mittee of Supply, to consider the Estimates of revenue and expenditure for the financial year 1895-96,

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said that, as hon. members appeared to desire an adjournment at that hour, he moved that progress be reported and leave asked to sit again.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until Thursday, 15th August.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 10.4 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th August, 1895.

Report upon storage of explosives—Railway and Theatre Refreshment Rooms Licensing Bill; in committee—Duties on Estates of Deceased Persons Bill; in committee—Goldfields Bill; in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

REPORT UPON STORAGE OF EXPLOSIVES.

MR. LEAKE, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether any report had been received from the expert recently appointed to inquire into the importation, use, and storage of explosives, and if it was proposed to present the report to Parliament.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that the report was in the hands of the Government Printer, and would shortly be placed on the table of the House.

RAILWAY AND THEATRE REFRESHMENT ROOMS LICENSING BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Consideration of Bill in Committee resumed.

Schedules:

Agreed to.

Preamble and title:

Agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

DUTIES ON ESTATES OF DECEASED PERSONS BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1, 2, and 3:

Agreed to.

Clause 4—"Statements to be filed":

MR. RANDELL moved, as an amendment, that the word "two," in the first line of Subclause 1, and consequentially in the remainder of the clause, be struck out, and the word "three" be inserted in lieu thereof, in each instance. He said the two months allowed in the clause for the winding up of estates would be too short, according to his experience; and although the Master had power to extend the time, it would be better to allow three months in the first instance, as proposed in his amendment.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) accepted the amendment.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. R. F. SHOLL moved, as a further amendment, that the words "one thousand" be inserted after the word "exceed," in the fourth line of the last paragraph, so as to read, "does not exceed one thousand five hundred pounds," etc. He said the minimum exemption of £500 would be too small a sum to be felt as a relief, in the case of an estate of £1,000 or £1,500 left to a widow with a family to educate and maintain. It was not desirable to levy duty for revenue purposes in such cases, whether the amount of the estate was large or small, and especially when it would be barely sufficient for bringing up a family. The object of the Bill was not to tax estates left in such circumstances, but was to get at large estates wherein the amount of the tax would not be felt. By increasing the minimum exemption to £1,500, no hardship would be created, while the object of the Bill as a revenue measure would be attained.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the duty was a half per cent only.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the clause would

operate harshly in many cases where the estate was small. His amendment would be fair; particularly as, later on, there might be an amendment proposed for exempting insurance policies.

MR. ILLINGWORTH supported the amendment, and said that, having had some experience in the matter, he knew of an estate in another colony, valued at about £200, left to a family, and the cost of winding it up amounted to £89. If, under this Bill, an estate worth £550 were left to a family, the amount being just above the exemption in the clause, the costs of winding up might be £50 or £60, and in such case the tax would be serious for a family. In a large estate the costs of winding up did not increase in anything like the same proportion to the value, as in the case of a small estate. Where the value of an estate barely exceeded the amount of exemption in the clause, considerable hardship might result to the parties interested.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) suggested that, instead of raising the exemption to £1,500, a fair compromise would be to raise the exemption to £1,000. Where the total value of an estate, after deducting all debts, was over £1,000 and did not exceed £1,500, the duty would be only a half per cent. on the excess over the £1,000, and therefore a small amount, if the minimum were to be fixed at £1,000, as he now suggested. If the mover would accept that suggestion, in lieu of his amendment, the exemption would be reasonable.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said half a loaf was better than no bread, and if the Government would not consent to raise the exemption to £1,500, he must be content to have it put at £1,000.

MR. LEAKE said the object of the hon. member for Nannine was to reduce as much as possible the cost of administering small estates, and if it would be necessary, as he thought it would, to file accounts in small estates, then the cost of doing so would be much more in proportion than the cost of filing accounts in large estates. He agreed with the amendment, and said a legacy of £1,500, if invested at 7 per cent., would not be much for a widow to live on; therefore such an amount might reasonably be exempted from duty, especially as this Bill was not required for raising an immediate revenue.

MR. SOLOMON supported the amendment, and said a duty on an estate under £1,500 in value would be a great hardship in many cases.

MR. WOOD agreed with the Premier's suggestion that £1,000 would be a fair limit of exemption. Estates of £1,000 in value were fairly large properties, in this colony.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that, supposing an estate was all in land, and not in money, the owners to whom it was left might have to mortgage it in order to raise money for paying the duty and the attendant expenses. As to the latter, if the Master thought a certain estate was worth over £1,000, although it might realise only £500 or £600, he could demand that a schedule, and all the documents should be filed, thereby incurring costs to a serious amount. Being thus put to expense, the owners might have to mortgage the property as a means of raising money for paying the costs thrown upon them by this Bill. It was not desirable, for revenue purposes, or as a matter of State policy, to put the inheritors of small estates to such expense.

MR. LEFROY said he hoped the Government would be generous, and allow the hon. member for Gascoyne's amendment to pass, because he did not think the principle of the Bill was the taxing of small estates. It should also be remembered that the cost of living in this colony was somewhat higher than in the country where the original measure from which the Bill was drafted had been framed, and as this would be a new departure here, he did not think the Bill should be made to create a hardship.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the expenses referred to by the hon. member for Nannine would be the same, whether the minimum were fixed at £1,000 or £1,500. It was not likely that the Master would testify that the statement of an estate was correct unless satisfied that it was so; and, in order to satisfy himself, the Master would have to incur those expenses. A sum of £1,000 might be regarded as a very small amount by some people, but it was a little fortune to others. The costs would not be affected by the duty, except to the extent of one half per cent. He did not wish to press the suggestion he had made.

MR. LOTON said he quite agreed that the Master would have to incur expenses in proving the accuracy of the statement of an estate; but that seemed to him to be the best argument in favor of increasing the amount before any duty upon it was levied.

The costs would have to be paid whether the estate were worth £1,000 or £1,500. He thought that the question as to whether £1,000 or £1,500 were to be considered large sums depended upon the circumstances, for they would be valued less by a person who was in comfortable circumstances than they would by a widow, for instance, in poor circumstances. He was of the opinion that £1,500 was a reasonable sum to fix as the minimum.

