

moved that a return be laid on the table of the House showing,—

1. The amount of money received by the Government for the hire of rolling stock for goods and passengers.

2. The amount of traffic over the said line since its control by Government, and the total earnings of the line for goods traffic, and also for passenger traffic to the end of June last.

3. The total amount of through and intermediate traffic (passenger and goods) on the Fremantle—Northam line, giving separate Return showing through traffic to Southern Cross, and also a similar Return as regards the Beverley to Northam, via Spencer's Brook line.

MR. MORAN: Sir, in moving the motion standing in my name. I am not particular as to the form in which the first part of my motion is expressed; all I desire is information as to the amounts received by the Government for the use of trucks.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn): I will endeavour to get the information for the hon. member. I think Mr. McDowell will be able to give us the information. In all such cases as this, it is desirable that hon. members should say exactly what they require, because it is impossible for the Government to know what is in their minds.

Motion put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.48 p.m., until 4.30 p.m., the following day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 4th July, 1895.

Presentation of the Address-in-Reply—Erection of Railway Goods Shed at Wonnerup—Completion of Boyanup-Busselton Telephone line—Stationing of Railway Engine at Busselton—Detention of Busselton Goods at Bunbury—Granting of power to Civil Service Commission to administer Oaths to witnesses—Public Telephones: Cost of upkeep, etc—Times of arrival of Trains upon Bunbury-Busselton Railway—Excise Duty upon Ale and Stout—Standard Time Bill; in committee—Uniforms Bill: second reading; in committee—Excess Bill, 1893-4: second reading; in committee—Agent-General Bill: second reading—Post Office Savings Bank Interest Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4.30 p.m.
PRAYERS.

PRESENTATION OF THE ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

At twenty minutes to five o'clock p.m., Mr. Speaker, accompanied by members, proceeded to Government House to present the Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Administrator, and having returned,

MR. SPEAKER reported that he had, with members of the House, waited upon His Excellency the Administrator, and had presented to him the Address of the Legislative Assembly in reply to his Opening Speech, agreed to by the House yesterday; and that His Excellency had been pleased to reply as follows:—

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

I thank you for your Address in reply to my Opening Speech, and for the assurance of your desire to deal with all questions that come before you in such a manner as may be most conducive to the continued prosperity of this portion of Her Majesty's dominions.

Government House, Perth, 4th July, 1895.

ERECTION OF RAILWAY GOODS SHED AT WONNERUP.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, whether it was the intention of the Govern-

ment to erect a goods shed at Wonnerup Station.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied that it was not the intention of the Government to erect a Goods Shed at Wonnerup at present. Every facility would be given for loading produce at the siding now there.

COMPLETION OF BOYANUP-BUSSELTON TELEPHONE LINE.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, whether it was the intention of the Government to complete the telephone line between Boyanup and Busselton; and, if so, when.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied: Yes; the poles are up, and the line wired 11 miles, and the other 15 miles will be completed in a month. The delay in completing the line was caused by the non-arrival of wire from London.

STATIONING OF RAILWAY ENGINE AT BUSSELTON.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, whether it was the intention of the Government to station an engine at Busselton, as proposed by the General Traffic Manager; and, if not, why not.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied: No. It was proposed to station an engine at Busselton, but, on mature consideration, it was found that such an arrangement would very injuriously affect the residents of the Blackwood and Donnybrook; and, to meet the conveniences of the whole district, including the Blackwood, Donnybrook, and Busselton, the existing time-table was arranged, which does not provide for an engine being stationed at Busselton.

DETENTION OF BUSSELTON GOODS AT BUNBURY.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, whether he was aware that goods despatched from Perth and Fremantle to Busselton, on a Saturday for instance, were frequently detained in Bunbury till the following Wednesday or Thursday, and that mileage for the extra ten miles, between Picton Junction and Bunbury and back, was charged for those goods.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied: No, I am not aware that goods *ex* Perth to Busselton by Saturday's train are detained in Bunbury until the following Wednesday or Thursday. If such is the fact, it has not been reported to either the General Traffic Manager or myself. Goods, by this train, in small quantities, should proceed to Busselton on Monday; but, if in truck loads, they are sent on direct the same night. No additional mileage is authorised to be charged for the distance between Picton Junction and Bunbury. The correct mileage is from Perth to Picton Junction, and thence to Busselton.

CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION ADMINISTERING OATHS TO WITNESSES.

MR. GEORGE, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier,—

1. Whether in view of the recent difficulties which had arisen with regard to a witness called before the Civil Service Commission now sitting, the Government would arrange to procure for the Commission the power for which they had asked, to enable them to administer the oath in cases where the Commission might consider it necessary to do so.

2. If not, why not.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the difficulties referred to had been removed, and the Commission had been informed to such effect. The Government were not prepared to introduce legislation giving the Commission power to administer oaths, as they were of opinion that such a course was altogether unnecessary.

PUBLIC TELEPHONES: CAPITAL VALUE COST OF UPKEEP, &c.

MR. GEORGE, in accordance with notice moved that a Return be laid upon the table showing,—

1. The Capital Value of the Public Telephones.

2. The Annual Expenditure—

- a. in Wages,
- b. in Salaries,
- c. in Upkeep and General Expenses.

3. List of persons using the Telephone—

- a. Who pay,
- b. Who do not pay.

4. List of Government Departments using the telephone, and the annual charge, if any, for same.

5. Statement showing the total amount received as subscriptions from the public, allowances, if any, from Government Departments, and all sources of revenue.

He said the reason for asking for this return was that a certain proposition had been officially made recently for increasing the charges to the general public who use the telephone service. He was aware that the proposition was said to have been since abandoned; but, notwithstanding that, he thought the House should have this return, so enable hon. members to judge whether the department which controlled the public telephones was carrying on that service in accordance with the views of hon. members with regard to it. So far as his view was concerned, it was that the public telephones should not be regarded, by those responsible for their management, as a means of producing profit to the revenue. They were established for the convenience of the general public, and should therefore be managed for duly serving the public convenience, even if there was a large financial loss in doing so. It was in order to see how far the responsible department was carrying out this mission that he moved for this return. Now that the Premier had assured the House that the revenue of the country was increasing far beyond expectations, it should not be necessary for the Government to regard the public telephones as a means of earning a profit to the revenue.

Motion put and passed.

ARRIVAL OF TRAINS UPON BUNBURY-BUSSELTON RAILWAY.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, moved that a return be laid on the table of the House, showing the actual times of arrival at Busselton of the evening trains on Mondays and Saturdays, and of the arrival at Bunbury of the return trains the same nights, or following mornings, during the month of June last. He said that though this might appear to some hon. members a small matter, yet he could assure them it was not a small matter to those persons who had to use this railway. Parliament having sanctioned the construction of a railway to Busselton, it was his desire that there should be a justification for that work, and he thought the only way of justifying it was to afford reasonable facilities to the people living along the route, and to others using the railway. Last April he had some correspondence

with the Premier, and if he (Mr. Cookworthy) had only received the same consideration and courtesy from the head of the Railway Department as he did receive, not only from the Premier, but from the Traffic Manager, it would not have been necessary for him to bring this matter before the House. The Premier instructed an officer of the Traffic Manager's department to visit the Vasse. He (Mr. Cookworthy) met that officer, and a time-table was arranged which he thought would satisfy the requirements of the district, and that table was to come into force on the 1st of May. But on the 28th of May an order was made for doing away with that time-table, and another time-table was introduced. That fresh table was perfectly unworkable, and at last another table was introduced. If a copy of this last time-table were now laid before the House, hon. members would see that the train times for the Vasse were most extraordinary, for the trains had to run in the middle of the night. The people using trains between Perth and Fremantle would not tolerate a time-table which gave them no trains in the daylight, but only in the night time; and the same principle should apply to the line at the Vasse. It should be observed also that this extraordinary alteration of the time-table was made in opposition to the General Traffic Manager's proposal; and by whom was the alteration made? By order of the Government. And who were the Government at the time? The Premier was ill in bed; the Attorney-General probably had not much to do with it; the Commissioner of Lands was away in the other colonies; and who were the Government then administering affairs? The Government, at any rate, capsized the time-table which had been arranged by their own Traffic Manager, and they did it to the great inconvenience of the people using the railway, besides actually driving traffic away from it. He supposed the new time-table was framed with a view to working the railway on commercial principles; something like what the Commissioner of Railways had stated only the previous day, in replying to the complaint that his policy was driving the good traffic off the railway on to the road between Perth and Fremantle. That could not be called a commercial principle, and if it was to be called a philanthropic principle, he would say the Vasse people did not want their railway worked on philanthropic principles, but worked in accordance with common sense, so

that they might be able to use their railway in the daylight. No extra expense would be incurred by doing so. The working of the line, since the present time-table came into operation, had been most objectionable; and if it had been in the interest of the department to drive traffic from it, that result could not have been achieved more effectually. Every inconvenience had been put in the way of those passengers from Perth and other places who wanted to go on to Busselton, for at Pictou Junction they had been put down in the night time, to the danger of their lives and their great inconvenience. He had known of passengers coming in from the Blackwood who had to go into Bunbury and stop there the night, when their object was to go directly into Busselton. If, as was said, there were no passengers from Donnybrook to the Vasse, how could the department expect to have passengers when they had no train service convenient for those people?

MR. R. F. SKOLL said there were no people there to travel.

MR. COOKWORTHY said the passenger traffic in that district was very fair, under the circumstances. He considered it was the bounden duty of the department to provide proper facilities for inducing people to travel on the railways, and not drive them off or compel them to use private conveyances.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he had hoped to be able to reply to the hon. member's motion by placing on the table the return asked for; but it was not yet to hand, though he hoped to lay it on the table that afternoon. The hon. member, in some of his remarks, had been unintentionally misleading the House. It was a mistake to say that the time table for the Busselton railway had been altered against the express wish of the General Traffic Manager. That statement could not be substantiated by any fact whatever.

