

"earlier than usual next year, when these subjects will, I feel sure, receive your early and careful attention.

"MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE
"LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

"I thank you for the liberal provision you have made for the Public Service.

"MR. PRESIDENT AND HONOURABLE
"GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE
"COUNCIL,—

"MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE
"LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

"The export of gold continues to be highly satisfactory, and for the year ending 31st December will reach the value of over two-and-a-half millions sterling, being considerably more than double the export of last year. The season has been a fairly good one, both for the agriculturist and pastoralist, though the rainfall has been less than the average.

"I now prorogue this Parliament till Wednesday, the 4th day of May next."
The session then closed.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 23rd December, 1897.

Papers Presented—The Missing Mail Bag: Ministerial Statement—Question: Stability of Fremantle Railway Bridge—Police Act Amendment Bill: second and third readings—Companies Act Amendment Bill: second and third readings—Companies (United Kingdom and British Colonies Registers) Bill: Speaker's Ruling—Discharge of Orders: Fire Brigades Bill, Metropolitan Waterworks Act Amendment Bill, Mines Regulation Bill—Discharge of Orders (five Bills)—Excess Bill, 1896-7: second and third readings—Motion: Reorganisation of Agent General's Department—Motion: Bonus to Discoverers of Colliery Coal—Police Act Amendment Bill: Legislative Council's Message re Amendment; division—Complimentary Remarks—Prorogation.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 12 o'clock noon.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1. Addition to Clause 2 of the Mineral Lands Regulations. 2. Report of the Bureau of Agriculture on Adulteration of Milk.

By the ATTORNEY GENERAL: Report of the Registrar of Patents, Designs, and Trade Marks for 1896.

By the PREMIER (in response to a previous motion by Mr. Illingworth): Report of the Bureau of Agriculture on the adulteration of milk.

Ordered to lie on the table.

THE MISSING MAIL BAG.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): I should like to make an announcement to the House. The missing mail bag from Coolgardie, about which we had some discussion yesterday, has been discovered. (Mr. LEAKE: Hear, hear.) I can assure the House no one is more pleased at this fact than I am. I have also instructed the Postmaster General to inform those persons who had letters in the bag, so that they may acquaint their friends in other colonies by sending telegrams to them free, in regard to letters that have been thus delayed. The occurrence is a dreadful one, but I am sure that hon. members will feel glad to learn that the missing bag of letters has been found.

MR. LEAKE: In what part of the railway station was the bag found?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must put a question to the Minister, if he wants further information.

MR. LEAKE: I will tell the House that the missing bag was found in a dark corner of the Post Office.

QUESTION—STABILITY OF FREMANTLE RAILWAY BRIDGE.

MR. CONOLLY, for Mr. Holmes, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works:—1. How many times river cargo boats and steamers had collided with the present Fremantle railway bridge. 2. Whether the Government had lately had the whole structure examined, and if so, when; and whether the Government would submit to this House the report furnished by the examiners. 3. Whether the responsible advisers of the Government were perfectly

satisfied with its stability, especially in view of the amount of dredging going on in the vicinity, and the increase in the strength of the tide caused by the opening of the bar.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—
1. The Department is only aware of four instances. 2. The whole structure was examined a few months ago, and was thoroughly overhauled and screwed up, work being completed in September last. No special report was made. 3. Yes. The dredging is being done some distance away from the bridge. The force of the tide has very little effect.

POLICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed on the motion for second reading, moved by Mr. Leake on the previous Friday.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): When legislation was introduced on this question a few years ago, I opposed it; and now I am pleased to see that this Bill proposes to put the racecourse amusements on a satisfactory basis. I said then that I did not object to any man using his money as he thought fit, but that I should like to see a proper class of men carrying on these operations. Under this Bill, we may rely that the operations will be carried on in a fair, honourable, and upright manner; and so long as these men are under the ægis of the W.A. Turf Club, all may be well. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Police Act, 1892:

MR. HOOLEY: This House having previously resolved to stop the use of wheel totalisators on racecourses, he hoped the decision would be maintained, and that this clause would be struck out. Betting by bookmakers was an evil; but betting by the use of wheel totalisators was not only an evil but a nuisance. He moved that the clause be struck out.