MR. ILLINGWORTH drew attention to the wording of the clause, which was as follows:—"So far as the Master shall require, this section shall not apply to any persons to whom "are granted probate or letters of administration of any estate, the total value of which, "after deducting therefrom all debts, does "not exceed £500." He therefore asked how the costs could apply in an estate of £1,500. There was more in the amendment than the Premier thought, and he asked the Government to accept it.

MR. HASSELL said the Premier had made out a good case for the amendment, and he would therefore vote for it.

MR. LEAKE said the Premier seemed to be under the impression that the only saving on an estate would be the percentage fixed by the schedule, but that was not correct. The initial costs of administration were those objected to. The cost of obtaining administration of an estate now was about £5 or £6; and, under the present law, administration accounts were very seldom filed. It was the filing of those accounts that cost the money, and the Bill enforced their being filed from the very start.

MR. MOSS said the value of an estate had nothing to do with the right of the Master to call for the accounts to prove the accuracy of the statement of that estate.

MR. LOTON pointed out that if the suggestion of the hon. member for Nannine would not save the incurring of heavy costs, it would lessen the amount of duty payable, and so assist in the payment of the costs.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said he hoped the Government would agree to the amendment; failing which, he was prepared to accept the suggested compromise.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 9, inclusive:

Agreed to.

Clause 10—"Duties imposed":

Agreed to, with consequential amendments, made necessary by the amendment to Clause 4.

Clause 11—"If duties unpaid, Master may apply to Court for a sale":

Agreed to, with consequential amendment.

Clauses 12 to 17, inclusive:

Agreed to.

Clause 18—"Fees to be paid in certain cases":

Agreed to, with consequential amendment.

Clauses 19 to 21, inclusive:

Agreed to.

Clause 22—"Duty payable on property transferred in evasion of the Act":

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked how the clause would operate, and what limit of time was to be allowed in which a property could be transferred either by gift or by other means, by a testator before his death.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the Master would have to prove that the property was transferred for the purpose of evading the Act, before he could order the particular property to form part of the estate demised.

MR. RANDELL asked also whether there was a time limit.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said Clause 2 of the affidavit contained in Schedule I., for the verification of the statement of the estate, read as follows:—"That, "to the best of my knowledge, information "and belief, the said deceased did not, within "the space of two years preceding the date of "his death, convey, or otherwise dispose of, "for other than adequate valuable considera-"tion, any real or personal property of which "was seized or possessed."

MR. RANDELL said Clause 6, which the schedule covered, made no time limit whatever.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that was the point he was arguing. If the Attorney-General would show that the schedule covered the clause, he would have no objection.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the section under debate had worked very well in Victoria for some time past, and all the cases cited under that Act did not show that any difficulty had arisen. No objection was offered to a gift being made, but it should be the law of the land that no person should be allowed to make away with his property for the purpose of evasion of the

duty. Hon. members could rest assured that the Master would not exercise the power given him unless satisfied that a gift, or an assignment of property, for instance, had not been made in order to evade the law.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said, supposing a father gave away some property to-day, and was killed to-morrow, would the Master say that he gave it away in order to evade the Act?

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Not at all. The Master must prove that a breach of the law was intended.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 23:

Agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 3, inclusive:

Agreed to.

Preamble and title:

Agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

GOLDFIELDS BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1—"Short title":

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved that the blank in the clause be filled in with the words, "the first day of October, 1895."

Put and passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 2 to 10, inclusive:

Agreed to.

Clause 11—"Record to be kept":

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked the Government to accept the amendment of which he had given notice, namely, to add at the end of the clause the words: "Duplicate copies of such records shall also be kept in the head office of every Warden in charge of a proclaimed goldfield." He said it was not sufficient that a record should be kept only in Perth. It would be a great convenience to have a copy of records kept on each goldfield, and hence his amendment.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he did not object to what the hon. member for Nannine was seeking to obtain, but he did not think the amendment would effect it. The beginning of the clause said a complete record should be kept of all leases, claims, transfers, liens, etc., and it also provided for a record being kept at the office of the Minister for Mines. It was necessary that the Registrar's office should be at once furnished with all information, in order that he might keep his books aright. It was desirable to have a central office, where a person purchasing a property could easily turn up the record and see the title of the transferror, in order to know in whose name the lease stood. It was neither desirable nor wise to have two places as Registrar's offices. It would make the clause better to strike out the word "lease" in the third line, and after that was struck out they could have something to meet the wishes of the hon. member for Nannine.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, by leave, withdrew his amendment.

MR. MARMION said he hoped the Attorney-General would not press his suggested amendment, because it required a good deal of consideration. He was sure the suggested amendment would not meet the case.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, as an amendment, that the word "lease," in the third line, be struck out, with the object of providing a Registry office for leases in Perth.

MR. MARMION said the amendment would be a mistake, because it was absolutely necessary that a record of all leases should be kept at every Registrar's office, at every Warden's office, and at the office of the Minister for Mines. The greater part of the business done was done on the goldfields, and not in Perth. The Registrar should have a complete record of all transactions within his district. It was also as necessary that the Warden should have a complete record as affecting the field over which he was Warden. It was also absolutely necessary for the Minister to have a complete record of everything that was done on every field. The question required a good deal of consideration.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) asked what the Warden wanted a complete record for?

MR. MARMION said because nearly everybody went to the Warden's office for information, and if it were not there they might perhaps have to go ninety miles away to the Registrar's office.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said that was where they ought to go in the first instance.

MR. MARMION said if the amendment of the Attorney-General were carried, applicants would have to come to Perth for information. [THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Only in the case of leases.] Yes; but nine-tenths of the whole of the business had reference to leases, and he

risked the opinion that it would be a mistake to carry this amendment.

MR. MORAN said an important question like that deserved further consideration, and by the date that had been inserted there was evidently no immediate hurry. He therefore moved that progress be reported and leave asked to sit again.