MR. COOKWORTHY: His letter shows it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he could read to the House the General Traffic Manager's letter, if necessary. The hon. member had misread the letter altogether. The hon. member's question, with regard to placing an engine at the Busselton end of the line, had been answered already in the House. It was a fact that the first proposal did include the stationing of an engine at Busselton; but when he (the Commissioner) referred the pro-

posed arrangements to the Blackwood people, and to the Hon. the Speaker as their principal representative, the Speaker objected to the proposed time-table as being most injurious to the Blackwood people, and such as they could not tolerate at all. It was then, with the consent of the Speaker, of the General Traffic Manager, and of himself (the Commissioner), that a time table was arranged which would, as they believed, best suit the whole of the district served by the railway. So far from his wishing to drive traffic away from any part of the railway, his desire, both as Commissioner of Railways and as a member for an adjoining district, was to make the Vasse line, or any other line, pay as much as possible, and to work the railway with the least possible expense. The new time-table was arranged to suit the district as a whole, and he believed it now suited the majority of those people very well indeed. It was a fact that, in doing so, the trains had to run to the Vasse rather late at night; but if those trains were run to the Vasse during the daylight, that arrangement would inconvenience a much larger number of people who travelled between Perth and Bunbury. He did not wish to speak about the amount of traffic on the Vasse line, but, if required, he would, reluctantly, make a return showing the actual results of working that section. The desire of the department was to do the best that was possible for the interests of the large majority of people who used this railway, and the same remark applied to all the railways. It would have given him much pleasure to station an engine at the Vasse, as the hon. member desired, if that had been practicable; but why the Vasse people wanted an engine to look at, he could not understand. The present time-table was certainly one that appeared to him sufficient for the present traffic. By referring to the memorandum which was sent by the General Traffic Manager to the Premier—he had seen it on a file of office papers—the hon. member would then see that the Commissioner of Railways was not, as alleged, acting against the proposals of the General Traffic Manager. That memorandum was addressed to the Premier—he (the Commissioner) believed he was away at Coolgardie at the time, and the Premier was doing the Ministerial duties of the Railway Department—and he would now read from the memorandum, remarking also that he had not actually read through it before. [*Extract not supplied.*]

That was the statement of the General Traffic Manager, and it did not exactly bear out the statements made by the hon. member. If the hon. member would read again the letter which he received from the General Traffic Manager, it would show that the General Traffic Manager had been requested to rearrange the time-table, with the assistance and concurrence of the Hon. the Speaker. The hon. member was making a huge mistake if he thought that he (the Commissioner) had any desire to divert traffic from the Vasse railway. There was no desire on his part, nor on that of the Government, to show that the Vasse line or any other line was doing worse or better than was actually the case; and if there was a tendency at all on his part, either as Commissioner of Railways or a member for the district served by this railway, it would be to show that the line was doing a great deal more than other persons might suppose. His desire, however, was to be correct and just; and although he was not the member for the Vasse district, he was very much interested in Bunbury, and he was afraid that the hon. member's grievance was prompted by a too clannish feeling which existed between Bunbury and the Vasse. For himself, he could say he had no desire to so arrange the district time-table as to push the traffic into Bunbury, or prevent it from going to the Vasse.

MR. COOKWORTHY said the Commissioner of Railways had accused him of trying to mislead the House, but he rather thought it was the Commissioner who had been misleading the House. He (Mr. Cookworthy) disputed the argument that the time-table, as first arranged, would cause the running of a large amount more of train mileage per week. The service at first arranged by the General Traffic Manager, the officer who visited the Vasse, and himself, was for exactly the same number of trains per week, and the only difference was the time of running in the daylight. Why that should affect Donnybrook he could not understand. It was an injustice to his constituents, the Vasse people, that the trains between 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. should cease running on the Vasse section, so that the night hours were the only time when people in that district could use the railway. Persons going to Busselton had to start early in the morning in order to do their business in Busselton, and they had also to stop there till the night train

took them back, so that they arrived home at 10 or 11 at night. He hoped and trusted the time-table would be altered. He denied that he had misread the meaning of the General Traffic Manager's letter to himself, for the letter said "The arrangement made between you and me has been altered by order of the Government, and I much regret it."

Notion put and passed.

EXCISE DUTY UPON ALE AND STOUT.

MR. HARPER, in accordance with notice, moved "That the best interests of this country would be served, if the Government were to introduce the following alterations into the Tariff Bill, now before the House, namely, (1) Place galvanised iron (plain and corrugated) and explosives of all kinds, upon the free list. (2) Impose an excise duty upon ale and stout made in the colony." I ask leave to amend this notice of motion. The amendment I wish to substitute is in the second part of my motion. It is to strike out the word "impose," and substitute the words "and also to introduce a measure for imposing." The second part will then read as follows: "And also to introduce a measure for imposing an excise duty upon ale and stout made in the colony." I do not think I need say much about the articles in the first part of my motion. Galvanised iron is one of those things used in every phase of life in the colony, and it is certainly anomalous that all other metal introduced in its raw or crude state will, in the new Bill, be admitted free. It would be rather absurd that on galvanised iron, which is so generally used for many economical purposes, we should have to pay a heavy duty, when other kinds of iron are admitted free.

MR. LEAKE: I rise to a point of order. Is the first part of the hon. member's motion in order, seeing that it refers to a Bill which is now before the House?

THE SPEAKER: It is anticipating the debate on the Tariff Bill. It did not strike me before, when the hon. member consulted me as to whether it would be out of order; but I think now, when my attention has been called to it, that it would not be proper to proceed with that part of the motion which anticipates discussion on the Tariff Bill, as that Bill is before the House. The hon. member will be in order in proceeding with the second part of his motion.

MR. HARPER: In accordance with your ruling, Sir, I will deal with the second part

of the motion, relating to the excise duty on ale and stout. One of the alterations in the Customs Tariff, two years ago, as hon. members may recollect, was for giving a bonus to local brewers, by increasing the duty on imported ale and stout; and I believe the duty has proved so effectual that I am told the importation has reached almost a vanishing point. The Government now propose, in their Tariff Bill, to put sugar on the free list; therefore, I think it is only fair that the brewers should contribute something to the revenue, for the considerable benefit they will receive from the abolition of the duty on that article. I therefore move the motion in its amended form.

MR. TIROSSELL: I rise with pleasure to second the motion of the hon. member for Beverley, but I wish it had gone a little further. As to the first part of the motion, I am not permitted to refer to that. With regard to imposing an excise duty on ale and stout, as proposed in the first part of the motion, there can be no question that when the Government bring in a Bill for the remission of sugar duties, their object is to reduce the cost of the necessaries of life, and not to build up, or enhance, the very big profits of the brewing interest. I feel sure that is so. I think I am right in saying that 6d. a gallon on beer manufactured in the colony would represent something like £10,000 per annum, possibly more. It was estimated, when the tariff question was before this House two years ago, that an excise duty of 6d. a gallon on ale and stout would increase the revenue by £7,000 per annum. I take it that the consumption of beer has not decreased since then, and possibly the same amount of duty, with our increased population, would now yield to the revenue much more than the estimate of two years ago, and could hardly be less than £10,000 a year. We may take it that the brewing industry at the present time is in a flourishing condition, and is very profitable. I shall feel great pleasure if the hon. member can carry his motion, as I hope that, by putting an excise duty on ale and stout, proportionate duties in other directions may be wiped out. I have great pleasure in seconding the motion.

MR. A. FORREST: I rise to oppose this motion. The hon. member for Northam says breweries in the colony are in a very flourishing condition and have made a lot of money. I deny the soft impeachment, and say that the

leading brewery in the colony, that of the Swan Brewery Company, has never paid a dividend, and may go on several years before it does pay a dividend, on the large capital invested in that business. If an excise duty is placed on the colonial made article, we open the door for a large introduction of English and other beers to compete against the local product. The competition between breweries in this colony and those outside is very keen, and it is almost impossible for local breweries to make a profit against any large concern in which considerable capital has been invested. There is no doubt that the reduction of the sugar duty will help brewers to a considerable extent, but to talk about an excise duty of 6d. a gallon would be absurd. If we give the brewers a small concession, in removing the duty on sugar, that is no sufficient reason, and this is not the time, to put an excise duty on beer locally manufactured. The time to put on a duty would be when the colony required more revenue. The colony does not need to increase its revenue at present by additional taxation, and I fail to see, therefore, that any good would be done to the country, or to those engaged in brewing, by imposing an excise duty, even though the duty on sugar is to be taken off. That part of the motion which cannot be discussed, according to the Speaker's ruling, but which the hon. member for Northam was trying to get in by a little side wind, is one of great importance. I hope that at this stage of the proceedings, the House not being quite full, the question of placing an excise duty on beer will be postponed, and that the hon. member will not press his motion on this occasion. The notice of this motion was put on the business paper yesterday, and has reached members only this afternoon; so that the members generally have not been made aware, until arriving in the House, that this discussion was coming on to-day. I hope, therefore, as there is not a full attendance, that the hon. member, before asking for a division will consent to have the discussion postponed until Monday, so as to give hon. members and the people outside some notice of what has been proposed in this House.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I think that if the discussion were postponed, the hon. member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) would be no better off than if a division is taken to-night. Probably he would have a worse chance of getting a majority with him to defeat the

motion. In a newspaper report which I saw recently, the Chairman of Directors of the Stanley Brewery Co., informed the shareholders that during five years that brewery had paid a dividend of 17s. 6d. on the shares paid up to 10s. Assuming that those shares were paid up and not "loaded," and only 5s. subscribed, then on that basis the total dividends were equal to 17s. 6d. a share, besides, I believe, a considerable sum being placed to the reserve fund. When the Tariff Bill was being considered by a Select Committee, two years ago, I think evidence was given by Mr. Hardwick, manager of the Swan Brewery Co., to the effect that he would not object to certain duties being taken off imported liquors, if an excise duty were not placed on the Colonial made article. I think that, if we take the duty off sugar—and I am myself in favor of its removal, though I fear it will benefit only the brewers, and possibly the confectioners—it is only reasonable that we should put an excise duty on local beer. Sugar is so cheap, and so evenly distributed in its consumption throughout the colony, that I think the duty is not felt by consumers, and yet it brings in a very large revenue to the country. I believe that those who would feel the greatest benefit from the removal of the duty would be the shareholders of the breweries. This is clearly shown by the fact that the value of shares has increased, and the brewing companies are now in a very good position indeed. The value of shares has gone up, in some cases five-fold, as compared with the value a few years ago; and, with our increasing population, the quantity of beer locally brewed must be increasing considerably. It is only reasonable and fair that if we take the duty off sugar, we should also place an excise duty on colonial made beer.

MR. GEORGE: Can I move an amendment to the motion, by proposing to add some other articles to it?

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member can do that.

MR. GEORGE: I am asking for more protection than the motion proposes.

THE SPEAKER: In order to place an excise duty on beer, I may inform the hon. member, the duty would have to be put into a separate Bill; therefore I do not think the hon. member would be in order in proposing that certain other articles be added to the same Bill. His motion is for the introduction of a measure imposing an excise duty on beer.

MR. HOOLEY: There is no amount of duty mentioned in the motion. It has been suggested by members that the excise duty in the proposed Bill should be 6d. a gallon; but if it amounted to that, I think it would be a great injustice to impose such a duty on locally brewed beer at the present time.

THE SPEAKER: There is no amount mentioned in the motion.