MR. LEAKE: The same objection did not obtain now as in the past to the wheel totalisators, because their use on

racecourses in this colony would be controlled by the Turf Club. By making this amendment on the last day of the session, he was afraid the Bill would be lost; and he asked the hon. member not to insist on the amendment. According to the proviso in the clause, the committee of the Turf Club could stop the use of the machine, if they chose to do so.

HON. H. W. VENN said the clause should be struck out, even at the risk of losing the Bill.

Amendment put and passed, and the clause struck out.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment, and report adopted.

THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and a Message transmitted to the Legislative Council requesting their concurrence in the amendment (Clause 3).

COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING, ETC.

MR. CONOLLY (Dundas), in moving the second reading, said: This Bill has been passed in the other House after due consideration, in which two prominent members of the Eastern goldfields took part, and has been entrusted to me to introduce into this House. A great deal of inconvenience has been caused to local shareholders holding interest in English companies, in getting information and dividends from those companies in which they have invested their money. This Bill provides for the registering of foreign companies which have embarked in industrial enterprise in this colony. It applies not only to mining companies, but to every other branch of industry that may have been taken up by foreign enterprise—such as breweries, waterworks, electric light works, tramway and timber companies, in fact any undertaking that commercial enterprise has opened up in this colony. It has a special bearing on the gold-mining industry, on account of its being so large in extent and being quoted in England and foreign countries. I do not think any great objection can be raised to the Bill, which has a very good and useful object. Before it was passed through the Upper House it was carefully con-

sidered by a committee, in which the legal profession was well represented, and the Bill was considered to be of advantage to the investing community in this colony. The Bill provides especially for the establishment of local registers of foreign companies in Western Australia. Clause 12 provides for a suitable notice being given by the local registrars to local shareholders, when dividends are due and so forth. During the Premier's visit to England, some representatives of the English investors informed him that they were not favourable to the appointment of local registrars, but since then those objections have in a great measure and in some notable instances been withdrawn. As evidence of that I may state that the hon. member of the Upper House who introduced the Bill there is acting here as the local manager and attorney for one of the leading English companies at home, which took a prominent part in objecting to the Bill, and he has it from them that they no longer object and are quite prepared to accept it. I beg to move the second reading.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie): Although I am entirely in accord with many of the provisions of the Bill, there are certain features about it which require consideration by this House before passing it. The London companies which have such a very large stake here, having invested so much money in our mines, are entitled to consideration at the hands of the House. Very many English companies strongly object to the enacting of this measure; and, although I am in favour of most of the clauses, the House should have more time to consider its merits than can be given to it if we hurriedly pass the Bill through.

THE PREMIER: I am not able to offer an opinion on the merits of this Bill, because I have not had time to consider it; but I know it is opposed by some of the companies in England. When I was in London a deputation waited on me from the London Chamber of Commerce. Some very influential men were present on the deputation, including the president of the chamber. There was an expression of opinion—I would not like to say it was general from all present, but certainly one or two urged strongly that these local registers should

not be established. No opposition to the objectors was made by the others who were present, so I take it that this Bill does not find much favour in London. There is a good deal, therefore, to be said on the other side, which the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) can say better than I. On the other hand, people here complain that they are put to great inconvenience owing to English and foreign companies doing business here having no branch office, in consequence of which the local investors have to send elsewhere, sometimes to Adelaide, to get their transfers or their dividends, and to transact whatever other business they may have. It is most inconvenient to people here. I should be sorry to do anything in the matter without full consideration. I had a telegram the other day from Mr. Waddington, who has large interests here, urging this matter upon me, and saying that he was very much in favour of local registrars being appointed in this colony. At the same time I should advise the House not to be in too much of a haste. I don't want to do anything that will be adversely commented on, or that will be against the interests of those who have embarked much money in enterprises here. I do not feel inclined to vote against the Bill, but I should be influenced by those who know more about the matter than I do.

