

colony—I regret seriously to have heard such an utterance from an hon. member whom I respect so much.

MR. RICHARDSON: What did I say?

MR. QUINLAN: You said that if there was anything in the argument of the Premier, it was that only the immigrants coming here should be allowed to have these free gifts of land. This Bill offers to every male who has attained the age of 18 years a free grant of 160 acres of land and monetary aid towards its improvement. The Bill does not say where these persons are to come from. It has been argued that we are about to produce more than we can consume; but the fact remains that if we can produce more than we can consume, we are not doing so now, and I venture to say it will not happen in the next ten years or more, inasmuch as, owing to the mineral resources of our colony and the large influx of population attracted by them, there must be a large and increasing demand for all the food that the land can produce. I trust that hon. members will take it from me that the conclusions I have expressed are the result of serious consideration.

MR. MONGER proposed that the debate be adjourned until the next day.

MR. SOLOMON objected to repeated adjournments, and said the members for Fremantle were desirous of sitting until the conclusion of the debate, they having arranged for a passenger carriage to be attached to the goods train leaving Perth for Fremantle at 1 o'clock a.m.

MR. DEHAMEL said it appeared that the Government had arranged a special train in order to keep the House sitting till a certain hour.

HON. MEMBERS: No, no; a goods train.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Does not the hon. member know that I have my carriage here to drive the hon. members to Fremantle?

MR. DEHAMEL said he did not see why the House should be kept sitting till the hon. members for Fremantle were ready to leave. He supported the motion for adjournment, or he was prepared to remain and take the division at 6 o'clock in the morning.

MR. R. F. SHOLL supported the motion for adjournment, saying the hon. member (Mr. Quinlan) had made a

lengthy speech, and his arguments ought to be answered.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) rose to support the adjournment.

The motion for adjournment of the debate was agreed to, and the debate was adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.40 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 24th November, 1892.

Relief to Widow of late Engine-driver Wright—Police Act, 1892, Amendment Bill: first reading—Return showing Amount paid to Newspapers for Government Advertisements—Industrial and Reformatory Schools Bill: first reading—Homesteads Bill: adjourned debate on motion for second reading—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: adjourned debate on motion for second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7.30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

RELIEF TO WIDOW AND CHILDREN OF LATE ENGINE-DRIVER WRIGHT.

MR. SOLOMON, in accordance with notice, asked the Colonial Treasurer, whether it was the intention of the Government to place a sum on the Estimates to relieve the distress of the widow and children of the late Engine-driver Wright, who was killed by the train on the Fremantle Bridge during the present year.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied that the Government had already paid the funeral expenses (amounting to £22) of Driver Wright, and had also made a compassionate allowance of £50 to his widow.

POLICE ACT, 1892, AMENDMENT BILL.

MR. MONGER, in accordance with notice, moved for leave to introduce a Bill intituled "An Act to amend 'The Police Act, 1892.'"

Question—put and passed.

Bill introduced, read a first time, and ordered to be printed.

RETURN SHOWING AMOUNTS PAID FOR GOVERNMENT ADVERTISEMENTS.

MR. R. F. SHOLL, in accordance with notice, moved, "That a return be laid upon the table of the House showing the amount of money paid to the proprietors of the different newspapers published in the colony for the insertion of advertisements on account of the Public Service, and specifying in each case the name of the paper, as well as the amount paid or still remaining due or unpaid from the 1st of January, 1891, to the present date."

Question—put and passed.

INDUSTRIAL AND REFORMATORY SCHOOLS BILL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), on behalf of the Attorney General, and in accordance with notice, moved for leave to introduce a Bill intituled "An Act to provide for the establishment of Industrial and Reformatory Schools."

Question—put and passed.

Bill introduced, read a first time, and ordered to be printed.

HOMESTEADS BILL.

SECOND READING: ADJOURNED DEBATE.