MR. ILLINGWORTH suggested it would be better to thresh the matter out then.

MR. MORAN said it was desirable there should be a principal office to which any one might go, or send, to obtain information; and he thought the capital of the colony was the place for that office.

Mr. LEAKE pointed out that if progress were reported they would be precluded from discussing the clause, and it was desirable that the clause should be fully discussed. The hon. member could afterwards have the Bill recommitted, for dealing with difficult clauses. [MR. MORAN: There are only about three.] He was certain the more the difficult clauses were threshed out, the better the Bill would be. The amendment of the Attorney-General would be of great assistance, and the contention of the hon. member for Fremantle could be met by transmitting to the Warden's office a copy of all leases that had been granted. The Warden already had a record of all applications; he knew what was being applied for, though he could not easily ascertain what leases had been granted, unless a copy of the record were sent him. All leases were granted by the Minister, and his office was consequently the place where the official record should be kept. It was impossible to have two places of record. There was such a thing as an injunction, and if there were two places of record, where could the injunction be lodged? It was absolutely necessary to determine where the record office should be established. Very few claims were registered. The men were generally satisfied with merely pegging them out.

MR. MARMION pointed out that a large number of transactions took place before ever a lease was issued—sometimes months before the lease was issued. He thought the number of such transactions would be three-fourths of the whole. He said, most distinctly, it was absolutely necessary for the Registrar of a district to have a complete record, and for the Warden to have one also.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) asked where the Warden's office was?

MR. MARMION replied that the officer was on the field.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the Warden's office was the office of the Registrar for the district.

MR. MARMION said, if that were so, it was an alteration that had been made lately. It was necessary to have a complete record on the field of all transactions before a lease was issued. To make it necessary for everybody to have to appeal to Perth, would tend to confuse business on the goldfields.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said it seemed to him they must have one office where records of leases and transfers should be kept; and as the Minister had to approve in these cases, it was right and proper that his should be the office. There was no reason why a copy of all transactions should not be sent to the offices of the various Registrars of districts, but the principal record should be in the Minister's office—the office where the transactions had been approved. The Warden's office on a goldfield was the office of the Registrar of that district. On some of the goldfields, such as Coolgardie and the Murchison, they had for convenience several districts under one officer. Those districts were each independent goldfields, but it was convenient to have them grouped together under one Warden. In every other particular the fields were separate and distinct, and the Warden visited them regularly at stated times. The business in connection with those districts was not sufficient to warrant the appointment of a separate Warden. When he referred to the Warden's office, he did not refer to the place where the Warden resided and acted as resident magistrate. He meant at such places as Yalgoo, Nannine, Mount Magnet, or any of those places where there was more than one district presided over by the same officer. What they were seeking to provide for was simple enough. They wished to do in this as in the Lands Department, for instance. There the Commissioner alone could approve of any transaction, and the record was kept in his office. Just so they were seeking to do in that matter; but there was no reason why a copy of all transactions should not be sent to all the places interested in the colony. When the Minister approved of any transaction, he could simply cause a copy to be sent to the district in which the property concerned was situated.

MR. MARMION pointed out that if the

word "lease" was struck out, the Registrar would not be able to keep a complete record of all matters dealt with.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the record should be kept in Perth.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the registration would be made in Perth, but as many copies could be made and forwarded to the various offices as were needed.

MR. MARMION asked which was to be relied upon?

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said Perth, of course. They could not rely upon two places. It would never do to invest more than one place with authority. It was easy to picture cases that might occur if they had more than one official record. All records would have to be made in Perth. There alone could it be ascertained who were the legal owners of any lease, and there, too, would be the record of all transactions in connection with it. A copy of all transactions could be forwarded to every Registrar interested, in order that he might keep his books posted.

MR. R. F. SHOLL thought it was both necessary and desirable that the head office for the registration of leases should be in Perth. The present system was most inconvenient. He knew of an instance where a sum of £40,000 or £50,000 was held in a bank pending the completion of a lease, and before this was accomplished nearly four months had elapsed. If the registration could have been completed in Perth, the matter would have been concluded without such a vexatious delay. So far as the Warden was concerned, there should be some provision whereby he could be notified of any transfers in any lease or any transactions connected with it. The difficulty that arose in the whole matter was to let people be acquainted with proposed changes, so that those who were on the fields would not proceed to deal with leases which might have already been transferred in Perth. It would be necessary to have some such provision as this to prevent inconvenience.

MR. LEAKE suggested that difficulties of this nature might be dealt with by some provision being made in the Regulations for the lodging of caveats. It should also be borne in mind that transfers of actual leases very seldom took place after the lease was granted. It was in the earlier stages of application for a lease that the trouble arose, for after the mine was at work transfers usually ceased. The matter was certainly one which could be dealt with more satisfactorily under the Regulations.

MR. MARMION desired to point out that many of the most important transactions in regard to these mining leases took place prior to the actual granting of the lease, and it was most essential that records of these should be at the office of the Warden for the district wherein the lease or land applied for was situated. There was no reason why the registration should not be made at Perth, but all the information as to the lease, both before and after it was granted, should be available on the field.

MR. ILLINGWORTH wished to remark that a lease was a lease, and was not a lease until it was properly issued. What the hon. member for Fremantle was referring to, were transactions which occurred prior to the granting of the lease, but these matters did not apply after a property had reached the dignity of being an absolute lease. When a lease was granted, a copy would be kept at the office of the Mining Registrar for the district, and it was here that the records of all transactions in connection with the application for the lease would be found. This was the proper place for these, and Perth was undoubtedly the proper place for main registration for leases, while there would be no difficulty in the various fields being fully acquainted with any changes in these. At present the system was most unworkable, and, if hon. members did not want to perpetuate it, they should accept the amendment of the Attorney-General. That amendment meant that if a man desired to get all the information he wanted at Coolgardie, he could get it there; if he was in Perth, he could get it in Perth, and that was what the hon. member for Fremantle desired to see provided.