MR. HUBBLE (the Gascoyne): I know many instances where shareholders in English companies have been put to serious inconvenience for want of a local registrar. The need for such an official cannot be too soon recognised. It is unfortunate that a Bill of such importance as this should come before us at so late a stage of the session; but still when I see laws, which in my opinion required much more consideration than this, rushed through the House at a most undignified rate, I do not see why this Bill should not also have a similar fate.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): I received a telegram last night from the Hon. H. G. Parsons, informing me that Mr. Waddington, the managing director of the Great Boulder, was in favour of the Bill.

THE PREMIER: I have a telegram from Mr. Waddington, in which he says that he strongly supports the Bill.

MR. GREGORY: I would like to read a passage from the report presented to the Legislative Council by the select committee appointed to consider the Bill. They adopted certain alterations and amendments, and reported as follows:—

Your committee is of opinion that the principle of the Bill is a sound one, and will cause no extra inconvenience to foreign companies registered in this colony and carrying on business here; and your committee has been anxious to cause as little inconvenience as possible, and for that purpose has introduced several amendments. The proposed Bill is drawn on the lines of the English Act, which allows the transfer of shares from the English register to colonial registers; and your committee has been careful to keep the Act as nearly as possible upon the lines of the principal Companies Act, 1893, so that persons dealing with shares in this colony will follow the same procedure as to registration, etc., as they would when dealing with shares of a colonial company.

That report was laid on the table of the Legislative Council on the 8th inst., so that there was no necessity for the delay that has taken place. The member for Coolgardie says there are certain provisions he does not like, but he has not told us what they are. Clause 2 provides that 5 per cent. of the shares in a company must be held here before a local registrar need be appointed.

THE PREMIER: Is 5 per cent. enough?

*MR. GREGORY: I think so. It is a fairly large proportion.

THE PREMIER: What is the objection of the English companies?

MR. MORGANS: The principal objection to it is that it will involve the companies in a very large amount of extra expense in keeping registered offices in this colony. Several of the companies have registered offices here.

THE PREMIER: Is that the only point?

MR. MORGANS: I think so.

MR. GREGORY: I thought the member for Coolgardie had some stronger objection to the Bill. I do not see why the local shareholders should not be placed on the same footing as the English shareholders. In many cases the local shareholders are the original vendors of the lease. They own a proportion of shares in the company, and should be placed on the same footing as the English shareholders. I strongly support the Bill, and I hope the House will try and put it through this session.

MR. RASON (South Murchison): I feel bound to support the Bill. Its main object is to provide for the local registry of foreign companies in West Australia. If this had only been provided for in the early stages of mining, there would probably have been no objection on the part of the English companies to it now. When the Coolgardie Chamber of Commerce, of which I was president, was initiated, I suggested that this step should be taken, and I regret that they did not fall in with my view. Had this step been taken then, no hardship would have been inflicted on the English companies. A little hardship will be inflicted now, as it will compel English companies already in existence, and which may have been in existence for a considerable time, to do that which there was no likelihood of their being called upon to do when they commenced investing in this colony. That is the only objection to the Bill that I can see, compelling foreign companies to incur expense which they had no reason to anticipate when they embarked their capital in this colony. Looking at it from the standpoint of investors in this colony, the Bill will doubtless be an advantage to them, inasmuch as it will enable them to transact their business with a registered office of the company to be located here. Some of the clauses might well be amended, but I shall cordially support the second reading.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): Although the proposed measure may cause some inconvenience to people in England, we have to consider ourselves. I know there are many scrip-holders here who find it utterly impossible to transfer their scrip, except by sending it through their bank to England and awaiting its return.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): This Bill comes to us with a very good recommendation. It is the outcome of the very serious consideration of four members of the Upper House, who are perhaps more largely interested in mining than the members of this Chamber. One of them is probably the largest representative of English capital in this colony. Another is one of the largest share-dealers in the colony, both on behalf of clients and for himself; and, as regards the other two, one is a very experienced goldfields lawyer, who represents a large amount of

English capital; and, on the recommendation of these four gentlemen, backed by my own opinions on this matter, I am prepared to accept this Bill.