MR. MONGER: Sir, in rising to support the amendment (p. 137 *ante*) proposed by the hon. member for the DeGrey, I have no desire to beat about the bush in giving my views upon the Bill now before this House. It was my intention at first to have moved that the Bill be deposited by the messenger or some other officer of this House in the waste-paper basket; but I was told that such a course was contrary to the forms of the House, and that it might possibly be hurtful to the feelings of the respected head of the Government, who, I understand, takes upon himself the sole responsibility for the authorship of this Bill. I do not think the hon. the Attorney General, or even the hon. the Commissioner of Railways (who has always taken such a lively

interest in everything appertaining to the settlement of the soil), would wish to deprive the hon. the Premier of the credit of having framed this measure. I think the one would say it was unworthy of a practical lawyer, and the other would say that it was equally unworthy of a practical farmer. And, as I understand the Premier does not profess to be either, he is perhaps to be pardoned for the shortcomings of the Bill as judged from either a legal or agricultural standpoint. It is not my intention to discuss this measure at any great length, or in detail; I shall simply refer to and deal with a few of the principal clauses of the Bill. I am pleased that to a certain extent I am in accord with the Government as regards clauses 3 and 4 of the Bill, amending the existing Land Regulations; my only regret is that the Government did not think fit to include these two clauses in the Land Regulations Amendment Bill which has already passed through this House this session. If these two clauses had been included in that Bill, as I submit they ought to have been, I feel certain they would have met with the unanimous support of members. The only construction that can be placed on clause 6 of the Bill is, that any young man, or any colonist, who happens to hold a small block of land in a town or suburb, or who happens to own a few acres of land in the country, is disabled from taking advantage of the provisions of this Bill; he is debarred from doing that which the man of straw can do, and that is to take up a homestead selection. Why, I ask, sir, should our young men, or why should colonists who have lived and striven here, and who have succeeded by their industry in acquiring a little land, be debarred by this Bill from doing that which any new comer is allowed to do? To me this appears to be reversing that old Biblical saying, so eloquently referred to the other evening by the hon. member for the Vasse, "To him who hath shall be given, and from him who hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath"—a text, by the way, which has always struck me as being somewhat Irish. I do not altogether quarrel with clauses 8 and 9 of the Bill; if the Bill is to become law, these are necessary clauses. They refer to the provisions made for the erection of

a house and the improvements required to be done. But I think it should be left optional with the selector whether he thought it necessary to erect a house such as is contemplated by this Bill. When I come to clauses 10 and 11, I foresee the greatest difficulties and dangers; these are the clauses dealing with the money advances which the Government propose to make to the selectors. These advances are to be based upon the value of the improvements made by the selector. This will entail, first of all, an assessment of the value of the house, and, after that, an assessment of the value of the improvements. Now, a £100 house, even though it were built on a rock, and not upon sand, will not last for ever; a paltry structure of that kind must soon deteriorate in value, and will soon not be worth the amount originally advanced upon it by the Government. Then the improvements contemplated are fencing, clearing, and cropping. These, as we all know, are not permanent securities. There are such things as bush fires; and, again, land once cleared may afterwards become overgrown, and a man's crops may become devastated by all sorts of scourges. Where, then, is the alleged security? These are risks which a private individual, or a firm, or a company, dealing with their own money, may be justified in incurring; but I do not think that the Government, who are not dealing with their own money but with the people's money, are justified in accepting such risks. We are told by clause 12 that all moneys required for carrying out the purposes of this Act shall be advanced by the Colonial Treasurer out of funds provided by Parliament for the purpose. It matters not to me where the funds come from; what I say is that this money, if expended in providing proper roads for our settlers, would be more in the interests of agricultural development, and more in the interests generally of the people of this colony. In fact, if our Roads Boards were better equipped with funds, rural settlement, and agriculture generally, would advance, and benefit to a far greater extent than they are doing now. Clause 13—which, I think is the only clause that the Premier did not think fit to allude to when explaining the Bill—appears to me to be liable to a number of