MR. LEAKE was still of opinion that the matter could be far better dealt with in the regulations, where the danger of providing two places of registration could be more effectually avoided.

MR. MARMION hoped the Committee would not lose sight of the fact that the Bill had been originally drafted by practical gentlemen, and if the word "lease" appeared in the draft, then it was there for some good reason. It might not be wise to strike out the word.

THE ATTORNEY - GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said it had been the intention of the Government all the time to move to strike the word "lease" out of the clause. No reason had been advanced to show that this would be wrong. The proper place for the record of leases to be kept would be at Perth, and copies could be kept elsewhere. Probably it would be better for him to withdraw his amendment, and let the clause pass as printed, so that the Bill could be re-committeed to consider an amendment which he would draft, and of which he would give notice.

MR. MARMION desired to press upon the Committee the fact that between the time a lease was actually granted and the time the application for it was made, important changes took place, and there should be some place where the record of these alterations would be found without the people who desired information having to come to Perth.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) again reminded the Committee that a lease was not a lease until it was granted and registered as such. So far as anything prior to the granting of the lease was concerned, information of that sort would have to be gained by searching for it on the field, but it would hardly be recorded in the same manner as a lease would be.

MR. MORAN considered that the hon. member for Fremantle was quite right. Great alterations took place as to the ownership of a lease before the lease was granted, for the simple reason that so long as the formalities were properly observed, an application for a lease would be treated by business men and speculators as the lease itself, until the lease was granted. If the records as to dealings prior to the lease being granted were not properly kept and available, leases might be sold to *bona fide* purchasers, who would subsequently find there were incumbrances on the property.

MR. MARMION pointed out that the words in the clause clearly meant that all transactions in connection with leases, claims, or any land connected with the goldfields should be recorded and registered. A man should be able to get all the information he required without coming down to Perth.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is what the Attorney-General proposes.

MR. MARMION: I do not take it that way, at any rate.

MR. CLARKSON thought the hon. members for Fremantle and Yilgarn were making a very great fuss about nothing. Perth was the proper place for registration, and he agreed with the argument of the hon. member for Nannine that a lease was a lease.

THE ATTORNEY - GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I think it would be better for me to withdraw my amendment, with the object of carrying out the suggestion I made just now.

Amendment, by leave, was withdrawn, and the clause, as printed, agreed to.

Clause 12.—"Miners' Rights:"

MR. ILLINGWORTH moved to strike out the word "alien," line 4, and to strike out all the words after the word "transferable," in line 10. In doing so, the hon. member remarked that doubtless he would arouse the wrath of the hon. member for Gascoyne in proposing to deal with a class of people who were naturalised British subjects. In India, a native, although a British subject, did not have the same rights as an Englishman, and although he passed certain examinations, he was for ever unable to take certain positions, which could only be held by Englishmen. India was a conquered country, and the Indian people a conquered race. In the country they belonged to they had not the same privileges as English people who were in India, and it was in consequence of this that so much of the trouble arose. There was no doubt the real object of the clause was to prevent Asiatics and Africans mining, and if this was to be done the word "alien" would have to be struck out.

MR. CLARKSON: Why shouldn't these people have the right to mine as well as anyone else?

MR. ILLINGWORTH thought there might be some wisdom in what the "seventh Minister" had said, if this class of people were to be permitted to mine. The feeling of the country on the point was unmistakable, and the amendment would meet the real intention of those who framed the clause. If the word "alien" was retained, the clause would be useless and ineffective.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson): Supposing a white man is born in Africa, are you going to treat him as a black man?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: When I was a boy my father used to teach me that because a man was born in a stable there was no reason why he should be regarded as a horse.

THE CHAIRMAN, in stating the question, said he desired to draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that other hon. members were being referred to as the "sixth Minister" or the "seventh Minister." Such expressions were not Parliamentary.

MR. JAMES earnestly hoped that this question would be dealt with without any wretched little quibbles being drawn into it. When the principle was affirmed, the details and actual wording would be very easy of settlement. The object of the amendment was clearly to carry out the real intention of the clause, and that intention would be nullified if the word "alien" were to remain. The vote on this question would really be taken to test the feeling of the committee whether or not restrictions should be placed upon not only Asiatic and African aliens, but also those who happened to be British subjects. This was the point to be tested, and wretched quibbles could be left out of the question until the principle was affirmed. The amendment was one which had his hearty support, and he would preface his remarks by congratulating the Government upon the wording of this section, for it showed that they were differing from the hon. member for Gascoyne. The more they left the opinions of that gentleman behind on this subject, the more the Government would be in touch with the popular and right feeling on the matter. So far as the principle itself was concerned, the House, on previous occasions, had committed itself beyond recall, and that was with the declaration that Asiatics and Africans who were aliens should not be permitted to carry on mining operations. In doing this they had acted very rightly, and now he wanted the Committee to go a step further, and, by agreeing to the amendment, establish the fact that no Asiatic or African, whether alien or otherwise, should be permitted to mine. They did not love these people more because they happened to be British subjects, nor would they detest them more if they were not. They objected to them altogether, because they were undesirable people to have in this colony. No one could say the dirty, wretched, detestable Afghans they saw crowding about Perth were any better than the Afghans who were actually in Afghanistan, but if they came from there they would not have been permitted to come into the colony at all. Instead of that they came from British territory, perhaps a few miles out of Afghanistan, and that was the sole difference. This class of people should be excluded, whether they were aliens, or whether they happened to be British subjects, in the way and to the extent, he had mentioned.

The Chairman left the chair at 6.30 p.m.

At 7.30 p.m., the Committee resumed.