MR. HOOLEY: I think that colonial industries of any kind, into which people have put a large amount of capital, should receive fair play from members of this House. To my knowledge, the wealth of the breweries is pretty considerable; but I am satisfied they are not making very handsome profits on their capital at the present time, though what they may do later on, with a larger population, I cannot say.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I seems to me that this discussion is somewhat premature. It assumes as a fact that which has not yet occurred. The Customs Duties Repeal Bill has not been considered in this House yet, and it seems to me that any addition to that Bill, or to any new law, rendered necessary in the opinion of some members, should follow and not precede the Bill now before the House. I have heard, and have reason to believe, that one brewery company in Perth has done very well, and I am glad to hear that it is so; but I know of a good many brewery companies, in different parts of the colony, that have not done very well. I think the brewery company referred to by the hon. member for the Gascoyne is the only one that has done well, for some reason or other. I believe there is a brewery company at Geraldton, but I have never heard that it is making a fortune. However, I think it is a matter we should rejoice in, when we find a local industry prospering, and not that we should desire to interfere with it because it is prospering. So soon as an institution in this country begins to prosper, that is not the time honorable members should rush in and try to strangle it, by trying to make it non-paying. At the same time, we want our institutions and industries to flourish and pay good dividends to the shareholders who have put their money into them. After the Customs Duties Repeal Bill has passed, as I hope it will, for the abolition of the duty on sugar and other articles mentioned, that will be the time, if necessary, to move in regard to the matters referred to in this motion. When that

time comes, I do not think I shall be in favour of the motion, because I wish to encourage those who are doing well in the country. I do not see that, because there is a little spurt of prosperity, there should be any necessity to interfere with a local industry by trying to make it unprofitable. For my own part, I should like to see breweries all over the country, so as may be necessary, for manufacturing a local product, rather than that our people should spend their money in purchasing articles imported from other countries. It is generally admitted that this country should be able to produce good beer, and I think we want to encourage the brewing industry, and many other industries besides, rather than to interfere with them in the way proposed in the motion. I will go with my hon. friend, the member for Beverley, to this extent: that if there were a necessity for raising more revenue at present, and if we were revising the whole tariff with that object, we might then consider this question; but, as far as the Government are concerned, we do not intend to do that this session. One object in the Bill which I introduced the other day, is to reduce taxation to such an extent as will not interfere very much with the principles of the Customs Tariff; and I would therefore advise the hon. member, if he desires to go on with this motion, to postpone it in any case until after the Customs Duties Repeal Bill has been dealt with.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I disagree with the hon. the Premier on that point, because I am certain that the votes of a great number of members in this House, on the question whether the duty should be taken off sugar or not, will be very materially influenced by the decision on this question whether there shall be an excise duty on locally brewed beer. I admit that, if people will drink beer, they may as well drink beer brewed in the colony rather than imported beer; and, as a protectionist, I am prepared to give local beer the advantage over the imported beer. The argument of the hon. the Minister for Lands, last evening, was that to take the duty off sugar would be a material help to a desirable industry—that is the manufacture of jam. I felt a strong interest in that question, and I believe great good will come to the country in many ways if that industry can be encouraged, because a very large quantity of fruit trees—much larger than most members imagine—is being, and has been planted, in and

around the Perth district and throughout the colony. It is certain that, if the fruit and jam-making industry is to pay as we desire it should, some encouragement should be given to it. That is the only reason why I should be inclined to support the remission of the sugar duty. The question of a free breakfast table does not enter into this discussion. I ask hon. members to bear in mind that, according to a rough estimate which I have, which is pretty accurate, and to which I call the Treasurer's special attention, the saving to the brewers which would result from the abolition of the duty on sugar, means a distinct profit of £7,000 or £8,000 per annum. In this motion the proposition is to give a small concession to the people of the colony, at the same time that this House is giving a concession to the brewers of £7,000 or £8,000 per annum. I say, distinctly, that the question of a free breakfast table is not the issue now before us; and consequently I consider that this is the time when the motion of the hon. member for Beverley ought to be considered and settled. If the Government have any desire to carry their proposed remission of duties to the extent of the abolition of the sugar duty, they will act wisely by supporting the hon. member for Beverley on this question. Although I do not want to suggest the amount of duty which it is proposed in this motion to impose, I am satisfied that if the amount be taken at 6d. a gallon on locally brewed beer, it will not be larger than the amount of the concession which is to be given to the brewers, through the Bill brought in by the Government. This is simply a question of equalising of the amount, for the purpose of giving a concession in another direction. On the one hand, there are duties on imported beers; on the other hand, the remission of the duty on sugar will give a distinct privilege to the brewers of between £7,000 and £8,000 a year; and this concession, I contend, it is not wise to give.

THE PREMIER: It will make beer cheaper.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am not anxious to make beer cheaper or stronger. If there is one thing I pardon the publican for, it is putting water into his drink—so long as he only puts water into it. I say this is the time when this question ought to be discussed, and I must say the decision on this motion will materially affect my vote upon the further question of the abolition of the duty on sugar, when that question comes up at another stage.

My only object in rising now, is to urge on the hon. member for Beverley not to withdraw his motion, but let it go to a vote, and then we shall have some idea of the feeling of the House on this particular question.

THE HON. W. E. MARMION: The hon. member is a little in error in saying the saving to the brewers will be anything like £7,000 or £8,000 a year. The Blue Book shows that the whole amount of the duty on sugar for 1893 was £9,587.

THE PREMIER: About £13,000 in 1894.

THE HON. W. E. MARMION: I think therefore, that £2,000 would be as much as the remission of the duty on sugar would save to the brewers at present. There is something in the suggestion made by the Premier that the consideration of this question might very well stand over until after the discussion on the tariff, because if the duty now on sugar is not taken off, the argument as to this proposed excise duty being a proportionate concession from the brewers to the people, would be altogether removed. There will, no doubt, be a saving to the brewers; but it is no argument to say, that if you save £1,000 to a man in one direction, you should impose £1,000 on him in another direction.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): By raising the question in this form, to put an excise duty on beer, those hon. members who do not desire this excise duty will be careful to note that the duty be not taken off sugar, for fear it should be put on beer. This kind of proposal is nothing more than what I expected, as the result of attempting to protect local industries. The doctrine of Protectionists is, that they profess to succour and help what are called infant industries; but the practical working of the doctrine is, that as soon as an infant industry begins to walk, they knock it down by making some adverse change in the tariff. The hon. member for the Murray believes in that doctrine, and when addressing the electors recently, I believe he wanted to protect a particular industry in which they are interested. Well, we now see that the first chance hon. members get to interfere with an infant industry that is beginning to walk in this colony—and that seldom happens except in the case of a brewery, I suppose—they all pounce down upon it like a lot of hawks, and try to strangle it, because they think somebody is making a little profit out of it. Show me any industry you have

attempted to protect in this country, that is making any headway at all, unless it be breweries, which some hon. members think are making too much headway. It must not be forgotten that when the tariff was re-arranged in 1893, this House tried to protect the farmer by making the brewer buy his barley grown in the colony, but which the farmer cannot grow—he does not grow as much as I could put in my eye, and has never got any to sell. That is one of the fallacies involved in the theory of protection. Since the tariff was re-arranged in 1893, the brewers have had to pay 2d. a bushel extra on malting barley. That duty, which was then placed on the brewers, was distinctly an additional charge, because they have to import nearly all the malting barley they use, not being able to get it here. If at that time you also put a duty on imported beer, to protect the brewers, why should you now want to pounce down on and strangle the brewery industry in this colony, directly it begins to walk? Here we have a native industry that we have been trying to encourage, and we find that as soon as it begins to walk, there is a cry of “down with it—put an excise duty on it—smash it up.” Of course the teetotalers and Good Templar men join in that cry. The hon. member for Nannine seems to be under the impression that the brewers use sugar for making beer, because he has heard of “sugar beer;” but the local brewers do not make “sugar beer,” and the ordinary beer is not made from sugar. The hon. member has told us that £7,000 or £8,000 a year is the amount that will be saved to the brewers by taking the duty off the sugar they put into beer.

MR. SIMPSON: How much does your brewery pay for sugar?

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I would gladly give the figures. I believe you will find that all the breweries in the country did not pay as much as £2,000 last year for the duty on sugar, for the reason that they do not make sugar beer; and hon. members should be aware that ordinary beer is not made from sugar. I did not think I should be called upon to speak upon these elementary matters; but when I find the hon. member for Nannine, who does not himself drink beer, has an idea that beer is made from sugar, it is only reasonable that I should put him right on that matter. I am not saying, however, that an excise duty on beer would not

be a proper duty in itself; but I do say, let the breweries have a chance of getting on their legs, and of paying a dividend.

MR. SIMPSON: One pays 50 per cent. per annum.

THE PREMIER: You are not in that.

MR. SIMPSON: But you are.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Those who have got the 50 per cent. must have been vendors or founders, and I do not think the genuine shareholders have got anything like 50 per cent. If you start a brewery here, you cannot expect to make anything like 50 per cent., at any rate for some years. The time may come when we shall want an excise duty on beer, and possibly we may want it in a year or two, if more revenue is then required. We may also have to put a duty on some other things. How much duty does the hon. member for Nannine pay on properties that are going up in value? It would be a good thing, I fancy, to have a duty on mining shares, though I never had a mining share that went up. I am quite willing to join with the hon. member for the Gascoyne in putting a duty on shares—say when they arrive at a certain amount; and then the breweries and the mining industry will be on the same footing. A shareholder in a gold mine does nothing at all—he toils not, neither does he spin—but he simply sits down, and when the shares are going up in value he makes large profits. Therefore, he is more legitimately an object for taxation than the brewers. At this period, when we have such a flourishing revenue, this is not the time to impose a duty on locally brewed beer. It will have to come sooner or later, no doubt, and may not be postponed more than a year or two. It will require an Act in itself, and there must be provision in that Act for the expenses of collecting the tax, because you will have to keep an eye on the brewers, and inspect their premises. I suppose the hon. member put into his motion, item No. 2 (excise duty on ale and stout), hoping that, by getting through item No. 1 (to place galvanized iron and explosives on the free list), he might be able also to get through item No. 2; and no doubt he had an idea that he would not be able to get through No. 1 separately. I ask the hon. member to postpone his motion for an excise duty on ale and stout to another time—say until next session.

MR. GEORGE: I did not intend to speak on this matter, because beer has no particular in-

terest for me. I cannot drink it, and if I do it disagrees with me. But the Attorney-General has thought fit to make some reference to the member for the Murray, and he has also spoken with regard to the necessity of correcting some members on elementary matters. The Attorney-General represents a squatting, and not a farming district, and when he states that the farmers in this colony cannot grow enough barley to put in his eye, he must have a very large eye, or he would be totally blinded. The district I have the honor to represent can grow more barley than the hon. gentleman, and the whole of the members on his side of the House, can "put in their eye," and if they wish to have all this barley brought into Perth for the purpose of malting, and will give me the railway I have asked for in the Murray district, I will undertake that the farmers in my district alone, will be able to supply more barley, and good barley too, than all the brewers can use. Some years ago, plenty of barley was grown in that district, and was carted distances of even 100 miles to a market. Some farmers in that district are growing it at the present time, and carting it very long distances; but most of them have had to give up growing barley, so as to grow a more valuable product and bring it to market. When the Attorney-General speaks on matters of that kind, I should be glad if he would speak with more exactness, or that he would confine his remarks to those matters which are really within his knowledge. As to interfering with the brewers, I am not a teetotaler, though I may call myself a temperate man, but I believe no country can prosper which has such a drink Bill as there is in this Colony. If an excise duty on ale and stout will aid temperance, by causing the brewers to supply better beer to compete with the imported article, then I should be in favor of putting a duty on ale and stout made in the colony. I am not a friend of either the publican or the brewer, for I consider the drink traffic has caused a great amount of sorrow throughout the whole world, and is causing it now. Therefore I should be happy to support anything that can be done to put a proper restriction on that traffic.