abuses. It provides that in cases of illness, or other special causes, a selector may absent himself from his homestead block without prejudice to his rights. According to this clause, a man could absent himself as often as he liked; in fact, there would hardly be any necessity for him to reside on his block at all; and it appears to me that the Government, by providing a clause like this, have endeavoured, as far as possible, to neutralise or do away with the compulsory residence clause. Much as I dislike the Bill, I do think that if it becomes law, it should not be made an instrument of vexation and oppression to those who bring themselves within its operation. When I was addressing a public meeting, some little time ago, I then stated that under such an Act as was proposed by the Premier the Government would find themselves in the very nasty and awkward position of having to evict its own tenants. I have heard it argued that the homestead selector under this Bill would stand in no worse position in this respect than those who now hold special occupation or conditional purchase blocks. But I would point out that the homestead selector will have his house over his head and be in actual possession of his small block of land; and, should he become a defaulter, it will not be a very nice thing for the Government to be compelled to evict that man, and turn him out of house and home.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): What's the difference between this provision as to forfeiture and the present law on the subject?

MR. MONGER: A great difference. The special occupation holder probably has other lands adjoining, and—

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): But, if he does not pay his rent, he is turned out.

MR. MONGER: Certainly, but in all cases he does not reside on the land, whereas in the case of these homestead selectors they must have a substantial house of their own on their block and they must reside there, unless the Government turn them out. To me this particular provision of the Bill (clause 17) appears a most severe one on the unfortunate man who may have been induced to avail himself of this Act. I do not think it has been my

good or ill fortune, in the numerous mortgages with which I have been connected, to have come across a condition so severe and peremptory as this clause imposes, and where the period of grace has been so short. If a man is only a month in arrear with his interest he is liable to be turned out. It is all very well to say that discretion is given to the Minister in dealing with these cases of forfeiture; but possibly the Minister may possess no discretion—I believe such a thing has been known. I do not think I need refer at this stage to any further clauses of the Bill, as they, for the most part, simply deal with the machinery to be provided for carrying out the Act. Coming to another point, I must say I was certainly surprised the other evening, when the Premier was moving the second reading of this Bill, to hear him state that agriculture, in the Eastern districts and other portions of the colony, had not increased during the last five years.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I said the area under crop. I would like the hon. member to keep to what I did say.

MR. MONGER: This, to my mind, was a most damaging statement for an hon. gentleman in his position to make. It virtually amounts to an admission that his great scheme for providing the country with railway facilities and for the opening up of agricultural areas has proved a failure. I do not intend to say much about these Agricultural Areas, for I do not know much about them, with the exception of that well-known Meekering area, of which some few months ago we heard a great deal, and saw considerable comment in the columns of the Press. But I do not think that much agricultural progress has been made in that direction; and, even with the Yilgarn Railway, I am afraid that this wonderfully fertile area will not progress to any great extent. But I can safely say, with reference to the district that I belong to, that during the last five years—and that, it may be said, is virtually about the time that York has been connected with Perth and Fremantle by railway—the amount of land under cultivation has increased twofold; and I think I am equally safe in saying that during the next five years it will increase in the same proportion. Then

we have also to take into consideration the large amount of cultivation that has followed upon the opening of the Great Southern Railway. Look at the numerous agricultural townships that have sprung up along that railway during the last five years, such as Katanning, Broomehill, Wagin, and other places. When we take into consideration the extent of land brought into cultivation in these parts of the colony—in those localities, and in the neighborhood of the Eastern Districts—I think I am safe in saying that within the last five years the area in cultivation has quite doubled itself. At any rate, if agriculture has not increased to the extent that it ought to have done, and to the extent we should all have wished it to have done, in my opinion that is not due to any illiberality in our present land laws, but to the deficiencies of a bad and oppressive tariff. This is the question to which the Government should have addressed themselves if they wished to encourage the settlement of the soil; and I am sorry to say it is the one point they seem to entirely ignore. In conclusion, sir, let me say, I am most strongly opposed to this Bill, which, if carried, will operate most unfairly towards existing settlers and landowners and those who have vested rights, by this indiscriminate gift of free grants of land in the settled districts of the colony. I also believe it will prove a most costly, inconvenient, and difficult measure to work—in fact, impossible to work—and that it will be liable to grave abuses on the part of these proposed new settlers. I heartily wish to see agricultural settlement encouraged by every legitimate means—by railways, by proper roads, and liberal land laws, and by a fair and reasonable tariff; but I do object to see a few new comers encouraged at the expense of the whole colony, many of whom will ultimately, under such an Act as this, have all sorts of grievances, and finally become a nuisance to the country.