MR. JAMES said he did not wish to labor the question, because, holding such strong views as he did upon the Asiatic question, he might be deemed guilty of insincerity. He also disliked to do so because he was so thoroughly convinced of the danger of allowing any part of Australia to become tainted by the unrestricted importation of undesirable people. It had occurred to him that to amend the Bill as proposed now would be to interfere with its passing, and because the Royal assent to it would have to be withheld for some time. He would like to hear what the Attorney-General had to say on that point.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said there was no reference to Her Majesty in a case like this. It was a national question.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the amendment was one of some importance. If it were carried the clause would provide that no miner's right should be granted to any Asiatic of African, whether he was a British subject or not. The question before the Committee was not whether Asiatics or Africans should be allowed on the goldfields, because miners' rights were not given to them, and the Bill proposed to leave the law in that state. Therefore, the only Asiatics or African aliens who could obtain miners' rights, were those who were British subjects. The section provided as an amendment of the law that if application were made by one of those people on the ground that he was a British subject, the question should be referred to the Minister, to whom proof of his claim as a British subject must be given. There had been very few cases indeed in which an Asiatic or an African had obtained a miner's right on the ground that he was a British subject, and therefore there was no great object to be gained by amending the clause as proposed, while there was much to be lost by doing so. He could not support the principle underlying the amendment. He was not contending that miner's rights should be given to Asiatics or Africans, but if they could prove that they were British subjects they were entitled to have them. He thought the reasons given for the dislike evinced for those

people, were quite distinct from those which were given in the House for curtailing their privileges and liberties. Now he had been asked if the Bill were passed with the proposed amendment, whether it would have to be reserved for Royal assent. In answer to that he would refer hon. members to the Royal Instructions to His Excellency the Governor, which were to be found in the Standing Orders of the House. In those Instructions the Governor was directed by Her Majesty not to assent to Bills of an extraordinary nature, or measures in which the perogative of Parliament, or the rights and property of subjects, not resident in the colony, might be prejudiced. With that before him, he would not be doing his duty as Attorney-General if he omitted to draw His Excellency's attention to those Instructions given to him by Her Majesty when the Bill was presented for assent. If it were enacted that no Asiatic or African whatever, was entitled to that which anyone else was entitled to, an infringement of that provision would be almost committed, and the Bill might, therefore, have to be reserved for Her Majesty's assent. It was not worth while jeopardising the passing of the Bill into law for perhaps 6 or 12 months, to achieve the unimportant object sought to be gained by the amendment. The goldfields had hitherto been worked with but very few instances of any difficulty arising over the matter, and it was useless to anticipate that a flood of applications would be received from those men of color for non-exclusion, when they were British subjects. He believed it would be found that there were none of those people on the fields with miners' rights.

MR. MORAN: But with business licenses.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said that was another matter.

MR. JAMES: Miners' rights mean hard work, and they do not like that.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said that if difficulties did not exist it was not necessary to legislate for them, and if the Bill was in danger of being reserved for assent, hon. members should vote against the amendment. It was really such a small matter that it was not worth while raising it in any shape on the clause which was before the Committee.

MR. MORAN said the objection raised by the Hon. the Attorney-General that the amending the clause as proposed it would interfere with the passing of the Bill into law, inasmuch as it would interfere with the rights of the people in question, was not a good one, because the very fact that miners' rights and business licenses had been issued to them, strengthened the position taken up by those who were opposed to the clause.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): How many have been granted?

MR. MORAN said that if a license were issued to one man, others would expect to have them granted as well. The fact that the amendment, if carried, would be a menace to their rights and privileges, showed that the clause was included in the Bill in order to shift the responsibility of granting the licenses on to one man. As the clause stood it was a menace to the rights of British subjects. He thought the reservation of the Bill for Royal assent was a very remote contingency. That question was first raised by the hon. member for the Gascoyne in the form of a threat, to the effect that if the clause were amended as proposed, he would warn the Governor that it was his duty to reserve his assent to the measure. That was assuming the functions of a Minister, without a doubt; or, in other words the hon. member for Gascoyne, who was one of 32 members, considered it was his duty to advise the Governor not to assent to a Bill that had been passed by the House. Surely the Governor knew his duty in the matter, and it was not even necessary for the Attorney-General to point it out to him. It had been said some difficulty might arise in proving a man's claim to be a British subject, but no man who produced the necessary documents could be doubted. He would support the amendment.

MR. MARMION said he would like to know if a colored man, born in America, could be called an African or an Asiatic. A large number of gentlemen of various shades of color were native-born Americans, and had a perfect right to a miner's right. If the amendment were carried, greater difficulties than those which already existed would be created, without any real benefit resulting. It was far better to leave the law as it stood, as very few difficulties had occurred in working it, and it was useless to imagine that they would arise. It was time enough to legislate when they did arise, and it would be wise if the hon. member withdrew the amendment.

MR. CLARKSON said he hoped the amendment would not be carried. People in other parts of the world must think it strange that

Britishers should exclude aliens from their dominions, and prevent them from making a living. It was ridiculous that because a man was black, and was not born under the the British flag, he should be debarred from making a living in this country.

AN HON. MEMBER: That is the law now.

MR. CLARKSON said it should be altered. He did not like the Chinese or Afghans himself, but it was rather too much to prevent them from making their living amongst white people.

MR. WOOD said he supported the amendment. The sooner Asiatics, Afghans, and Chinamen were got rid of, the better for the country. He did not acknowledge any alien as an Indian Britisher. They were not British subjects in the sense that white people were, but were serfs and slaves.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that before the amendment was put to the vote, he desired to say that the other colonies were advocating the legislation proposed by it.

THE PREMIER (Hon Sir. J. Forrest): Which one?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: All of them.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Not a single one. I enquired lately, and I found that not even New Zealand advocated it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that recent events which had occurred in some of the mining districts of New Zealand, were sufficient to warn hon. members to be very careful. He did not think the Hon. the Attorney-General was likely to call the attention of the Governor to the clause under debate, for by so doing he would be showing an amount of feeling in the matter that would scarcely be worthy of the position he held, and he (Mr. Illingworth) did not think the hon. member would do anything of the kind. He hoped hon. members would express their opinion on the matter by voting for the amendment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said that some short time ago he enquired by telegraph of all the other colonies as to what restrictions were placed upon the introduction of aliens, and he found that with, the exception of the law relating to Chinese—which was in force in this colony—there was not a single restriction placed upon the advent of aliens in the Australian colonies. New Zealand had replied that it was proposed to introduce some legislation with the object of excluding undesirable people. The telegram did not specify which race it was proposed to exclude. He saw no necessity for excising the word "alien" from the clause. Since the Government had been in office, scarcely any Asiatic or African aliens had been naturalised, and, to his own knowledge, there was not a single Asiatic or African, being a British subject, working as a miner on the goldfields. He believed there was an Afghan or two who had business licenses, and that Faiz Mahommed held one.