MR. CONNOR: I am afraid my friend, the hon. member for West Kimberley, was rather out of order in referring to the Beer Bill before this House, when he suggested that the House was not full.

MR. LEAKE: One is placed somewhat in a difficulty, in speaking on a question of this kind, when one has to follow experts in this House. We have had the Attorney-General, the hon. member for the Murray, and the hon. member for West Kimberley, speaking as experts; but I suppose one must tackle the question in the best way possible, and if I may give my reason for supporting the hon. member for Beverley in this motion: it is that I assume, of course, that the Government will carry their proposals. They do generally carry most things they bring forward. I think it would be so far fair to put an excise duty on ale and stout made in the colony, because the benefit which will accrue to the brewers from the remission of the sugar duty will be out of proportion to the benefit accruing to other consumers of sugar in the colony—that is if we take off the sugar duty. I do sincerely trust the hon. member will not withdraw his motion, but will force it, if necessary, to a division. I do not think it is a sound argument, advanced by the Attorney-General, when he says that this is an attempt to cripple a rising industry which is just paying its way. I say it is nothing of the kind, because we are giving brewers compensating advantages; for there is to be the duty taken off sugar, and against that there should be a duty put on beer. I do not suppose that the ordinary consumers of beer, such as the supporters of the Government, will really be affected at all. I hope some of my enthusiastic friends in this House will have something to say about the brewers' monopoly, before the Session is over; and if you can do something in that line, by having a "shy" at them, you may do some good by preventing the brewers from tying up all the public-houses and drinking places in the colony. That is what does more harm than anything else in the drinking line.

MR. HARPER: The Hon. the Attorney-General has tried to cast some ridicule upon this motion. One of his arguments is that he desires to see the duty taken off sugar for the benefit of brewers; and what the effect of that would be has been pointed out by the hon. member for Albany. The Attorney-General also cast some slur on the farmers for not producing barley to make malt; and this gives me the opportunity of assuring him of the very little confidence that growers of barley have in brewers. Some years ago the brewers offered seed to farmers for the production of malting barley, and entered into guarantees

that they would take all the barley which these farmers could grow, during a certain number of years, at a certain price. The result was that the farmers produced a great deal of barley; but when it was ready for delivery the brewers said it was too much, and that they could buy imported barley at a cheaper rate than the price which had been agreed upon in the guarantee. After that experience, the brewers cannot expect the farmers here to have much confidence in the assurances of brewers. As to the amount of the excise duty which should be put on beer, no one has authority to say I suggested an excise duty of 6d. a gallon. I want simply to equalise this duty in connection with the proposed remission of the sugar duty. I cannot see any hard terms in that, and I hope the House will support my motion.

Motion put, that the best interests of this country would be served, if the Government were to introduce a measure for imposing an excise duty upon ale and stout made in the colony, and division taken, with the following result:—

Ayes	15
Noes	8

Majority for 7

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Clarkson	Mr. Burt
Mr. Cookworthy	Mr. Connor
Mr. George	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Illingworth	Mr. Hooley
Mr. Keep	Mr. Marnion
Mr. Leake	Mr. Richardson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Venn
Mr. Moran	Mr. A. Forrest (Teller.)
Mr. Moss	
Mr. R. F. Sholl	
Mr. Simpson	
Mr. Solomon	
Mr. Throssell	
Mr. Traylen	
Mr. Harper (Teller)	

Question put and passed.

STANDARD TIME BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1:

Agreed to.

Clause 2.—Commencement of Act:

MR. LEAKE asked whether it was absolutely necessary to postpone the coming into operation of the Bill until the 1st day of January next. As the 1st of January was a holiday, the change of time on that day might be inconvenient, in the railway service particularly, as all the clocks in the country would be adrift. The new system having been al-

ready adopted by the other Parliaments in Australia, a long delay in this colony seemed unnecessary.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) accepted the hon. member's suggestion, and thought the 1st of December would be more suitable. He therefore moved, as an amendment, that the words "January" and "six," in line 2, be struck out, and the words "December" and "five" be inserted respectively in lieu thereof.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 3 and 4:

Agreed to.

Preamble and title:

Agreed to.

Bill reported, with an amendment.

UNIFORMS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt), in moving the second reading, said: This is a little Bill which the Secretary of State for the Colonies has suggested to be passed in this colony; as in other colonies. It has been found that some persons in England have been in the habit of sending military and naval uniforms to the colonies, for sale; and consequently an Act has been passed by the English Parliament, quoted in the margin of this Bill (Imp. Act 57 and 58 Vict., c. 45), which is practically to the same effect as this Bill. It merely provides that naval and military uniforms are not to be worn without authority, and that naval and military uniforms are not to be worn in such a manner, or under such circumstances as will be likely to bring contempt upon them.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 7, inclusive:

Agreed to.

MR. LEAKE asked whether the Bill applied to the wearing of consular uniforms without authority.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said it did not.

Preamble and title:

Agreed to.

Bill reported, without amendment.

Report adopted.

The House resumed.

At 6:24 p.m. the Speaker left the Chair.

At 7:30 p.m. the Speaker resumed the chair.

EXCESS BILL, 1894.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Sir, in moving the second reading of this Bill, I should like to make a very few observations with regard to it. Hon. members, no doubt, feel as I do, that to ask for the approval of this House to expenditure incurred during the year ending over twelve months ago, is not altogether what they would like.

MR. LEAKE: Hear; Hear. Excesses.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Hon. members would prefer to deal with expenditure that has just been incurred, but under the system in force here now, I have no hesitation in saying that it is impossible to have the Auditor-General's report placed upon the table of this House during the session of Parliament just following the end of the financial year. Years ago our financial year ended on the 31st of December, and Parliament met then as it does now sometime during winter, there were always five or six months after the end of the financial year, in which to prepare the Treasurer's statement, and receive the notes of the Auditor-General in regard to the accounts of the colony. That system was convenient in some ways to the hon. members of this House, but it had its disadvantages, the estimates for the year were placed upon the table several months before the end of the financial year, and the Treasurer was under this great disadvantage, he had not only to estimate the revenue that was coming, which was several months—probably four months—ahead, but he also had to estimate the revenue he would receive from the year with which he was then dealing, and because he did not know what money he would receive from the date of making the financial statement to the end of the year, that arrangement was very disadvantageous, and so it was altered. It was considered it would be much better that the financial statement of the Treasurer should be given shortly after the end of the financial year, when he knew exactly the revenue he had received for the past year, and was able with some certainty to judge the revenue he was likely to receive for the coming year. That system was altered about eighteen months ago, and the result is the Auditor-General is very often not able to get the public accounts of the colony until three months after the year has ended. If anyone will take the trouble to look through this very valuable, and very complete statement, compiled by the

Under-Treasurer, I think he must come to the conclusion that it cannot be done in a very short time. As matter of fact, the Audit Act gives him three months to prepare the information contained in the 131 pages of the 'Public Accounts of the Colony,' it then has to go to the Auditor-General, which will carry it to about the end of September, before it reaches him, and of course it would take the Auditor-General a good while to go through the whole of these accounts and make his report to Parliament. I find he states in the beginning of his report "even supposing the Treasury had been able to furnish the Annual Statements within the time prescribed by Clause 38 of "The Audit Act, 1891" (i.e. not later than three months after the end of every financial year), it would have been a most difficult, if not an impossible task, for this Department to have discharged its duty in regard to the examination in detail of the manifold transactions connected with the Public Accounts in these days, all of which must be finally disposed of before it is possible to compile the Annual Report for presentation to Parliament. As you are aware, Parliament met on the 25th July, 1894, almost immediately after the close of the Financial Year 1893-94, now under review, and the prorogation took place before it was possible for this Department to collate the required information to enable my Annual Report to be prepared. If the Financial Year terminated, as formerly, on the 31st December, instead of the 30th June, or if Parliament met six months after its close, the Annual Report would most certainly be in readiness six months earlier than at present." That is the reason why this Excess Bill was not submitted during last session for the confirmation of this House. Those hon. members who have been in the House some years, will recollect, that in the first session after we obtained Responsible Government, I submitted to this House an Excess Bill, within a very short time of the House first meeting, but this House by resolution refused to go on with the Bill until they received the Auditor-General's report. Of course the Auditor-General's report could not be furnished while the House was in session, and it has become the custom since then to introduce a Bill, not in the session immediately following the financial year which this report relates to, but twelve months after. I recognise fully the inconvenience, but I can see no remedy, unless we

change our financial year back to the 31st of December, instead of the 30th June. Of course it would be quite possible for me in a very few weeks to produce the Excess Bill for 1894-5, that is for the year ending on the 30th of June last, but there would not be the Auditor-General's report for the information of hon. members, and so I fear they would not be in a position to deal with excesses or underdrafts, as they would if they had this most careful report, giving reasons for every excess, supplied by the departments themselves, and corrected if necessary by the Auditor-General, giving full particulars of every single vote upon the Estimates. The Treasurer is in a position very soon after the end of the financial year to give the information contained in this Bill, that is the amounts of excesses on all items, but this House by resolution—I think in 1891—would not deal with the Bill, unless they had before them the Auditor-General's report, and very wisely too, for we should only have a lot of talk, and information would be asked for that it would be very difficult to supply readily. The House certainly would not be in the position it is to-night, having the Auditor-General's report before it, giving reasons for all the excesses, and for all the underdrafts. Hon. members will notice in this Bill there is an excess over expenditure authorised by this House of £42,531 3s. 11d. I am glad to say that although we have exceeded the authority of this House to that extent, we have not exceeded the gross amount authorised, which was £54,154 0s. 6d., leaving a sum of £11,622 16s. 7d. expended, less than we were actually authorised to expend. Of course it would be much more satisfactory to us to come to this House first, rather than ask authority for any expenditure that has been made without Parliamentary approval, but I do not see how that is possible under the circumstances. The only thing now for the Government to do is to minimise the amount as much as possible. The reason this amount is so large for the year 1894, is on account of the developments that have taken place in the colony, and new expenditure that has been absolutely necessary. When we get into committee on the Bill, I will try to explain to the best of my knowledge any item of excess there is in it. All I can now say is, while I regret very much an excess of £42,531 3s. 11d., I rejoice that the underdrafts are more than the excesses. I can say there is every effort made by the

Government not to exceed the votes of the Legislature, but we have to take the responsibility in all these excesses. We have to say to ourselves, is it in the interests of the colony, and being satisfied upon that, we take the responsibility upon ourselves, and trust to a generous Legislature to approve of the expenditure. That course the Government have found to be absolutely necessary, and after all it is not very much—though it looks much—considering the total amount of expenditure for the year, and as I have said before, if we have expended these amounts in excess of votes, we have not expended a larger amount than the gross amount authorised by the Legislature. I beg to move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I quite agree with the hon. the Premier. It is unsatisfactory that we have now to consider an Excess Bill virtually two years old.

THE PREMIER: Not two years—one year.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: It is nominally for last year, but the excesses commenced over twelve months ago and may have commenced two years ago. I think I am probably correct in saying some of the items are two years old.