MR. LEFROY: Mr. Speaker—I wish to make a few remarks with reference to the Bill before the House. The remarks I have to make, I may as well say at once, will be opposed to the Bill. I do not take up this position factiously by any means at all, but I do say that I am under a firm conviction that if this Bill is made law it will be detrimental to the

interests of the colony. I do not intend to deal with the clauses of the Bill in detail, as my hon. friend the member for York has done; I propose to deal only with the main principles of the Bill, namely, the giving away of free grants of land, and the lending of money, by the State. Should this Bill pass its second reading hon. members will then have an opportunity of discussing each clause as it comes before them. If it does not pass its second reading, of course there will be no necessity to discuss the details of the Bill at all. I must admit—I hope I may be pardoned as a new member of this Assembly for expressing my opinions so far—but I must admit that every credit is due to the hon. the Premier for an honest intention on his part to do what he can to advance the interests of the colony. I believe that is his intention, and the intention of the hon. gentlemen who sit beside him. Still, at the same time, I am sure he will admit that he cannot always be right; therefore, I hope he will pardon those who may be honestly opposed to him as regards this measure. This scheme is not a new one to us; it has been before the country for some months, and I think the Premier deserves the thanks of this House for having given us plenty of time to consider his scheme. It has been before us since the hon. gentleman addressed that large gathering at Geraldton, and it has been discussed all over the country, and through the Press. I have watched carefully all these utterances, and all those letters that have appeared in the columns of the newspapers; and, after giving the matter my careful consideration, I can see no reason for supporting the measure before the House. The Premier, when moving its second reading, stated that agriculture is not progressing in this colony. I am prepared to deny that statement, and not only am I prepared to deny it, but I am also prepared to prove that it is not a correct statement. The Premier has told us that during the last five years agriculture has made no progress in this colony. I have in my hand a little book which bears on its face the Government stamp, the Royal arms, and the name of the Registrar General of the colony. I am prepared to admit that there has been a

slight falling off in the area under crop; but here is a statement made in the Government's own publication, the "Western Australian Year Book" for last year—a statement which I am prepared to say is perfectly correct. The Registrar General says: "The estimated acreage of land under cultivation in 1891 was 131,900, "as against 122,032 acres in 1890. "The increase as shown, therefore, was "9,868 acres." I do not wish to argue that all this land was under crop in one year; I admit it was not. I am happy to say that agriculturists in this colony are now waking up to the fact that agriculture, to be successful, must be proceeded with properly, and on scientific or intelligent principles; and, consequently, during the last two or three years, a great deal of the land throughout the colony has been rested and fallowed. I submit that is one consequence of the falling off in the acreage under crop as compared with some previous years. There is also the fact of the severe drought which was felt all through the colony during the last year, with the result that land in many places was not cropped at all, people being disheartened by the dry season. For these reasons, there was certainly a falling off in the quantity of land under crop; but I think I can safely say that the amount of stuff that will come off the land at the end of this year will be considerably in excess of that which has come off the land during previous years. With regard to the importation of flour, it is a remarkable fact that in 1891 there was less flour imported into the colony by nearly one-half than there has been since 1889.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): What about horse feed?