MR. MORAN: And he keeps over 100 Afghans.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Yes, as camel drivers.

MR. MORAN: No, they are not.

THE CHAIRMAN: Order!

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the Afghans were very necessary in dealing with camels, as they understood them. With regard to the question as to whether the Bill might be reserved for Royal assent, if the amendment were carried, he pointed out that before any Bill was presented for Royal assent it had to be forwarded to the Attorney-General, who was asked whether the Governor could legally and properly assent to it in Her Majesty's name. The Attorney-General then advised the Governor as to whether he could legally and properly assent to it, and it was his duty to point out anything in the measure that in any way infringed the Royal Instructions. Apart from that, the Governor had the power to reserve any Bill for Her Majesty's assent, and all the Executive Government could do in such a case would be to object; and he thought hon. members could rest assured that if a Bill infringing on the rights of British subjects born in other parts of the world were passed, the Governor would reserve assent. It was not worth while running any risks with the Bill. Those who opposed the clause had not shown good reasons for altering it in the direction proposed, and he hoped hon. members would allow the law which had been in force since 1866 to stand.

MR. LEAKE said he had no fear that the colony was threatened with an overwhelming influx of Chinese or other Asiatic aliens, and his views were not in accord with those of members on his side of the House in regard to the section of the Bill under consideration. He was inclined to support the view of the Hon. the Attorney-General that by striking out the word "alien," hon. members were likely to imperil the passing of the mea-

sure. It was of far more importance to pass the Bill at once than to run the risk of having the Afghan or any black man on the goldfields. There had been no difficulty in the past, and, so far as he could gather, he did not think any Government would dare to grant miners, rights to those persons against whom an objection was raised. There was ample provision in the Bill to prevent the goldfields from being overrun by those people, and the Ministry accepted all responsibility. He would not vote for the amendment, because it might imperil the passage of the Bill.

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. R. F. SHOLL moved to strike out the remainder of the clause after the word "transferable," as follows:—"Provided always "that no miner's right, consolidated miner's "right, or business license, shall be issued to "any Asiatic or African claiming to be a British "subject without the authority of the Minister "first had and obtained." He said that after the arguments they had used against the previous amendment, the Government would, he was sure, support that amendment. Both the Premier and the Attorney-General had said that hon. members should not legislate in such a way as to infringe the rights of British subjects. Was it to be expected that any British subject should have to present his certificate of birth to the Minister in order to obtain a miner's right? In order to do that, he would have to travel to Perth from the fields, and surely the Warden could be vested with sufficient discretionary power to decide whether the applicant was a British subject or not. The Minister, he was sure, would not grant the unfortunate British subject's request, because his skin was black, and then he would have to go to the Supreme Court to claim his rights. He was of opinion that the Bill advocated class legislation. The proviso he proposed to strike out was a left-handed way of evading the question, because the Government, knowing that those people were unpopular on the fields, included the provision that the Warden should refer applications for miners' right, made by them, to the Minister, who, of course, would not grant them. Certain agitators were now stumping the country on the Anti-Asiatic cry, and he knew that one of them had been imprisoned in Queensland for sedition.

MR. MORAN: Who is that?

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the hon. member knew the man to whom he was referring. With regard to the hon. member for Yilgarn, who had been stumping the other colonies with a notorious Irish patriot, it was well known that he took the stand he did because he knew it was popular. He (Mr Sholl) thought that if the proviso were allowed to remain in the Bill it would imperil its passage just as much as the previous amendment would have done.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that, seeing the Government had insisted upon the retention of the word "alien," he would like to know how they were to obtain the "Christian" name and surname of Asiatic or African alien applicants.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he did not think the proviso was objectionable in any way. Seeing that miners' rights were only granted to British subjects, great care should be taken that rights were not issued to every applicant on the mere assertion that he was a British subject. The Government considered that the duty of finding out whether an applicant was a British subject or not should be left to the Minister, who had more opportunities of doing so than a Warden, who was in a distant part of the colony, had. The hon. member for the Gascoyne, no doubt, remembered that a great deal of trouble arose some years ago in regard to the colored pearlers at Sharks Bay having so many licenses for boats. The result of the agitation was that the Government bought out colored owners of boats altogether, and made regulations by which the Governor-in-Council, by order, had power to limit the issue of licenses; and since then no licenses had been issued to any African or Asiatic aliens.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: This proviso deals with British subjects.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): No, it deals only with persons claiming to be British subjects. He did not think the hon. member for the Gascoyne would advocate the granting of pearling licenses, all along the coast to Wyndham, to aliens or persons of color. He hoped the amendment would be withdrawn.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the argument of the Hon. the Premier was in favor of not granting miners' rights to aliens, but he objected to British subjects being prevented from obtaining them.

MR. CLARKSON said he hoped the amendment would not be withdrawn, because it was

ridiculous to put a British subject to so much trouble in getting a miner's right.

MR. LEFROY said he could not see any objection to the proviso. He was anxious that fair play should be given to all British subjects, and, in order to protect them it was provided that they should apply to the Minister for a miner's right. He objected to the use of opprobrious epithets in regard to those alien races, for there were many among them who were as honorable and as upright as any hon. member was, although they differed in colour.