MR. CONOLLY (Dundas): I should like to say a few words, with all due deference to the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) who, I feel confident, has what, in his opinion, are good reasons for taking exception to a few doubtful points in this Bill. But, when he considers the great benefit it is likely to confer on people in this colony, and the very small amount of inconvenience it will entail on English companies, I am sure he will be ready to waive whatever doubts he may entertain, and allow the Bill to go through this session. With reference to the extra expense to English companies which has been alluded to, it is very doubtful whether any such expense would be involved; because the work which would be required by these local registrars could be carried on in behalf of English companies, by the local directors and others holding powers of attorney. According to the articles of association of many companies, it is necessary, I believe, that the share certificates should be signed by two directors and the secretary. Well, I think there is no legal difficulty in the way of this. It depends entirely on the articles of association of the individual company, which can easily be altered to permit of the attorney or local director in this colony carrying on the business with the assistance of his secretary. It will therefore be seen that English capitalists will be put to little or no inconvenience by the passage of this Bill. I sincerely hope that the second reading will be carried, and that the Bill will pass this session.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): With reference to the object of this Bill, there is one consideration which, perhaps, has not occurred to hon. members who have supported the second reading, though I think the difficulty can be overcome. It is this, that many of these companies, by their articles of association, are absolutely prevented from complying with its provisions. But the answer is that such companies can, by a special resolution, meet the requirements of the Bill. And, taking into consideration the fact that companies are protected to

the extent that it is only where five per cent. of the shareholders are resident in this colony that they come under the operation of the Bill, I think it would be in the interests of the country that the Bill should go through.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Passed through committee without debate or amendment.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

COMPANIES (UNITED KINGDOM AND BRITISH COLONIES REGISTERS) BILL.

SPEAKER'S RULING.

Order of the Day, for the second reading, read.

THE SPEAKER: There cannot be two Bills on the same subject before Parliament at the same time.

MR. A. FORREST (in charge of the Bill): They are different subjects.

THE SPEAKER: No; they are not. I have looked through the two Bills, and I see they are both dealing with the same subject.

Bill thus ruled out of order.

DISCHARGE OF ORDERS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the next three Orders of the Day were discharged, namely: Fire Brigades Bill (for second reading); Metropolitan Waterworks Act Amendment Bill (for second reading); Mines Regulation Bill (for second reading).

OTHER ORDERS.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We have now come to this position, that we cannot deal with any other Bills on the Notice Paper, unless hon. members like to pass the Excess Bill. I have spoken to the leader of the Opposition, and he has no objection. Of course, we have not time to debate it, and the Government are quite willing to let it stand over; but, as I do not see the use of dealing with it six months later, I will ask the House to pass it now. Therefore, with that view, I move that all Orders of the Day be discharged, except No. 7 (Excess Bill).

Put and passed, and the remaining orders discharged, namely: Bills of Sale Bill (for committee), Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill (for second reading),

Leasing of Government Mine on Collie Coalfield (to consider petition for), Underground Surveyors Bill (for second reading), Public Education Bill (for committee), Roads Act Amendment Bill (for second reading).

EXCESS BILL, 1896-7.

SECOND READING.

Order of the Day, for resuming the debate on the second reading, read.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Schedule A :

MR. KENNY: I am pleased to see there is no excess in regard to the North Murchison, under the head of "Mining." This brings me to the point of the amount voted the other day for public batteries. I have been informed that the Government are negotiating for the purchase of second-hand batteries, to place on the Murchison goldfields. In regard to one battery that is being negotiated for, I am in a position to state that it is certainly not worth taking down and removing.

THE PREMIER: Which one is that?

MR. KENNY: At Nannine. I was under the impression that when the £30,000 was voted for public batteries, the Government would at least expend the money on new machinery.

THE PREMIER: Nothing has been done yet, I believe.