MR. LEFROY: I am not prepared at the present moment to go into the question of horse feed; but it is a remarkable fact, and tells somewhat against the contention of the Premier, that notwithstanding a large increase of population, a large increase of consumers, the importation of flour decreased by one-half. With regard to the present Bill, it will be seen that no one in the colony possessing a bit of ground of his own is to participate in the advantages which the Bill offers to new comers. I am not opposed to see people coming here—I am glad to see them coming here—but I represent a

farming district, and there are a number of farmers there who, I think, are just as worthy of consideration as these new comers. I wish to see every man advancing; I wish to see every farmer in the colony prospering, for in my opinion the prosperity of the colony is bound up with the prosperity of those who live in it; and those amongst us who are striving to advance their own interests are indirectly advancing the interests of the whole colony. Why should those men who have worked hard, and who by their industry and energy have acquired a little land of their own, why should these people be excluded from the benefits of this Bill? The Premier has told us that we have 5,000,000 acres of land alienated, and that at the end of last year there was only about one per cent. of that under crop. Surely, with all this land alienated, and a great deal of it fit to put the plough in, there is no necessity to offer free grants of land to all comers, in order to encourage settlement. The hon. gentleman also told us that if this Bill did not pass, the electric wire would flash the news to the outside world, and we would be condemned by public opinion in England. I say it will do more harm to the colony to publish to the outside world that we have already 5,000,000 acres of land alienated, a large portion of which is fit for cultivation, and that we have only one per cent. of it cultivated after sixty years of settlement, and that the Government should announce to the world that we are prepared to give away our land to anybody who chooses to come here to cultivate it—if we do this it seems to me that the outside world must come to the conclusion that our land is very poor indeed, and we shall do the colony more harm than good. I am not prepared to admit, myself, that our land is so poor; I believe there is a great deal to be done in this colony in the way of agricultural production, and I believe it will be done yet. Our people are beginning to wake up to that fact, and I see no reason for giving our land away as proposed by this Bill. We know that the system of making free grants of land to immigrants was a complete failure; and in the Report from the Survey Department for last year we have confirmation of that fact. Referring to this very subject

of free grants the Report says: "It is a fact worthy of note, as showing the very doubtful benefit of these free grants that, on an average, for every one holder who fulfills the conditions and obtains a Crown grant, three forfeit their holdings for non-compliance with the regulations." Could there be a stronger condemnation than that of this principle of giving away free grants of land to new comers?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): There was no residence clause under those regulations.

MR. LEFROY: I quite admit that. Still it shows that the free-grant system in the past has been a complete failure. According to this Bill, the man who comes here to settle on these homestead blocks must have a certain amount of capital—that is a *sine qua non*; and, if a man comes here with the £200 or £300 which it is necessary he should have before he settles on this land, I say that man is quite able to pay £4 a year for his 160 acres. It has been said that these free gifts of land are a sort of bait to try to induce people to come here to settle on our land. I submit that Western Australia should not descend to such a thing as to offer baits to the outside public to come here to settle our lands for us. I think we ought to be more patriotic than that. We who oppose this Bill have been twitted by the Premier as being unpatriotic; but I think there is quite as much patriotism on one side of the House as the other. I believe we are all working to the same end, and I cannot see how anyone who opposes this Bill can be regarded as unpatriotic. The hon. the Premier—I do not think he intended it exactly—told us in his very able opening speech on this Bill that those who argued in a certain way must be insane, idiotic, ridiculous. I hope the hon. gentleman does not intend to stamp those of us who are opposed to this Bill with such a stigma as that, and that it may not be necessary for my hon. friend the member for Gascoyne to come forward and ask for a supply of sixteen straight-waistcoats, should there be sixteen hon. members opposed to this measure. I know there is a general idea that those who have land in the colony—what are called landholders—are opposed to the Bill from selfish motives. I, at any rate, cannot be