THE PREMIER: I do not think so.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: There may be some, I quite recognise there may be, and probably are, certain items for which a vote had not been provided by Parliament, not having been foreseen by the Government, and which consequently appear in an Excess Bill, indeed we must expect an excess for the year, but there may be underdrafts as well, and according to the Audit Act these cannot be put one against the other. Every excess and every underdraft has to be shown separately and I do not think there is much in the argument of the Government.

THE PREMIER: We might have transferred the lot if we had liked, but we did not do so.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I believe that is correct, for this reason: works may be undertaken for which Parliament has voted the money, but I do not think there is much in that for which to take credit. If Parliament votes money for any buildings, or for the employment of civil servants, if those civil servants are not employed or those works not constructed, I do not see where the credit to the Government comes in. I do not intend to deal with the whole of the items in this Excess Bill, but I do wish to say this: I think it would be more convenient to hon.

members to have the Excess Bill earlier, even if we had to do without the Auditor-General's report at the time. I say this now because I was one of those who took part in doing away with the former arrangement.

THE PREMIER: You could get the particulars of all excesses, with general remarks upon them by the Auditor-General.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: That would be much more convenient than waiting for his report, because he has to wait for the accounts to be audited, and then it takes him some little time to frame the excellent report which he annually places before us. It would be more convenient, and we should know better what we were doing, if we could get the Excess Bill, even without the formal report of the Auditor-General. He might draw attention to any particular item and attach any remarks that might be of interest to hon. members, or which he considered his duty to place before them. Now, Sir, there are certain items in this Bill upon which I certainly think Parliament should express an opinion, and protest against. There is an item on page four, under the heading of "Inspection of Stock," Government Veterinary Surgeon, £250. Why did not the Government come down and say they were going to employ him for twelve months, instead of informing us they were going to employ him for six months.

THE PREMIER: That was the first six months.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Yes of course, I remember now, his appointment was made in consequence of some representations made to the Government, with regard to an outbreak of disease down South. Still I believe he is employed by the Government at the present time, although only six months' salary was voted, and I quite expect in another two years' time when we get the Excess Bill for 1895, we shall find he will still be drawing his salary.

MR. A. FORREST: He is inspecting camels.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: There is another item that I take exception to, and I think it is a matter the House should take exception to, and that is with reference to gratuities given to private people. I think before the Government make a present of the funds of the country to any private individual, they should bring the matter forward here and obtain the sanction of Parliament. On page 9 there is a gratuity of £50 to a certain widow, and another to another lady of £25, and another to

a late ship captain of £250. I hope it will not be thought I take exception to these gratuities on private grounds, I do not take the merits of the cases into account at all. It is possible that if these items had been brought before Parliament they would have been sanctioned; all I contend for is that Parliament has a right to vote these amounts in the Estimates. If these matters were allowed to pass without challenge they might lead to abuses in the future, and I think Parliament should be careful, and keep in its own hands the control of any expenditure in the shape of gratuities, either for servants of the Government or out-side people. I notice there is an excess for mining, amounting to £1603 19s. 3d., and if hon. members will refer to the Auditor-General's report, they will see that this is not to be wondered at. I do not know whether hon. members have read that report; but it shows a very unsatisfactory state of things on the goldfields, and I hope things are not in the same state there now. There is a very excellent report to the Auditor-General from Mr. Percy L. Hussey, Audit Examiner, dealing with certain affairs on the goldfields. In paragraph four, on page 151, he says, "I could not obtain any satisfactory result from my examination of this officer's accounts, the only books at my disposal being a 'reputed ledger' and a bank pass book, which I could in no way reconcile. The bank pass book, in showing a large surplus over amounts debited in the ledger, clearly indicated that the latter had not been faithfully kept. However, I discovered that an amount of £24 8s. 4d., receipts from Coolgardie bore, had not been banked, and Mr.—, upon being so informed, handed his cheque in for the deficiency." He goes on to say:—

"Upon being questioned as to the whereabouts of the statements supplied by caretakers when handing in their cash, Mr.— stated he invariably destroyed them after making the proper entries in his ledger. Mr.—, who is in charge of the Coolgardie bore, also stated that his cash books, holding receipts for money paid to — had been taken from his tent. This was very unsatisfactory, and prevented me from making a proper examination of the accounts.

"Under Mr. Jobson's direction, however, the accounts are now kept in a very satisfactory manner, and the only suggestions I have to make are that another cash column be ruled in the present cash book, so that moneys received for sale of plant and forage, and credited to construction, may be kept separate from those credited to revenue, and that ledger accounts be opened against persons having monthly accounts, provided it is thought ad-

visable to continue the present credit system; perhaps it would be better to abolish it, as I believe difficulty is sometimes experienced in collecting amounts owing.

"Before leaving this portion of my report, I would draw your attention to the fact that there is at present no check on the caretakers at the different tanks and condensers, and it seems to me it will be a difficult matter to establish one; but in view of the largely increasing revenue from this source, I think some effort should be made to protect Government interests in that direction.

THE WARDEN'S OFFICE.

"I regret that I am compelled to report that the accounts in this office are far from satisfactory, and action should at once be taken to place matters on a firmer basis. Mr. Finnerty being away from Coolgardie, I did not see him, but had a conversation with Mr. Gill, the Registrar. He informed me that 'it was impossible to keep the accounts in a satisfactory manner, with the present staff.' In view of this you may be prepared to make some suggestion on the subject; personally, I think the matter a grave one, and, in view of the largely increasing revenue in the district, an officer properly qualified and well versed in the Government methods of account keeping should be stationed there.

"On counting the cash in the safe, I found a sum of £694 10s., representing mining revenue from the 1st to 14th January; this money should have been banked daily, and two (2) remittances should have been made to Head Office. Where money is kept in a small safe in a building of a temporary nature, such as the one at Coolgardie, too much care cannot be taken in this respect.

"On examining the cash book, I discovered that no revenue for the period between the 3rd November and 31st of December had been remitted to Perth till early in January, when an amount exceeding £8,000 had been forwarded; this sum had been allowed to accumulate without an entry of any kind being made to support it, and had not been banked, the result being, when the cash book was written up, a surplus of £1,787 12s. 9d., appeared, and which at present cannot be explained. This amount, less a cheque of £120, drawn by one — (which still remains in the safe, requiring endorsement), has been placed to credit of a 'Trust Account' in the name of the Warden. Pencil entries appear in the cash book, purporting to account for £737 14s. of the surplus, being balance of purchase money on town lots 197—200, paid by J. Duff.

"A credit balance of £257 8s. 8d. also appears on the revenue account at the Bank, which likewise cannot be explained, and makes a total surplus of £2,045 1s. 5d., which I would suggest be forwarded to the Treasury at once, where it may be held in suspense, or dealt with as you may otherwise deem necessary; it certainly should not be left at Coolgardie; and I would point out, while on this matter, that if officers are allowed to open 'Trust' or other

accounts without instruction from or reference to the Head Office, a hopeless state of confusion will ensue, and revenue will be lying about in all corners of the colony, within the knowledge of no one but the officer who has collected it."

THE PREMIER: That is all for this year and does not refer to this Bill. You are dealing with the accounts for the year just closed.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I am dealing now with excesses.

THE PREMIER: You are out of it altogether, there was a surplus of £2,000 at the bank, which that refers to.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Now, Sir, I say this, that whoever is responsible for that state of things, it is a disgrace to the department. That any officer, be he Warden or anyone else, should be allowed to open trust accounts, without getting the permission of the Government, is a matter to be deplored. I cannot see how the Government, or their officials, can keep control of the revenue, if officers are allowed to place the various amounts they receive in some bank, unknown to anyone. I hope the Government will take steps to prevent a recurrence of such a state of things as that.

THE PREMIER: They are all right now.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I hope those gentlemen who burnt their receipts and lost their books, or had them stolen, are no longer in the Government service.

THE PREMIER: They are not.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I do not propose to say anything more on this question, beyond reiterating that it would be convenient if we could get the unauthorized expenditure while Parliament is sitting. I notice that on several occasions the Auditor-General applied for certain accounts, but could not get them until some time in February, and yet the Audit Act provides he should receive them by the 30th of September. The Act states they must be forwarded within three months after the close of the financial year, and yet he states that these accounts did not come into his hands until some time in February. I know the Premier is endeavouring to alter that for the future, and if we can get the Excess Bill for the year while Parliament is sitting, it will be much more satisfactory than getting it at the end of 12 months.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—Excesses on votes.

Agreed to.

Schedules :

Printing, £504 12s. 1d.

MR. GEORGE, referring to the item "Extra Labour, £439 19s. 8d.," wished to know how it was possible for such an amount to be made up, when the Government employees were paid every month. He thought the amount would cover a very large amount of labour.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), pointed out there was a permanent and provisional staff at the Government printing office, for which £1,000 had been voted for wages in the year 1893-4, but that sum had been exceeded by the amount then asked for, namely, £439 19s. 8d.

MR. GEORGE said he was not satisfied with the explanation, and thought that an increase of nearly fifty per cent. on a wage sheet was unjustifiable.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) explained that the amount was an accumulation extending over twelve months.

MR. A. FORREST said £4,000 had been voted for the whole year, and even if that were increased it would be found at the end of the year they had spent more than had been sanctioned by the House.

MR. GEORGE contended that the head of any department who could not estimate a wage sheet more approximately than that, was not equal to his position.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said there was an underdraft of £721 6s. 10d. There had been a thousand pounds voted for wages, and he supposed as the year went on, with the pressure of work from Parliament and other sources, they had had to take on extra labour, and in consequence, instead of asking say for £100 per month, they asked for £120, and so before the end of the year the amount of a thousand pounds was exhausted, and they had to be paid from excesses.

Defences. Incidental Expenses, £789 18s. 11d.

MR. R. F. SHOLL elicited the fact that the item £144 18s. referred to the volunteer shooting party which had come by invitation of the Government, and the amount of £56 under the "Central Board of Health" was for an assistant inspector.

Land Titles, £205 7s. 10d.

MR. A. FORREST called the attention of the Committee to the Auditor-General's Report page 165, which showed the item £166 13s. 3d. under "Foreign Telegrams and Stationery"

was for "unforeseen expenditure on behalf of the Survey Branch in the purchase of theodolites and other expensive instruments."

MR. GEORGE objected to the perversion of the English language, whereby the word telegrams, was made to include theodolites.

THE ATTORNEY - GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) pointed out that in the survey branch of the Land Titles Office, there was an Inspecting Surveyor, whose duty it was to pass the surveys made by other officers, and it probably referred to that officer's work, but why theodolites were included under telegrams he could not say.

Government Storekeeper, £109 14s. 7d.

MR. GEORGE called attention to the item, £46 Os. 5d., for postages and telephone rent, and asked that these items be kept separate in future.

Miscellaneous, £4,401 14s. 2d.

MR. ILLINGWORTH always looked with suspicion upon the title "miscellaneous," and as a good percentage of the whole amount came under that head, he hoped the Premier would explain how it was.