MR. KENNY: I know the general feeling throughout the fields is that whatever money is expended for this purpose should be on good machinery, so as to give working miners the benefit of it. Referring again to the Nannine batteries, I know one that has been offered is not worth removing.

THE PREMIER: I heard of one battery being under offer.

MR. KENNY: The goldfields would benefit more by six new batteries than by a dozen such as that referred to.

THE PREMIER: I can assure the hon. member that any batteries purchased by the Government must be new, or as good as new.

MR. MORAN: The Government may sometimes get double the value, by purchasing batteries that were erected where good stone has not been obtainable. I

hope the Government will not hamper the vote for batteries by any conditions such as have been now suggested, although I believe the battery referred to by the hon. member (Mr. Kenny) is not worth purchasing. Some batteries that are good, but erected in unsuitable places, can be purchased for 50 per cent. of the value, and the Government can obtain the opinion of mine managers in every district where a battery is offered. If a battery be known to be not a successful one, the Government would only be wasting money in purchasing it.

THE PREMIER: We will not buy batteries of that kind, you may be sure.

Put and passed.

Schedule B, preamble, and title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and report adopted.

THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MOTION—AGENT GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

SUGGESTED REORGANISATION.

MR. LEAKE (Albany), for Mr. Simpson, in accordance with notice, moved—

That in the opinion of this House the time has arrived when the advantage of the colony will be secured by the reorganisation of the Agent General's department.

The object of the member for Geraldton, in giving notice of this motion, was to suggest to the Government the advisability of doing something to increase the efficiency of the London office, and more particularly to secure that the officers in charge of that office—not only the Agent General, but the staff—should be in touch with the affairs of the colony. There is no one in the office of the Agent General who has been in Western Australia for seven years, and the members of the staff are therefore fairly well behind the times. If the staff are unable to return to the colony to make themselves acquainted with the position of affairs here, at any rate they may be reinforced by someone from here who is well up in current events. The Agent General who is to be appointed shortly to replace the present official might take with him his own clerk, or at any rate something should be done in that direction. It

appears to be advisable that the London office should be removed from its present position into the city. Several people spoke to me on the subject last year. I know we have able men in that office, but now when we are seeking to settle the lands of the colony, we want someone to represent us there who is posted up in the question, and who understands not only all about the lands and the conditions of settlement, but all about the mining regulations and the various developments that have taken place in the colony recently, and who can give information to inquirers not from books, but from actual knowledge and experience. The motion is only brought forward by way of suggestion in a friendly spirit, and in no way to hamper the Government. It would be a good thing if the chief clerk in the Agent General's office were brought out here to get a little more experience, and refresh his mind as it were with reference to things that have occurred since he went away.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We should not pass such a motion without more information. The London office can be extended and made more useful, if we like to spend more money on it. The expense of the agency is very small at present, and before undertaking to remove the office to the city, the question will have to be carefully considered. I hope to confer with the Premiers of the other colonies on this subject, in a short time, to see if we can get a suitable place in the city. I do not believe in having the agency of one colony in one part of London, and that of another in some other part. We want a good, suitable office for the accommodation of all. In future it is probable that the Agent General will not hold office for more than three years. If this rule were applied to all the members of the staff, there would be some difficulty in finding suitable places for them at the end of the three years. No doubt it would be a good thing to have people with local knowledge on the staff; but it is also necessary that the members of the agency should have a knowledge of London, in order to carry on the business properly. It should not be forgotten that this is, to a large extent, a commercial agency, with a figure head to conduct the diplomatic relations, so

far as we have any, with the different Governments. But we want persons there who have some knowledge of commercial affairs. The member for Albany should be satisfied with having brought the matter under the notice of the Government. I think something will be done between this and the time we meet again, both with regard to the location of the office and the increase of the staff. I should be sorry to have this motion passed, for another reason. The Agent General will be leaving in April. He asked to be relieved some time ago. He has been an efficient and a thoroughly reliable officer, and one who has done his best in the interests of the colony. He has conducted the financial arrangements, which have been very onerous indeed during the last few years. In general, I think he has done very well. I should be sorry if the resolution were passed, as he might think we were reflecting on him just as he was leaving. I do not want to do that, nor, I think, does the hon. member opposite. [MR. LEAKE: No.] If the hon. member will be content with having brought the matter under notice—he may bring it up again next session—I should be very much obliged to him.