called a landholder; two years ago I had not even the necessary property qualification to entitle me to a seat in this House. Therefore, I cannot be stamped as one of these "selfish" landholders. I have had a number of farmers settled outside me for years, and it has always been my desire to see them prosper in every way; and I'll be bound, if you go into the country districts of this colony, you will find no spirit of antagonism between those who carry on pastoral pursuits and those who are engaged in agriculture. I know there is a general feeling in some quarters that, because a man has a few sheep and a few head of cattle, he must be necessarily opposed to the man who tills the soil. I say it is not so; I say the feeling is not general throughout this colony at any rate. I should be very glad indeed to see something done to benefit these small holders in the country. If you want to give land away, let it be given to those already on the land, and not to newcomers. But my firm conviction is that there is no necessity for this Bill at all, at the present time. As I have already said, the people of the colony are waking up to the necessity of extending the area of land for purposes of cultivation. I notice that during last year applications for 85,800 acres under the conditional purchase regulations were approved; and of this quantity 44,401 acres, comprising 209 licenses of an average area of 212 acres, were taken up in the South-West division of the colony, under clause 48 of the Land Regulations, which provides for the payment of 6d. an acre over a period of twenty years. Those who have taken up this land must be going to cultivate it. They have not taken it up at 6d. an acre to run stock on it. There is very little land in this colony—I say it without fear of contradiction from anyone engaged in pastoral pursuits or who has any acquaintance with the country—there is very little land that would be worth 6d. an acre for twenty years, simply for feeding stock on it. I say this land must have been taken up for agricultural purposes, and we shall find that this fresh land will soon be under the plough; and in a few years we shall hear no more of this cry about the want of agricultural production. I believe in the future of this colony, and I believe we are going ahead now, with the progressive policy of the

present Government, with our railway extensions, and with the great attractions offered by that wonderfully attractive metal—gold. No one can doubt that this colony is now moving ahead, and will continue to move ahead; and those who are settled on the land are beginning to recognise that fact. I hope that those hon. members who at present feel that they are in accord with this Bill will calmly think over these facts before a division takes place, and that they will then vote against it.

MR. PIESSE: The measure before the House this evening is one, I think, of the greatest importance to the country generally, and the object in view is one which I have always been pleased to support,—that is, agricultural settlement. Although I am not able to agree with the Premier's scheme as to free grants of land as proposed in this Bill in its present form, I think he deserves all credit from the country, and especially from the agricultural community, for introducing this measure, if it only results in inducing discussion in this House as to the best means of settling people on the soil. We all know that agricultural settlement is very necessary for the progress of the colony, and that everything should be done to encourage production, so that the colony may be able to supply all its own wants in the way of the products of the soil, instead of largely importing, as we now do, from other colonies, and sending large sums out of the country to add to the prosperity of other States and the neighboring colonies. Although this Bill may not meet with the approval of all of us, it will, I am sure, receive all due consideration; and when it goes into committee, as I hope it will, we may be able to make it more generally acceptable. For that reason I intend to vote for its second reading, for I consider that any measure of this kind is entitled to our very serious consideration before we condemn it entirely. I have had a little to do lately with the settlement of the land in my own district, and may tell members that—Albany being the first port of call for persons coming here by the mail steamers—I have had many opportunities of conversing with people who, travelling by the Great Southern Railway, come here to see what the