MR. R. F. SHOLL wanted an explanation of the item £558 7s. 11d.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he would find the explanation on page 167 of the Auditor-General's report, where it was stated to be for printing, freight, revision and completion of the Handbook of W. A.

MR. R. F. SHOLL wanted to know who compiled the book.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said hon. members would recollect that the book had been published by Messrs. Sands and McDougall, some year or two ago. It had been written by Mr. F. Hart and revised by himself (the Premier). He had looked through it to see that there was nothing in it he objected to, and it had then been published in London, where most of the edition—consisting of 5,000 copies—had been left to be distributed by the Agent-General. The authority for the book had been given by the Governor-in-Council, because it was absolutely necessary at that time to have some work on the colony, as a large number of applications had been made, both here and at the office of the Agent-General, for books containing reliable information.

MR. SOLOMON called attention to the item of "£719 6s. 1d. for Crown Agents, Commission on payment of interest" and asked for an explanation.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) explained that the Crown Agents kept all the books of the old loans, and paid the interest on them as it became due. They also transacted all business in connection with the conversion of debenture bonds into inscribed stock; the wish of the Government had been to get rid of all debenture bonds, and to convert them into inscribed stock, and the Crown Agents always did all the work in connection with it.

MR. GEORGE was assured that measures had been taken to prevent any future defalcation, such as that of £325 14s. 5d. to which he had called attention.

THE HON. W. E. MARMION asked for information as to whether the Crown Agents were absolutely necessary in the interests of the colony, or by authority of any Statute, and whether, if the business were transferred from such agents, there would still have to be commission paid to the Bank which did the business?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said as far as he knew, if they transferred the business from these agents, some other institution would be required to act in their stead. Since 1891 the Westminster Bank had done the business upon terms—he thought—of about £500 per million.

MR. JAMES wanted to know how long that would last.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the system would last as long as the loans lasted. Someone would have to do the business seeing they could not possibly do it themselves.

MR. MOSS wanted to know what rate of commission was paid.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he could not say, but if any member asked the question in the House, the information would be supplied.

MR. LEAKE wished to know if the defalcations at the General Post-Office of £325 14s. 5d. were not caused through defective book-keeping, and was told they were.

MR. R. F. SHOLL called attention to the items, gratuities of £50, £25, and £250, and thought they were such items as might well have waited for an expression of opinion from the House, as to their justice or otherwise; he did not think it right that the Government should give away the public funds.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) pointed out that the item of £250 was consequent upon doing away with the schooler

Meda, whose captain could have claimed a pension, but the Government thought it would be more economical, and more satisfactory to the country, to give a gratuity instead of the retiring allowances which he could have claimed under the Act.

MR. R. F. SHOLL wanted to know how it could be called a gratuity, if the man was entitled to it.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said under the Superannuation Act, the Government were not legally obliged to pay any man a pension; there were certain rules laid down, and there was perhaps a moral obligation, but the case under discussion did not come under that division.

MR. R. F. SHOLL objected to the principle involved, because it might be abused, and a Government which could give one person £250, might be able to give another £10,000.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said they could do so, but they would have to come to the House, and explain and take the consequences. He explained the reason why that particular amount did not appear in the estimates. The Government had been looking round to see whether some other employment could not be found for the man, seeing he had served the country a good many years before his office was abolished. He also explained the reasons for the two smaller amounts.

MR. KEEP called attention to the item £158 3s. 2d., charged for the travelling expenses of Mr. Saville-Kent, which was characterised by the Auditor-General as "heavy charges," and wished to know if the agreement with that gentleman had terminated.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the gentleman had been engaged for two years, which had now expired, at a salary of £1,800 year, together with his passage to the colony, and all his travelling expenses while in the colony. He did not consider the amount excessive for travelling about the coast and other places.

MR. R. F. SHOLL wanted to know what amount had been voted.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) did not think there had been any amount voted unless it were some £150 which included travelling expenses up the coast, he believed as far as Wyndham.

Lands and Surveys: £4,834 4s. 9d.

MR. GEORGE sought an explanation of the item: £2,859 6s. 2d. for surveys.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the bulk of it was for a very important expedition in connection with a Government survey party, sent out from Coolgardie to Dundas, and on to Esperance Bay. The camp and outfit was very large and expensive.

MR. JAMES complained that at the time the expedition was fitted out, there were very loud complaints of favoritism against the leader of it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said that alluded to a different expedition altogether.

Mining: £1,603 19s. 3d.

MR. GEORGE, in connection with the item of £45 for the native assistant at Yilgarn, was proceeding to discuss Coolgardie affairs when

MR. MORAN rose to a point of order, as the item did not refer to Coolgardie at all.

THE CHAIRMAN sustained the point of order and said the hon. member for the Murray had been discussing Coolgardie, and not Yilgarn.

Railways and Tramways: £7,3491 1s. 6d.

MR. SOLOMON asked for explanations of seven items—£65 6s. 1d., £905 8s. 3d., £1,064 11s. 3d., £107 3s. 5d., £143 18s. 10d., £240 9s. 0d., and £33 14s. 4d.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) endeavoured to satisfy the enquiry by dealing with the earnings of the railways compared to their expense.

MR. SOLOMON said he was not satisfied and could not see why the heavy cost on account of a washaway on the line, should be connected with a claim for goods destroyed in transit.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) showed that when the vote was taken by the Legislature, such items were all included under one general head.

MR. GEORGE wanted to know how the loss was estimated.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied that a percentage was taken, as on all railways.

MR. GEORGE complained again of the perversion of the English language in accounting for the item £33 14s. 4d., and contended that amounts should not be lumped together as they had been.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said the hon. member, needed to distinguish between railway accounts

and the Auditor-General's report. In the railway accounts the hon. member would get every item separately. With regard to damage and loss of goods in transit, the Government did all they possibly could, but could not do everything.

Works and Buildings: £5,747 5s. 4d.

MR. A. FORREST directed attention to the item £967 16s. 1d., which he presumed was the balance of the contract for the new Government Printing Office. That item had been going from department to department for six or eight months. The Attorney-General had recommended the Government to pay the amount, and yet it had not been done. He considered it was not the thing for the Government of the colony to attempt to compromise any account; it should be paid in full, and at once. The man had no recourse, they would not allow him to go to law. The department never gave the man material enough, because they had to get it from London. He brought the matter before the House to show the way the Public Works Department of the colony was carried on. It appeared that no one had been responsible for settling up with the man when he had finished his work.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said if hon. members had all the facts they would not blame the department. The contractor complained, and it was explained, as per terms of contract, that the matter must be submitted to the Engineer-in-Chief for arbitration. The contractor refused absolutely to go to the Engineer-in-Chief, and then went away from Perth for some months. The Government always desired that accounts should be paid as soon as the work was done, and the accounts certified.

MR. LEAKE said, according to the hon. member for West Kimberley, the Hon. the Commissioner of Railways had refused to allow a man to go to law, but surely the Government could not prevent him presenting a petition of right?

MR. MOSS said they could, for the Engineer-in-Chief was supreme arbitrator, according to specifications for Government contracts.

MR. A. FORREST said after the contractor had tried all ways to get his money, after the Commissioner had been advised both by the Hon. the Premier, and the Hon. the Attorney-General, that the man was entitled to it, still he was not paid, then he went to this great authority the Engineer-in-Chief, and he was too busy to attend to him.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he had never advised the Commissioner, or anyone else, in the matter.

MR. A. FORREST said that the Attorney-General's firm had done so.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the Attorney-General had never seen the claim, but he knew that that particular claim had been dealt with by the Assistant Engineer-in-Chief. The delay was the sole fault of the contractor himself.

MR. GEORGE said as the Attorney-General and the Director of Public Works had referred to him in connection with contracts, he should like to say a few words. He was not afraid to go before the Engineer-in-Chief to argue a contract with him; he had done so before. He believed the Engineer-in-Chief tried to be perfectly fair, and he believed the Commissioner of Railways tried, not only to be fair, but to be absolutely just. But he submitted that when the Engineer-in-Chief, by the conditions of a contract, was constituted the sole arbitrator in questions of dispute arising in connection with a contract—questions which, perhaps, in the course of the contract had been brought before him by the Executive authorities—he could hardly be considered as an unbiassed arbitrator. He would also say this (and he said it with the full weight of the responsibility attached to it), that the specific conditions under which contractors laboured in carrying out a contract under the Public Works Department, were such that, if the contractor was an honest man (unless he had a big banking account at his back), were likely to ruin him before the contract was finished. If he was only partly an honest man he might perhaps make money out of his contract by sacrificing the remainder of his honesty. With regard to the individual case referred to by the hon. member for West Kimberley, he (Mr. George) knew that a great injustice had been done; and there were other contracts carried out in this city under which the same injustice had been worked. He wished to protest most strongly against contracts being called for, and let, under these conditions. He did not think it was the wish of the Director of Public Works or of the Government, that small contractors—in contracts involving only a few hundred pounds—should have to sign contracts with conditions attached to them which even the trained and skilled engineers of the Government had to go to the Engineer-in-Chief

to have interpreted. The Director of Public Works said the Government were always ready to pay their accounts. The fact remained that they did not do so. It was a matter of scandal that departmental accounts were not paid more promptly. He himself had had to wait for months, before he could get a settlement of a small contract he had carried out for the Public Works Department, and it was only after worrying the department and kicking up a row, that he at last succeeded in getting his money. He also wished to protest against this department inviting tenders for works, when the department had no money to pay for them.

Roads and Bridges, £4,999 2s. 6d.

MR. SIMPSON asked for some explanation as to the item "Mandurah Bridge, £908 14s." He said the estimated cost of this bridge was £2,000, and they had had a solemn assurance that the bridge would not cost more than this amount; yet here was an excess of nearly £1,000 upon an estimate of £2,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said that at the time the Estimates were framed, and £2,000 was put down for this bridge, the estimate had not been submitted to the Works Department. The gentleman who was then the member for the district said that in his opinion £2,000 would be enough to build the bridge, and the House was good enough to vote that amount; but when a survey came to be made, and the contract was let, it was found that the lowest tender was very much in excess of this estimate. The question then arose, whether the work should be undertaken at this extra cost, or whether it should be left undone. The bridge was a necessary work, and the Government decided to proceed with it, feeling sure that the extra amount would be readily voted by Parliament.

The other items were agreed to, and the Bill reported.

AGENT-GENERAL BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Sir, in rising to move the second reading of this Bill I do not propose to say very much. All the colonies of Australia, and also Tasmania—I am not quite sure about New Zealand, though no doubt they have done the same—have passed statutory regulations dealing with the appointment and the tenure of office of their Agents-General, and it seems to me it

would be advantageous that we also should have an Act dealing with the subject. The Bill deals with the appointment of the Agent-General, his duties, and his salary, and it also deals with his tenure of office. It provides that the Agent-General shall not hold office for longer than three years, but that he shall be eligible for re-appointment. It also provides that no person appointed to the office shall be entitled to any claim upon the Superannuation Act for compensation for loss of office, or upon his retirement. I think that in the interests of the office itself, as well as in the interests of the country, it is desirable that the Agent-General should be under some Statute. Of course the tenure of office is a very uncertain tenure at present, and I see no reason at all why, like the other colonies, we should not have an Act regulating the appointment, the duties, the salary, and the tenure of office of our Agent-General. That seems to be also the view taken by my friend, the hon. member for the Gascoyne, who early in the session gave notice of a motion in the same direction, and I am glad to find myself on this occasion in accord with the hon. member. The Bill, however, was actually drafted before the hon. member gave his notice of motion. I beg to move its second reading.