MR. LEAKE (in reply): I am glad the Premier has pointed out the possible construction which might be put on the motion. That was far from my mind, as I am sure it was from that of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson), by whom the motion was framed. I shall therefore be quite content if the motion can be withdrawn, in view of the assurance from the Premier that the matter will be considered. I trust that before the Hon. E. H. Wittenoom goes to England in March, he will confer with the right hon. gentleman and see what arrangements can be made in the direction indicated. I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MOTION—BONUS TO DISCOVERERS OF COLLIE COAL.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington), in accordance with notice, moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should, during recess, take into consideration the desirability of awarding a bonus to the first discoverer or discoverers of coal on the Collie.

MR. LEAKE (Albany) said he did not wish to raise an unnecessary debate, or throw any difficulty in the way, but he could not say that he approved of the motion, for the reason that it had not been properly proved whether the Collie coalfield was a payable one or not.

THE PREMIER: It would be before six months were over.

MR. LEAKE: If it were proved that the field was a payable one, and that the construction of the railway was justifiable, then the Government might consider what reward should be given to the first discoverers.

Question put and passed.

POLICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S MESSAGE.

The Assembly having amended the Bill, by striking out a clause permitting the wheel totalisator to be used on racecourses, and the Legislative Council having disagreed to the amendment, the reasons for so disagreeing were now considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. LEAKE (in charge of the Bill) moved that the Assembly do not insist on its amendment.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the use of the wheel totalisator on racecourses enlivened the scene, and afforded an amusement which was not likely to be so injurious as the betting ring. If these games were carried on dishonestly, the managers of racecourses would be to blame.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: In no British community was the spinning-wheel permitted as a game. It was forbidden in every colony of Australia, also in South Africa, as being the lowest and most objectionable form of swindling—pure, concentrated swindling.

MR. GEORGE: The hon. member never went on a racecourse, and what did he know about this?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There were many things he knew about, without having been in connection with them. This was looked on as the most contemptible and disgraceful form of betting.

MR. LOCKE moved that the question be now put.

Motion put and negatived. Division called for, and bell rung, but the call for division afterwards withdrawn.

MR. WILSON objected to the Bill altogether, and said it could not be carried in a full House. He moved that the Chairman do now leave the chair.

Motion put, and division called for by Mr. Monger. The House divided, with the following result:—

Ayes	14
Noes	7

Majority for 7

AYES.
Sir John Forrest
Mr. George
Mr. Higham
Mr. Kenny
Mr. Oats
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Quinlan
Mr. Hason
Mr. Solomon
Sir J. G. Lee Steere
Mr. Throssell
Mr. Venn
Mr. Wilson
Mr. Illingworth (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. Hubble
Mr. Locke
Mr. Monger
Mr. Moran
Mr. Oldham
Mr. Pennefather
Mr. Morgans (Teller).

Motion thus passed, and the CHAIRMAN left the Chair. Progress not reported.

At 1.44 p.m. the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 2.45 p.m. the SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

COMPLIMENTARY REMARKS.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Parliament having now concluded the labours of the session, this House will be summoned in a few minutes to hear His Excellency's Speech proroguing Parliament. I should not like hon. members to separate without expressing, on behalf of myself and colleagues, and also I am sure for every member of this House, our thanks to you, Mr. Speaker, for the way in which you have presided over the business of the House during this session. Many of us have had experience of it under your presidency during many years, and our experience in the present session is only in accord with what we have known of your presidency for many years. I desire, sir, to convey to you our thanks, and our appreciation of the assistance and kindness you have extended to all of us during this session, which in many respects has been a very trying one. I desire also to say that the