capabilities of the colony are and what attractions it offers for the intending settler. From conversations I have had with these visitors, I find they have no fault with our present Land Regulations; they consider them liberal enough, as regards the terms upon which land may be taken up. Therefore I do not think we can blame the Land Regulations if these people do not settle on the land. For another proof of this we have only to look at the return laid on the table the other day, showing the progress of settlement within our Agricultural Areas. Although the Katanning Area was only thrown open for selection some six months ago, there are already 18,000 acres of land taken up there by persons who intend to settle on this land; and I am pleased to inform the House that there are 34 selectors within this area already, and, of these 34, no less than 32 of them are now residing upon their lots, and cultivation of the land is being carried on vigorously. In fact, the progress made in this direction has been very satisfactory indeed, and appears to me to be a strong argument against any necessity for giving away land as proposed in this Bill. I quite admit that something is necessary to help people when they require it; that is, after they have spent what little capital in improving their selections, and are unable to go any further in that direction without assistance. But how this is to be done remains to be seen, and, if this Bill goes into committee, no doubt the subject will be pretty well threshed out. I think the most sceptical must agree that if we can encourage settlement by assisting a deserving class of farmers—a class that does so much to build up the country—we shall be doing the colony a good turn, and add to its wealth and general prosperity. We must all admit that something should be done to prevent the large importations of agricultural products now going on. The importations into Albany, I know, have been very considerable; and, although as mentioned just now by the hon. member for the Moore, there has been a falling off with regard to flour, I may perhaps be able to inform the hon. member why that is the case. The reason is this: that our importations of wheat have been very much larger of late than it was in the past. The quan-

tity of wheat now imported by our local millers, owing to the introduction of new and improved milling machinery, has been largely in excess of former years, and this accounts for the falling off in the importation of flour. I may mention that my own firm imported no less than 10,000 bags of wheat during last year, equal to 40,000 bushels. The same thing has been going on, I believe, at Bunbury, Fremantle, and Perth, where roller mills have been established, the local millers finding it necessary to import wheat to keep their mills going. It is a deplorable state of affairs, no doubt, to see this large quantity of wheat coming into the colony, instead of coming off our own lands, but this is the reason why there has been a falling off in the quantity of flour imported. Coming back to the Bill, although the lines laid down by the Premier may not be those which will be eventually adopted, still I hope we shall be able to come to some satisfactory arrangement when the Bill gets into committee. No doubt, as the hon. member for York said, there are difficulties to be met; but difficulties will always exist. The hon. member himself has been very largely interested in agriculture, and he must know that there are always risks and difficulties in dealing with this question. The Government must also expect to meet with risks and difficulties in carrying out any scheme of this kind; but I have no doubt, if this proposal for advancing money to selectors on the security of their improvements is adopted, the Government will take care that any risk involved is minimised as much as possible, and, no doubt, will be able to provide some means to protect themselves. We must all admit, I think, that our system of immigration in the past has not been a success, and that the money so expended has been, to a great extent, thrown away. A number of immigrants, from time to time, have been brought by railway from Albany, in my own direction, and once or twice I was communicated with by the Government with the view of endeavoring to place these men in the district where I reside. I met them at the railway station and entered into conversation with them, but when it came to the question of wages, and I told them we generally paid from

5s. to 7s. 6d. a day, they almost all refused it. A few of them afterwards came back, after being to Perth, and went into service in the district, but, after staying there a few months, they took their departure to the Eastern colonies. We have spent large sums in introducing immigrants, and without any great benefit to the colony; and I see no reason why we should not now try some other experiment, by assisting people to settle on the land. The amount proposed to be spent in experimenting with this scheme of the Premier's is not a very large one; and, if it is not successful, or the scheme is not workable, it can be amended at any time. I notice that provision is made in the Bill for that, and I dare say the Government will take steps at once to discontinue the experiment if it doesn't answer.

MR. LEFROY: What about assisting the farmers already in the colony?

MR. PIESSE: This Bill is not all for new-comers. Any young man in the colony, sons of farmers and others, are entitled to participate in the same advantages as new-comers, so long as they are not landowners already. I admit I do not care for this idea of free gifts of land myself; but the provisions of the Bill in this respect are not confined to new-comers; they also apply to those who are already here. If it only settles 230 selectors on the land, as said by the hon. member for the Swan, and they spend £200 each in improvements, that means an expenditure of £46,000 in improving the land; and surely some good must result from it. Although, as I have said, I cannot agree with the Bill *in toto*, there are some portions of it which I think deserve the consideration of the House, and for that reason I hope it will be read a second time. In committee we shall have an opportunity of considering whether it cannot be made a Bill that will tend to the advancement and prosperity of the colony.