MR. RANDALL: I may say generally that I am in accord with the Bill introduced by the Government. I think it is only right that the Agent-General should be attached to some department of the public service, and that his salary and tenure of office should be regulated by Statute. With regard to the salary which the Bill provides is to be paid to the Agent-General (£1,500), I do not think it will be generally considered that the salary is exorbitant, though one hon. member did give notice of his intention to move that it should not exceed £1,200 a year. I think we should endeavour to secure the best possible men for such a position, because it is of great importance to the colony that we should be represented in London by a capable Agent-General. I wish more particularly to draw attention to the 4th clause, which provides that the occupant of the office shall, at the expiration of his term of three years, be eligible for re-appointment. I think it is very desirable that we should always have an Agent-General who is in touch with the colony, and who possesses an intimate acquaintance with the requirements and circumstances of the colony, and it is a question to my mind, whether we ought to

provide by Statute that an Agent-General should be eligible for re-appointment. We know that the position and circumstances of the colony are changing every day and, an agent in London, after an absence of some years—however well he may be informed by those whose duty it is to direct his operations, as to these changing circumstances—is not likely to be so closely in touch with the colony as those who are on the spot and thoroughly cognisant of all that is passing. The last three years have witnessed very great developments in the affairs of this colony, and, during the next three years we may possibly see even greater developments. Therefore, I think it is a matter of serious consideration for members whether we should not, when we go into committee on the Bill, move to strike out this provision as to the eligibility of the Agent-General for re-appointment.

MR. LEAKE: It is my intention to support the second reading of this Bill, and my only object in rising at the present moment is to urge, with all the force I can, the acceptance of the suggestion made by the hon. member for Perth. I do not know that the Government can possibly urge any valid objection to it. At any rate, if the matter has not occurred to them, I ask the Ministry to consider the suggestion. I am sure, if they will argue it out amongst themselves, they will see there is great force in the hon. member's proposal. Let us take, for instance,—and, in saying what I do, I do not wish to make any observations at all affecting anybody holding this position—take for instance the present holder of the office. He has been Agent-General, I believe, for five years.

THE PREMIER: Three years, in April last.

MR. LEAKE: At any rate he is completely out of touch with recent developments in this colony. He left the colony before we began to boom, and I am perfectly certain that this gentleman cannot give that information about the colony which he ought to be able to give. If this office is held for three years, and three years only, we shall then be certain to have an Agent-General who will be in touch (as it is said) with all the current events and progress of the colony. Moreover, there is this advantage, that we may possibly have—and in all possibility we should have—an ex-Agent-General occupying a seat in this House, and advising members of the methods and the working, or the internal economy, of the Agent-General's office. It would be of the

greatest possible advantage, I am sure, to this colony that we should have such a person here. There are gentlemen on the other side of the House, who, I am sure, would be prepared to accept this office, and, for the matter of that, I dare say there are members on this side of the House also, who would do the same, and it really would be to our advantage if we could have either somebody in London who knows something about the colony, or somebody in this House who knows all about the Agent-General's office. I think it is most undesirable that this office should be filled for a long period by the same person. Take one or two instances from the other colonies. Representing New South Wales and South Australia they have had Agents-General who occupied their positions for ten or twelve years. One gentleman grew old and died in the service of his colony as its Agent-General. Now, great and glorious as it is to die for one's country, it is far better to live for it. A man can do more good for his country, if he is an able man, when he is alive than when he dies and leaves us to discuss his amiabilities and virtues after he has gone. I believe the Agent-General for New South Wales has grown old in that office and nobody surely can deny that a gentleman who has been seen so long in office must get fossilised to a certain extent. The person who occupies the office of Agent-General should be active and energetic, as well as intelligent and up to date, and have all the current events of the colony he represents at his fingers' ends. There is another advantage in limiting the tenure of office of an Agent-General. It prevents anything like—what shall I call it? Well, for want of a milder word, I will call it self-aggrandisement, and all that sort of thing. I would go so far as to say that the office should not in any case be held for more than three years; or, if the Government won't agree to that, let it be held for five years, and no longer. The Government should accept this as a *bona-fide* suggestion from this side of the House, and agree to it.

THE PREMIER: We can deal with it in committee.

THE HON. W. E. MARMION: I do not think that any other portion of this Bill, except that relating to the salary and tenure of office, calls for any remark. With regard to the tenure of office, I do not think, if the work is properly and satisfactorily performed, anyone can complain about the pro-

visions of the Bill. With reference to the remarks of the hon. member for Perth and the hon. member for Albany, there is possibly something in their remarks which members may be in accord with; but I think there is something also to be said on the other side, that requires consideration. Both the hon. members referred to, seem to be of opinion that this appointment should not be held for a longer term than three years, and that the retiring occupant of the office should not be eligible for re-appointment. I am not altogether in accord with that view. It may be that the gentleman whose term of office has expired, is the most eligible man we could possibly have for the position. He may be a first-class man in every respect, and, though he may have resided out of the colony for a few years, he may still retain a lively interest in the colony, and be in touch with it and able to advance our interests in the mother country to a larger extent than any other person available for the position at the time. Surely it would be a pity that the colony could not retain the services of such a man, or that he should have to retire in favour of somebody who was not half so good a man. By leaving in the words "shall be eligible for re-appointment," no harm can be done, it seems to me. If a man is worthy of being re-appointed, and is the best man the colony could have for the position, by all means let us have the opportunity of re-appointing him, if it is considered desirable to do so. The hon. member for Albany alluded to the present holder of the office, and alleged that he cannot possibly be in touch with the colony now, or with the developments that have taken place here during the last three or four years. It is possible that may be the case, but I would draw attention to this fact: the developments and the events that have taken place in this colony within the last three or four years are quite exceptional—I may say phenomenal—and they are not likely to occur again for years to come. No doubt the same ratio of progress will be maintained, and I hope surpassed, but I do not think it is likely we shall be able say that so great a convulsion or change has taken place within the same time, for many years to come, as has taken place during the last three or four years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The introduction of this Bill by the Government is my mind a step in the right direction. The suggestion which has been made by my friend the hon.

member for Perth has a good deal in it to recommend it; but I am not disposed to make it an absolutely hard and fast condition by putting it in this Bill, though I think that generally speaking we should expect the Ministry to act upon the suggestion, and change the Agent-General at least every three years. But I hardly think it ought to be on the Statute book that under no circumstances should the same person be eligible for re-appointment, however suitable for the position he may be. Another part of the Bill to which I desire to call attention is the provision in Clause 3 which irrevocably fixes the salary attached to the office at £1,500. We are not a very numerous community at present—less than 100,000 people—and it does seem to me that when we propose to pay our Agent-General the same salary (so far as my memory serves me) as is paid by Victoria and New South Wales—[The PREMIER: No, no.]—we are going into an extravagance which, if not beyond our means, is unnecessary. We are the smallest of the group so far as population is concerned, yet it is set down in this Bill as a hard and fast condition, that the salary of the Agent-General, whoever he may be, shall be £1,500. To my mind that is going a little too far. If the wording is altered to the effect that the salary shall "not exceed £1,500," leaving it to the discretion of the Government to fix the precise salary, I may be disposed to accept it. But I do not think we should fix it by Statute at £1,500. There may be cases in the future where the gentleman appointed to the office may be the holder of a large pension, yet according to this Bill he would also receive this £1,500 a year.

THE PREMIER: No, no, he would not draw his pension as well.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It has been said that it would be a good thing to have an ex-Agent-General in this House. My idea is that it would be better to have an ex-Premier as Agent-General. As soon as ever the exigencies of this country admit of the present Premier vacating the seat he now occupies, and the hon. gentleman is willing to accept the position of Agent-General—

THE PREMIER: Not yet a bit, I assure you.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course I do not expect to live to see it. Still, whenever this country can afford to dispense with our hon. friend, the present Premier, and he should be willing to accept the Agent-Generalship, I am sure that with his great ability, his intimate knowledge of the colony, his untiring energy,

and his great force of character he could not serve the country better than in that position.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, we'll appoint him, right enough.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member who says he is going to put the Ministry out says he will appoint the Premier to this office. I am sure that will be a very satisfactory arrangement. What I want to point out is this; the Premier's predecessor in the office may not have been worth more than £1,000 or £1,200 a year, and we might want some greater inducement to make the Premier accept the position, therefore I think we should leave a good margin, so that we may be able to offer him £1,500. But I do not think we should fix the salary in every case at that figure; and, when we go into committee, I shall propose that the words "not exceeding" £1,500 be inserted.

MR. THROSSELL: One clause of this Bill makes provision that whoever shall be appointed to the office of Agent-General shall also be eligible for re-appointment and fixes the tenure of the office at three years, so that whoever occupies it shall not be removed from office at the caprice of any Ministry that may happen to be in power, though I notice that he may be suspended or removed from office by the Governor. I think it is very desirable that the tenure and duration of the office should be fixed by Statute, and I also think that the provision as to re-appointment should be retained in the Bill. It may be that the retiring Agent-General is the most suitable person for the position, and the best qualified for it in every respect; and why should the colony lose the services of such a man? I think that in appointing anyone to this office care should be taken that he is a gentleman of high social position, and fitted to represent the colony worthily in the old country; also that he possesses a thorough knowledge of the colony and its requirements—such a man as our respected Premier, for instance. We also want a man of energy and of resource, who will take every opportunity of keeping the colony before the eyes of the British public at home, and of pointing out the attractions and openings it offers to those who may be seeking new homes for themselves and their families. In the rural districts of England, in these days of agricultural depression, there are many who are looking for new homes, and, if the attractions offered by this colony to men of that class were brought to their notice, we

would probably receive an accession of immigrants of the very class which the colony requires.