MR. MARMION said he believed the idea of the hon. member for the Gascoyne in moving the amendment was to obviate the refusal of a miner's right to a British subject who happened to be a man of color, or who appeared to be other than a British subject, and to give the Warden power to refuse a right to an applicant if, after an examination of his documents, he found the man had no claim to be a British subject. If the Warden had any doubt on the subject, he would refer the question to the Minister, so as to relieve himself of the responsibility of refusing an applicant, who might be a British subject, a miner's right. He did not think very much harm would result if the proviso were allowed to remain, but, on the contrary, they would, in retaining it, prevent the very mischief which the mover of the amendment did not want to take place.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said he complained that the proviso did not compel the Minister to grant a miner's right to applicants proved to be British subjects.

MR. GEORGE said he desired to point out, without going into the question of whether it was desirable to have Asiatics or Africans in the colony or not, that it was not proper to abuse them, because there were amongst them men who were as honorable as those whose skin was white; but he considered that if the debate had been based more upon the question as to whether it was desirable that people of a different color should be allowed to live in the colony, the subject could have been entered into more deeply. He would prefer to see the Chinaman, the African, and the Afghan excluded. With regard to the proviso, he was afraid that, if it were carried, there would be a large influx of aliens, and if they had to appeal to the Minister for their miners' rights, that gentleman's time, which should be devoted to his proper duties, would be too much occupied. It had been mentioned to him that a certain gentleman, named Walsh, a resident of Coolgardie, had, at great expense to himself, sunk a well, and by some means a number of Afghans obtained the piece of ground adjoining his claim. They sank a well thereon, and took away all the water from Walsh's shaft. That showed that the aliens could do something, and it also showed that, if a great influx of them were allowed, they would simply swamp the white man.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed, as printed.

Clause 13:

Agreed to.

Clause 14—"Privileges conferred by a miner's right":

MR. GEORGE asked the Attorney-General to make the meaning of the clause clearer.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said any person could take whatever quantity of water he chose from any flowing stream, so long as he allowed the stream to flow on afterwards.

MR. GEORGE said he understood that water was a very valuable commodity on the goldfields, and he was anxious to have the meaning of the clause made perfectly plain. A person might possibly make a dam, and impound water for the purpose of selling it.

MR. CLARKSON said if the hon. member knew anything about the goldfields, he would know there were no flowing streams there.

MR. ILLINGWORTH moved, as an amendment, that the words, "such area, upon being afterwards declared a townsite, to become the property in fee simple of the owner on payment of the upset price," be added to the clause. He said it was a far more important thing than some hon. members thought. A man went to a goldfield and established a business. After a while there came a rush of people, and soon a township was declared, and he had to enter into competition at auction for what was practically both his land and his business. He (Mr. Illingworth) did not think the Government wanted to make a profit out of a man's business, when ostensibly they were only selling the land. He contended that the man who went to the field first and established himself, should have the right to his land at upset price. He hoped the Government would not object to his amendment, as it would not materially affect the revenue, whilst it would

do justice to the man who did the pioneer work on goldfields.

MR. A. FORREST said it would not be in the interests of the colony to pass the amendment. He did not think it right that the Government should practically give away the best sites in the goldfield towns. It would mean that certain people would have agents on every field, in order to secure the best blocks of land at the upset price, and, if the township turned out a failure, they would clear out of it. He hoped the Committee would not seriously consider the amendment, as it would simply be an incentive to people to go and put up small places with a view of securing valuable allotments at a cheap rate. Land in Coolgardie was worth as much as the land in Perth. The Wardens always dealt generously with the first arrivals on the field.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said there was no doubt that the object of the hon. member for Nannine had been much talked of on the fields, and in some cases there might have been hardships inflicted. It seemed to him (the Premier) that it was a matter which might fairly be dealt with in the regulations, rather than find a hard and fast place is the Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Will you put it there?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said, so far as he was concerned, he would be glad to try and frame something that would suit all parties. He thought the Wardens generally dealt very liberally with men who had established businesses on the fields; and he believed nine out of every ten of the original holders got their land at the upset price. He considered it a very important matter that a man should get his place of business, and be secure in his house and home. It had been brought under his notice, when on the Murchison goldfields, and he thought some provision should be made by which such a man could hold his place under a business license. The question was a difficult one, as the hon. member for West Kimberley had pointed out; and it would not be satisfactory for all the best sites of a declared township to be secured at the upset price. Still, something should be done to hinder a man from being summarily dispossessed of his holding. He could see that, for a man to hold his place on a business license merely, would not be satisfactory, as the tenure would not be secure; and yet to allow him to have the place at the upset price would encourage people to go and put up small tenements in order to get the best sites in a township. If the hon. member for Nannine would leave the matter to the Government, they would do something under the Regulations. That would do justice to the people holding the business positions. He did not like to put it in the Bill.

MR. MORAN said he was pleased that the Premier did recognise that hardships had occurred under the old Regulations. If the amendment were passed, they would probably still have instances where land would be dummied, but the legitimate miner would have a chance too, though the best land might be monopolised by wealthy land-grabbers. Still justice would be done to those who were there first. He supported the amendment. He asked what would have been the position of the country had it not been for the prospectors. Had it not been for them and their intrepidity, the land to-day would have been worth little or nothing; it would not have been worth a penny an acre. He knew that syndicates had run up prices beyond that which the original holder of a block had been able to pay, and he considered the Committee should not be afraid to do justice, on account of the bogie held up by the hon. member for West Kimberley. This colony had more unfair laws with regard to the alienation of land on the goldfields than any of the other Australian colonies. The principle of the amendment prevailed at Ballarat in its early days; and was also the law in Queensland at the present time. He regarded the old regime as aggravated landlordism, and he hoped the Committee would express sympathy with the amendment, and so strengthen the hands of the Government in endeavoring to provide something in the Regulations to meet the case.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) suggested that the clause should be allowed to pass as it stood, and he would draft something to meet the case, though he thought it should be a clause by itself.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, upon the assurance which the Premier had just given, asked leave to withdraw his amendment.

MR. MARMION said he hoped the sympathy of the Premier would not carry him too far in the direction suggested by the hon. member for Nannine. The question required very careful consideration, or else the colony would be deprived of considerable revenue.

MR. MORAN: Give the first men a chance.

