-West division, shall have the first right to take up any portion of their leases under the Homesteads Act, and that the balance of the land shall be thrown open for selection under the same Act. It seems to me, as I have said, that the hon. gentleman who presides over this department has admitted most distinctly that his administration of the department has been a failure, or that it is not working satisfactorily.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Under the Homesteads Act.

MR. LOTON: If he only refers to the Homesteads Act, how is it that after three years experience under the existing regulations, as well as twelve months under the Homesteads Act, he tells us that people only take up land to throw it up again? On the other hand, if he thinks the regulations are unsatisfactory, why in the name of all that is reasonable does he not take some steps to alter them? Why does he not bring the matter under the attention of his colleagues, and let the country have the benefit of his opinions, if they are worth anything—and he seems to think they are very valuable. They ought to be valuable after the experience he has had as the head of the department. Next, perhaps, to his colleague the Premier, he ought to be in a better position to give us some practical system that will work satisfactorily than any member of this House. Why does he not do so, instead of condemning the present system, and telling us that the homestead lease system also will only end in disappointment? If he has taken any interest in the working of the department which he has presided over for the last three years, surely he ought to be able to place his finger upon its defective parts, and to point out some way of dealing with our lands in a more satisfactory manner? This resolution does not go far enough, to my mind. It has been admitted by the administrator of the department—and I think the Premier also went nearly as far—that nearly all the land in the South-West Division, except what is reserved for agricultural purposes under



the homestead block system, is only second and third class land.

**THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):** I said all the unleased portion.

**MR. LOTON:** The resolution, to my mind, is not liberal enough, dealing as it does with second and third class lands. I am not one of those people who are inclined to favour the accumulation of large estates by individuals. I should like to see in this colony closer settlement and more occupation, and more improvement of the land; and if the Government, in their wisdom, are prepared to go to the extent proposed in this resolution, they will be going somewhat in that direction, but, in my opinion, not far enough. When we do go as far as this resolution indicates, we shall very soon find we shall require to go further, and I do not think we can go too far, or commence too soon, or proceed too rapidly with the settlement and improvement of the land. I trust that, after the discussion that has taken place this evening, some movement will be made in the direction indicated, and that people who are desirous of applying for land under this Act will have an opportunity of doing so, and have their applications considered and dealt with, and that they will have a chance of settling upon these lands, and demonstrate whether the regulations under this homestead lease system are sufficiently liberal, and the areas sufficiently large.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** This is the second time this session we have had a most severe attack upon the administration of the Lands Department by the hon. member who is commonly known as the "Sixth Minister"; but the hon. member invariably stops at the sticking point. If there is anything in his criticisms at all, he should wind up with a direct vote of want of confidence in the Minister of Lands. His argument all through has been that the Act is a good Act, but that the administration of the department is bad. The remedy for that is to remove the administrator—not to alter the Act. With reference to the question of whether something ought not to be done in reference to the Act itself, it seems to me that the mover of this resolution is to some extent on the right track; and, so far as I can see, I shall be obliged to support him. What I wish to impress upon the

House is this, that the one thing to be gained, and the one thing this country requires to consider, is not so much the question of classifying the land as to get those who desire to occupy the land to improve it. There is too much land occupied at the present time by people who will not improve it; and, if it be anything in the question of tenure which prevents this improvement, the sooner we deal with it, and make some alteration in that tenure, the better. This motion, as I read it, takes up this position: that if a lessee chooses to make an application for the purpose of bringing a portion of his land under the homestead lease system, he should be allowed to do so, conditionally upon his at once throwing open the remainder of his leasehold for other persons to do the same. That would be one step in the right direction, because, if a leaseholder who holds, say, 20,000 acres, could see that he could increase the value and the capabilities of his land by obtaining a better tenure, and reducing the area of his leasehold to 3,000 or 5,000 acres—even although he were to take up the best part of it—he would thereby locate himself upon his holding and improve it, and he would enable the remainder, though, perhaps, not quite so good, to be dealt with in the same way. When you see a man making good use of his land, you generally find that the next piece to it is considered to be nearly as good. The very fact of one man succeeding in improving his piece will almost certainly lead to the taking up of the next piece on similar conditions. In this way you get the country settled. In my opinion there is not sufficient stress laid upon this question of improving the land. There is not sufficient encouragement given to people to improve their land, and to make the best use of it. I hold it as a principle that the true tenure for any man who goes on the land is to compel him to make use of it. He has no right to it unless he makes use of it, and increases its capacity for carrying sheep, or its productiveness under cultivation. The Minister of Lands prophesies that this resolution won't work. The only way to test the accuracy of his prophecy is to give it a trial. I shall have to support the motion.