advent of new members into this House, giving to all parts of the country a larger representation, and especially to those portions in which our goldfields are situated, has been a matter for congratulation to all of us; and I am sure we have been very glad to have this addition to our numbers, and to have the advantage of their experience and knowledge in dealing with the many matters affecting their interests. I only hope that those gentlemen who have been members for the first time during the present session will have felt that we—some of us growing grey in the service—have extended to them the hand of good-fellowship, and that we have desired to make them believe that we are glad to see them here, and glad to assist them in any way that is possible. I should like also to thank hon. members generally, on this side of the House, and those on the opposite side, for the consideration they have shown to the Government during the present session. There is no doubt it has been an exceptional session. A great deal of business has been pressed into a short space of time, and we have been under the obligation of asking consideration from all members of the House, in our attempt to get the business of the session concluded. I can hardly think that the peculiar circumstances which have arisen this year will for many a long year arise again; but, when we meet again, we shall be in a far better position to deal with the important business we have not been able to get through, than we would have been in if we had continued to sit some time longer. Before I sit down I should also like to thank the officers of the House for the assistance they have rendered to members during the session. The officers have always been most anxious and ready to assist hon. members in any way that is possible. I again desire to offer my congratulations to this House that we are presided over by a gentleman like yourself, Mr. Speaker, having so much knowledge and experience, and so much tact in controlling our proceedings. I think a great deal of the success that has attended our parliamentary efforts in this colony has been due to that cause.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I need hardly say I heartily concur in every word the

Premier has said, and particularly with regard to the observations about yourself, Mr. Speaker, for whom I am sure there is none other feeling than that of the greatest respect and honour entertained by every member of this House. This session has been exceptional, and we know that you, sir, have presided on these occasions in the most trying circumstances. But, as the Premier has said, owing to great parliamentary knowledge, and your tact and ability in managing members, if I may say so, the work of the session has run on smoothly. There can be no better evidence of the respect in which you are held by members than the fact that during this session everything has gone off so well, and that you have been occasioned so little trouble in maintaining parliamentary order and decorum. I know that with most of the new members of the House you have secured the same measure of respect which the older members of Parliament entertain for the Chair; and whilst I look forward to an interesting session in 1898, we all hope we shall have pleasanter weather in which to do our work, and that the work may be got through more speedily. I take this opportunity of saying that, so far as this side of the House is concerned, we have endeavoured to work together, and not to do more than we thought was necessary in opposing the Government measures; and if there has been any heat in debate, all I can say, so far as I am personally concerned, is that we forget all about it directly we get outside the walls of this Chamber. I am ready, as I am sure members are on both sides of the House, to meet again and discuss matters of public importance and interest; and, if necessary, we shall not be afraid to say what we think of them. I congratulate the House on having you still as Speaker, and I hope we shall have you in your place when we meet in June.

THE SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Jas. G. Lee Steere): Honourable members, I have to express my great thanks to the leader of the House, and also to the leader of the Opposition, for the kind words made use of in reference to the manner in which I have presided over the deliberations of this House. There is no doubt the circumstances under which we have been conducting the

business, this session, have been very exceptional. In the first place, the condition of the weather has been altogether against us, and it cannot be expected that, with the extreme heat prevailing at this season, hon. members could give that attention to the business of the House which they otherwise might do. And, owing to the shortness of the session, we have been obliged to work at high pressure, such as I hope will never occur again in this House, as I do not consider it is conducive to good legislation. I have also to express my appreciation of the manner in which the new members have conformed to the rules of the House. Their conduct has been most admirable, and I have never had occasion to call attention to any transgression of the rules. The new members have set an admirable example, and one that is to be highly commended. So long as my life and

health are spared, and I have the honour to be a member of the Legislature, I shall be only too glad to place my services at the disposal of this House in the position I now occupy; and I hope to retain your good opinion during the time I do occupy the position.

PROROGATION.

At eight minutes past three o'clock a Message was received from the Governor; and, accordingly, Mr. Speaker and hon. members proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber, where His Excellency was pleased to give assent in the name of Her Majesty to 26 Bills of the session, and also to deliver an address proroguing Parliament [*Vide* Council proceedings, page 1321, *ante*].

The session then closed.