Motion put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK INTEREST BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Sir, —I beg to move the second reading of a Bill entitled "an Act to regulate the interest payable to depositors in the Post Office Savings Bank." The object of the Bill is this: instead of having the interest on the deposits fixed as at present by law, it is proposed that it shall be adjusted from time to time by the Governor-in-Council. The interest at present payable to depositors, as fixed by Statute, is 3½ per cent.; and the Government are of opinion that the rate is, under existing circumstances, too high. In the case of the investment of the money on mortgage, the Government of course are able to get 6 per cent. for it, but a great deal of this money does not realise anything like that, and there is a difficulty in making use of it, and leaving a margin of profit for working expenses. The amount of the Bank's deposits I am glad to say, is gradually increasing, showing that the colony is progressing, and that the people are thrifty. Of course the Post Office Savings Bank is a very safe place for depositors to place their money in, with the security of the colony for its safety, and the result is, that in the present condition of the money market, we find we cannot invest this money in a way that will yield to the Government as high a rate of interest as we are paying the depositors. In all the other colonies, I believe, the rate of interest is varied from time to time, and not fixed by Statute, and I do not think there is another colony that pays anything like 3½ per cent. on the money deposited. The second clause of the Bill provides that the words in the section of the Act which fix the rate of interest at £3 15s. per centum per annum, shall be repealed, and that in lieu thereof, the rate shall be fixed from time to time by the Governor-in-Council, and notified in the *Government Gazette*. That is the whole scope of the Bill, and I think it is a reasonable enactment, and one that will work well. When money is scarce and deposits are required, the rate of interest will be higher; and, on the other hand, when money is plentiful and not easily invested, the

Government will lower the rate. That is as it should be. I am sure no one desires that we should lose money by the transactions of this Post Office Savings Bank. The institution is a great convenience to many people. It gives them absolute security for their deposits, and they have the interests on those deposits paid regularly, or it is added to their deposits; and no doubt it is a very useful institution. At the same time the Government should not be expected to pay for the depositors' money, a higher rate of interest than the Government themselves can obtain for the money they receive. At the present moment the colony does not actually lose by this Bank, but the margin is very small, and we are informed that the rate of interest we have been in the habit of receiving from local institutions cannot be continued. In fact it has to be lowered, and the Government will then get less for their money. In these circumstances, I think it is only reasonable that the rate of interest we have to pay depositors should also be lowered. In any case it will be a matter for the Executive Council to adjust and deal with, instead of being fixed by Statute as at present.

MR. GEORGE: If I am in order, I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time this day six months. I am surprised that the Premier, who has boasted (and no doubt honestly believes) that the people of the colony are well clothed and well fed, should by this Bill seek to deprive them of that encouragement to thrift which the Savings Bank at present offers to them. We all remember the wave of commercial depression and the financial crisis that these colonies passed through, some two years ago, and that many persons suffered severely through the Bank failures which occurred at that time. The Post Office Savings Bank in those days afforded to a great number of people the means of obtaining money to keep their houses going, when all other means had failed. Their little capital, or their great capital, as the case might be, being locked up in those institutions that went down in the crash, they would have become objects of charity if they had not had a little money in the Savings Bank to provide meat and bread for their families.

THE PREMIER: What is the point in that?

MR. GEORGE: I am going to give you the point directly. When the Premier boasts, and rightly boasts, that the revenue of the colony is increasing by leaps and bounds, I do not think

he ought to adopt this cheese-paring policy in dealing with the rate of interest paid to those whose little savings are deposited in this Post Office Savings Bank. They are mostly persons of small means, and their money is saved in small items, after a good deal of pinching and contriving; and I think it is unworthy of a colony whose revenue is increasing in all directions, to adopt a cheese-paring policy like this.

THE PREMIER: This is simply a business undertaking.

MR. GEORGE: Yes, I am looking at it on business principles. The object of these institutions is to encourage thrift amongst the poorer classes of the community, and at present they offer every encouragement to these people to save a little money and to put it by for a rainy day. But, take away the inducements now offered to people to place their money in these Savings Banks, by reducing the rate of interest, and you at once strike a blow at those frugal and thrifty habits which it ought to be our aim to encourage. These Savings Banks are looked upon as amongst the safest institutions of the country. I say it is unworthy of a colony whose revenue is mainly derived from its working classes, and when the public Treasury is overflowing, to adopt this policy of cheese-paring, just for the sake of saving 5s. or 10s. per cent. on the money deposited in the Post Office Savings Bank. I remember that in Victoria, some years ago, when the Banks there reduced their rate of interest on fixed deposits, many people withdrew their money and invested it in speculations, which unfortunately turned out disastrously; and, when this Bill becomes law, the Premier will find that a large amount of the deposits in the Savings Bank will be withdrawn, for the same reason, and put into circulation in some other channel. Probably the answer to that will be "So much the better for the country." But I do not think it is wise to encourage a spirit of mad speculation in this colony, to take the place of that spirit of thrift which these institutions are intended to foster. For this reason I hope the House will support me in moving as an amendment, that this Bill be read a second time this day six months.

MR. R. F. SHOLL formally seconded the amendment.

MR. MORAN: It appears to me there is a little that is illogical in the speech of the hon. member for the Murray. He says that the people of this colony, and rightly so, look

upon the Savings Bank as one of the safest institutions in the country. No doubt it is. But if it is to continue to be so, it must be conducted on safe principles. I fail to see where the hon. member's business principles come in, when he wants the Government to pay a higher rate of interest to the depositors in the Banks, than they (the Government) can themselves get for the money. It seems to me that the action of the Government in endeavouring to regulate the rate of interest so as to leave them a small margin of profit, so that this Savings Bank may be run without any loss to the country, is based upon the soundest principles of finance. The argument that these institutions afford the safest security which people who wish to save money can have, is an argument in favour of their paying a lower rate of interest than institutions where the risks are greater. I would not be one that would advocate any measure which would in any way depreciate the profits of a class of people for whom I have a great deal of sympathy, namely the poorer classes. I do not wish, like some hon. members of this House, to arrogate to myself the title of the "working man's friend," but when anything really affecting the interests of that class comes before the House, it will have my cordial support. At the same time I think the action of the Government on this occasion, is one which I believe, will meet with the approval of every sensible man, and even of depositors themselves, if they want to see this Bank conducted on safe and sound principles.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson): I only wish to point out that the argument of the hon. member for the Murrumbidgee (Mr. George) seems to me to reduce itself to an argument in favour of a State Bank. If he is in favour of the Savings Bank paying such a rate of interest as to enable it to successfully compete with other banking institutions, and drive them out of the field, the Savings Bank would virtually become a State Bank.

MR. JAMES: It seems to me a very serious question whether we should not endeavour to increase the number of depositors in the Savings Bank even at some loss to the country, though I recognise that there is much to be said in support of the main principle of the Bill. There is, no doubt, a difficulty in successfully working institutions of this kind, if you are confined to a fixed scale of interest, when we know that in-

terest fluctuates so much, and, recently, has been going down so much. The danger I see in allowing the rate of interest to be fixed by the Government is this: if a Ministry with Conservative tendencies is in office—and we know that popular institutions such as the Savings Bank are not viewed with much favour by Conservatives—is there not a danger that they may fix the rate of interest so low, that there would be no encouragement to people to make use of these institutions? On the other hand, if a Liberal Ministry happens to be in power, is there not an equal danger that they may fix the rate so high that the ordinary financial institutions of the country will not be able to compete with this Savings Bank? I think there should be some maximum and minimum rate of interest fixed in the Bill, which would prevent either of the evils I have suggested arising. If that provision is made, I shall have much pleasure in supporting the Bill, because I recognise there must be some machinery for the graduation of the rate of interest, in proportion to the ruling rate of interest paid by other institutions, for the time being.

MR. A. FORREST: I think anyone who has watched and noticed what has been going on in this colony of late, in financial circles, must know that the Savings Bank is not in a position to pay the present high rate of interest. If it could afford to do so, and pay 3½ per cent., it would soon monopolise all the fixed deposits in this colony; and what is the Government going to do with the money when it gets it, to enable them to pay that rate of interest? They must become the one great lending institution of the colony. I do not think anyone wishes to see the Savings Bank coming into competition with other financial institutions for the purpose of lending out money. At the present time the leading Bank in the colony, and in London—the Union Bank—has reduced its rate of interest on fixed deposits to 3¼ per cent. The manager of the Bank told me so to-day.

MR. RANDALL: That is not the leading bank, is it?

MR. A. FORREST: I think it is the leading bank in this colony, at any rate. What will be the result? People who have fixed deposits there, will transfer them to the Savings Bank in order to get 3½ per cent., which is the present rate of interest. I have wondered for a long time how the Government could go on paying 3½ per cent., when they

were lending the money to another institution at 4 per cent., leaving only $\frac{1}{4}$ per cent to cover the cost of working this Savings Bank. Now the institution that has been allowing them 4 per cent. will not, I understand, continue any longer to pay that rate of interest. I do not like, myself, to see the people hoarding up their money in the Savings Bank, when there are so many other things they can do with their money in a new country like this. It would be better if they invested it in land, and made some good use of the land, thus benefiting themselves and the country.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir. J. Forrest): I should like to say a word or two in answer to what has fallen from the hon. member for the Murray. I do not think it was ever intended by the Legislature that the Savings Bank should be run at the expense of the general taxpayer, which it must come to if it is run at a loss. We must deal with this matter as a business matter, and not as a matter of sentiment. We want to make this bank pay its way, as well as to serve a useful purpose in encouraging thrift amongst the community. We simply wish to have power to adjust the rate of interest, according to circumstances. If the Government are found to be making too much money out of this Savings Bank, I dare say members will look after that. The returns will show the receipts and the expenditure; and if the receipts are unduly inflated, in comparison with the expenditure, it will be clear enough that the Government are making money out of it, and paying too little interest to the depositors for the use of their deposits. Of course we are always very glad to listen to any new member when he addresses the House, but the hon. member for the Murray seems to me to want to monopolise all the talk, and, if he goes on as he does now, he will soon tire us. We can't stand too much of it. Other members want some little time in which to place their views before the House.

The amendment—that the Bill be read a second time that day six months—having been negatived on the voices, the original motion was put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House at 10.40 p.m. adjourned until Monday, July 8th.

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 8th July, 1895

Petition: Customs Repeal Bill—New System of keeping Advance Accounts—Amendment of Land Regulations re Leasing of Jarrah Forests—Carriage of Explosives and Ammunition to Northern Ports—Uniforms Bill: third reading—Excess Bill, 1893-4: third reading—Agent-General Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7.30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION re CUSTOMS REPEAL BILL.

THE HON. W. E. MARMION presented a Petition from the Fremantle Chamber of Commerce, praying that the Customs Duties Repeal Bill should not come into force for the term of six months from date.

Petition received and read.

Ordered—That the Petition be taken into consideration when the House is in Committee upon "The Customs Duties Repeal Bill."

NEW SYSTEM OF KEEPING ADVANCE ACCOUNTS.

MR. GEORGE, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier,—

1. Whether the new system of keeping the Advance Accounts, referred to on pages 146-149 of the Auditor-General's Report, was working satisfactorily.

2. Whether he considered that the Auditor-General's requirements in this respect would now be fully and satisfactorily complied with.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied, as follows:—

1. The system referred to has not been working long enough to express a decided opinion upon it. There is every reason to believe it will work satisfactorily.

2. It is believed so, but, if not, the Auditor-General will bring the matter under notice.

THE LAND REGULATIONS re LEASING THE JARRAH FORESTS.

MR. A. FORREST moved, in accordance with notice, "That in the opinion of this House the Government should introduce a Bill to amend the Land Regulations, in the direction of special Legislation as to the leasing of jarrah forests." The hon. member said: In moving the motion standing in my name, I have to address the House for a short time, with a view of asking the Government whether there is any intention to introduce, during this session of Parliament, any legislation having for its