**MR. MORAN:** Inside this House and outside it we constantly hear the remark

made that the eyes of the land in Western Australia were taken out by the old settlers; and, if I am not mistaken, I venture to say that the same opinion is held by the hon. member for Nannine. It is a well known fact that many of the best lands along our rivers and our railways are held under fee, and that they cannot be dealt with. This is the secret of the cry we hear—"Down with the Forrest Government; down with the 'six families'; tax the lands; burst up the big estates." That was a cry that was largely availed of when the hon. member for Nannine went on his electioneering campaign. But what strange evolutions time brings about! Here we have the Forrest Government saying they look with a certain amount of suspicion upon a motion brought forward and supported by the most Conservative members, representing the pastoral interest, who want to enable the owners of large estates to acquire still larger holdings, whereby what is already the curse of the colony would be increased twofold. At the fag end of the session, in a thin House, what I maintain is a radical change in the land policy of the Government is brought before the House. Without saying whether I am prepared to support it or not, I say this is not the time to bring it forward. I maintain that at the next session the whole of the Land Regulations ought to be carefully considered, amended, and consolidated; but to attempt, by a side wind, to bring about this radical change, at the fag end of a dying session, is in my opinion unjustifiable. I hope, however, that members will not go back from the principles they have enunciated to-night. I hope, too, the House will not accept this resolution. When the question is brought before the House, in a proper way, at the proper time, I hope members who represent what I may call the industrial classes, in contradistinction to landed interests, will not allow such an innocent-looking measure as this to pass, because it contemplates a complete and radical change in the direction of seeking to bring in a system of fee instead of the system of lease. With regard to the remarks of the hon. member for West Kimberley on this question, we know he, above all others, is prepared to lay down his life for his country, out of a spirit of pure patriotism; and I think we may

look upon his remarks as having a certain amount of weight on any question—provided there is 100 per cent. attached to it.

MR. LEAKE: I really do not know which is most incomprehensible, the Commissioner of Crown Lands or the hon. member for Yilgarn? It has been suggested, as a last resource, that we should get rid of the Commissioner; let us be consistent and for goodness sake get rid of the hon. member for Yilgarn too. It seems to me that the Government in this case are not true to their trust in the Homesteads Act, when they oppose this resolution. The object of that Bill was to encourage settlement and to put people on the land; but now, when effect is sought to be given to that principle by this resolution, the Government won't support it. It seems to me that what this motion aims at is to encourage leaseholders to give up large areas of indifferent land, which they neither utilise nor improve, and to take up with smaller areas, within their leases, paying for them a higher rental to the Crown, and committing themselves to certain improvements. Surely that is a very good principle. I shall most certainly support the resolution. I was inclined to think at one time it was a squatter's resolution, but I cannot now see that it is. I have now come to the conclusion that it is a very proper resolution, and one that deserves the support of every member who desires the speedy settlement and improvement of our land.

MR. HARPER: Before the debate closes, I cannot help expressing a few words in regard to what has fallen from the Commissioner of Crown Lands. He talked about half an hour, trying to convince us that the result of this resolution, if adopted, must be failure and disappointment. That is purely a matter of opinion, and, being an opinion coming from a person who is not experienced in rural occupation, I do not think he need have spent so much time in explaining his own ignorance, and prophesying what the result would be likely to be. He argued this way: that lessees who are now paying £1 per 1,000 acres are not going to take up a lesser quantity and pay four times the amount for it. That, at once, shows his entire misapprehension of the position. They may be taking up smaller areas and paying more for it, but

it will be under conditions that will make that land produce six or seven times more than the other land. That is the great object in view. I may be allowed to refer to some cases that have come under my notice, bearing pointedly upon the whole question at issue. Men who were on the land of the Great Southern Railway Company found themselves in this position: they had all their leasehold land taken from them, and many of them said they would be ruined in consequence. But what was the result? Some of those who held 40,000 or 50,000 or 60,000 acres arranged matters with the Company so that they were allowed to take up a few thousand acres only; and one and all whom I have spoken to on the subject say it was the best thing that ever happened to them. That, also, I am confident will be the result of the operation of these homestead leases. I know there are some people who believe they will be ruined by losing a considerable portion of what they never use; but I think they belong to a class that will soon become extinct. I refer to those who run their sheep in front of a shepherd rather than fence their land, a practice which is indefensible on economical grounds; and the sooner these people learn, by the experience of their neighbours, that they are on the wrong track, the better will it be for them, and the better will it be for the colony. The object of my resolution is this: we may all have our opinion or our doubts as to the success of this proposal, but let us try the experiment. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Let us try the experiment, and let us watch the result. If the Government give effect to this resolution we shall have the very experience we want. We can then see whether it is a failure or not. With these few words, I again commend the resolution to the House.

Motion put and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 40 minutes past 10 o'clock p.m.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 8th November, 1894.

Railways Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Municipal Institutions Bill: Legislative Assembly's Message—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 4:30 o'clock p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, and passed.

#### MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS BILL.

##### LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY'S MESSAGE.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. H. Parker) moved that the amendment made by the Legislative Assembly on the Council's amendment No. 28 be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. H. Parker): I now beg to move that this committee does not insist on its amendments Nos. 17 and 18. I am sorry that the Legislative Assembly has not seen fit to accept these; but still I see no use in insisting upon them. One amendment provided that a blind person, or a person unable to read or write, might vote, and the other that the hiring of carriages to bring voters to the poll should not be deemed an act of bribery and corruption under the Act. However, the Assembly has not seen fit to accept them, and I move that we do not insist upon them.

THE HON. H. McKERNAN: The Assembly says that the insertion of the words "blind persons or who cannot write" will interfere with the secrecy of the ballot; but how about proxy voting? That is still allowed, and there is no secrecy about it.

Amendment agreed to.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. H. Parker): I now move that the Council's amendments Nos. 36 and 42, with which the Legislative Assembly has disagreed, be insisted on. These are