MR MARMION said the first men were

nearly always the same men. Those men generally took the precaution to hold the best sites in the township. He knew that was so, and in nearly every case the land had been obtained at the upset price. It ought to be the duty of the Committee to first conserve the interests of the community. He asked the Hon. the Premier to be careful of those men who were always held up as poor, suffering individuals, for he knew that some of them had made thousands of pounds out of the Government, by obtaining land at the upset price.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

MR. LEAKE pointed out to the Attorney-General that the clause they were dealing with had reference to residence only, whereas Clause 18 dealt with business licenses.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 15:

Agreed to.

Clause 16—"Incapacity to sue without miner's rights":

MR. ILLINGWORTH moved, as an amendment, that in the first line the words "other than wages men" be added after the word "persons." He said it could not be intended to hinder a man from suing for wages, simply because he did not hold a miner's right The Bill gave a lien for wages upon the claim or lease, and if a workman could not take action, what protection had he? He (Mr. Illingworth) asked if it were the intention of the Government that a man should have no claim for wages unless he had a miner's right?

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said there was nothing in that clause to preclude a man for recovering his wages. Provisions would be made in the Regulations whereby a property could be realised upon for the payment of wages.

MR. LEAKE said that, according to Clause 75, a wages man could not procure a lien for wages except upon the production of a miner's right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked for an assurance from the Attorney-General that if Clause 16 were passed, it would not prevent the wages man from suing for his wages, simply because he did not hold a miner's right. He (Mr. Illingworth) feared that the clause would absolutely nullify the workman's lien.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said this clause would not affect the question of wages. That question would come up under Clause 57.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 17—"Incorporated mining company may obtain miner's right:"

MR. LEAKE asked the Attorney General to explain the clause.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said it simply meant that if a mining company put on 12 men, they would have to get consolidated rights for 12 men.

Clause agreed to.

Clause 18—"Business license:"

MR. LEAKE said this clause was a new departure. Under the old law, licenses were issued by the Governor, but provision was here being made for deputies to do that work. He asked why the Warden should not be the Governor's deputy. [THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: He will be one of them.] Then, too the clause did not specify the term for which a business license should be held. It seemed also that a person could take up too much land. [THE PREMIER: Only a quarter of an acre.] But he (Mr. Leake) understood that, if it were not in a street, a man might take up an acre. It looked as if they were going to give a man a right to take up a business license within the townsite with much greater advantage than could be done under the old law. He asked if the Attorney-General had considered the point; and suggested that progress should be reported at this stage.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the clause had been recommended to the Government as an improvement upon the old law. He could not then remember the difference between the clause and the old law on the subject.

MR. ILLINGWORTH moved, as an amendment in the third line, that after the word "person" there be inserted the words "not being an Asiatic or African."

MR. R. F. SHOLL said he would oppose the amendment unless the word "alien" were inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved as an amendment that the word "alien" be inserted after the word "African."

Further amendment, put and passed.

MR. LEAKE pointed out that the clause said, "on application for a business license, "the same shall be granted," but said no length of term was mentioned, and if no term were mentioned it might be taken that the man had absolute right to hold the license.

Under the old law, holders had to pay £4 a year for a license, and it was in force for ten years.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): From year to year.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the language of the clause right through assumed that a term was mentioned. He though the words should be the same as in Clause 12, where it said, "It shall be in force for one year from the date thereof."

MR. LEAKE said it was also evidently intended that business licenses should refer to lands outside townships. It was surely never intended that a man who held a business license should squat down upon a piece of land, that would ultimately become a valuable site in a thriving township, and get for next to nothing what another man would have to pay for "through the nose." He thought the clause could not be satisfactorily dealt with without considerable thought.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved that progress be reported, and leave asked to sit again.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9·20 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 20th August, 1895.

Petition of Settlers in the Blackwood District re Railway Route—Use of Dredge on the Canning River—Legislation re Ground Vermin and Bird Pests—Railway and Theatre Refreshment Rooms Licensing Bill; report—Married Women's Property Bill; in committee—Depositing Stone, &c., in River at Rocky Bay; Legislative Council's amendment; in committee—Estimates, 1895-96; in committee—Crown Suits Bill: first reading—Sale of Goods Bill: first reading—Free Railway Passes Granted, 1894-95—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PETITION OF SETTLERS IN BLACKWOOD DISTRICT *re* RAILWAY ROUTE.

MR. HARPER, on behalf of Sir J. G. LEE-STEERE, presented a petition, signed by Mr. G. M. Williams and other settlers in the Blackwood district, praying that the route of the Blackwood railway should be *viâ* Brookhampton and Thompson's Brook.

Petition read and ordered to be printed.

USE OF DREDGE ON THE CANNING RIVER.

MR. RANDELL (for MR. JAMES) in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works (1) the time during which the dredge "Black Swan" had been employed on the Canning River; (2) the work done, its cost, and the object for which it had been—and was being done; (3) the amount of work to be done, and the time expected to be taken in doing it.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied as follows:—(1) Since August, 1892, to date; or, say, three years exactly. (2) Work done.—7,250 lineal feet, or about one and two-fifths miles of channel dredged to a minimum depth of about 4ft. at low water, with the exception of some silted up patches, which will require further deepening. This channel has been piled, staked, and wattled throughout the greater part of its length, and wherever deemed necessary. Minor accessory works have been executed in the way of general improvements. The labor has been practically all convict. (3), Cost to date, £3,113.

LEGISLATION *re* GROUND VERMIN AND BIRD PESTS.

MR. PIESSE, in accordance with notice, asked the Attorney-General whether it was the intention of the Government, during this session of Parliament, to introduce a measure dealing with the destruction of ground vermin and bird pests.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) replied that the Government had no intention of introducing a measure of the character referred to in the question of the hon. member.

RAILWAY AND REFRESHMENT ROOMS LICENSING BILL.

REPORT.

Upon the reading of the amendments made in committee,

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. S Burt) moved that the amendment made in Clause 1 be not agreed to. He said this