MR. TRAYLEN: Amongst the things about the Premier which always impresses my mind is his remarkable facility for drawing mental pictures, ideal pictures, glowing pictures that always relate to the comfort, the prosperity, and the well-being of the colony and its people. I was very much impressed the other evening with that attractive picture which

the hon. gentleman reproduced out of his mind, for our benefit, about a constant stream of persons being attracted to our shores, by this Bill, from the other colonies, from the mother country, from the continent of Europe and elsewhere. I have also been impressed with this fact: once the Premier evolves an ideal picture for our benefit, no interval must elapse between the evolution of the mental process and the production of some scheme for the realisation of the picture. As an abstract thing, the subject matter before us this evening is one that must commend itself, without question, to every hon. member of this House. There is not one of us here who does not desire to see a large population settled upon the soil. We are all thoroughly at one in this respect; and I can readily imagine that the good people in England would approve, almost without exception—I may refer to the exception presently—of this scheme of the Premier's for settling the colony by placing upon our lands a number of persons who will become producers of all we are able to consume. We all remember that during the time we were so anxious to know whether Responsible Government would be granted to this colony or not, and the question was being largely discussed in the mother country—we all remember that there were many of the good people in England who spoke of the colony as being a British inheritance, and objected to handing it over to us. They were apparently afraid that we would cut it up into slices and eat it all ourselves, and not leave the British nation—that is, the people in England—an opportunity of getting any portion of what they called their inheritance. That was the talk. When these people now find that the Premier intends to cut off slices of 160 acres of our territory, and offer them as free gifts to anyone who will only come here and accept them, of course these people in England will be jubilant. But, whilst that may be the feeling in England, it is quite possible that people here may have a different feeling; and, although I would give every credit to the Premier for his good intentions, I really am not able to compliment him upon the method he has adopted to give effect to them. I shall have to join with so many who have already spoken on the

subject in saying that my impression of this whole Bill is, that it is unfair in several respects. I need not travel over all the ground again: but I may call attention afresh to clause 6, which says that whoever now possesses a foot of land in Western Australia, or who holds any land here under special occupation or conditional purchase is, forsooth, ineligible to apply for an extra block of land under this Bill; and the excellent reason that has been given by the Premier for this condition is that the present owner of land might possibly neglect the property he now holds in favor of that which he desires to hold. Now, if I turn to section nineteen and also to section twenty-seven of the Bill, I find that whoever comes amongst us a man of straw, and obtains 160 acres, for nothing, under this Bill, can that very instant avail himself of all the provisions and all the privileges of our existing Land Regulations. And, more than that, the very fact that this man of straw has obtained a free grant of land under this Bill, and goes and lives on that land, will exempt that man from the conditions of residence attached to certain clauses of our Land Regulations, should he apply for more land under those clauses.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): A man cannot reside in two places at once.

MR. TRAYLEN: I cannot help thinking that the Premier has not read that classical story of the student who was sent by a certain professor to measure the depth of a well. It is said that this young man came back to the professor with the intelligence that the well was so many feet from the top to the bottom, but, how far it was from the bottom to the top he was unable to say, as he had no ladder to go down the well. If we are going to allow the man who accepts a present of 160 acres under this Bill to go outside his homestead block and work other land without complying with the conditions of the Land Regulations—as he may do under clauses 19 and 27—why in this world should not the man who has already fixed and settled himself on the soil be allowed the same privilege, and take up his 160 acres and work it? In that respect, I submit, the Bill is very unfair—that one person, who really has no claim whatever on the

colony, should have certain privileges which another and a more deserving person cannot have. I say more deserving, because Mr. Jones or Mr. Brown, just from England, has not done anything for the colony so far—he has not contributed one penny of his money towards our roads and our railways—whereas Mr. Smith or Mr. Robinson, who is already settled on the land, may have been contributing to our revenue for twenty years past, and yet he is to be excluded from the privileges which this Bill proposes to confer on his neighbor, Mr. Jones or Mr. Brown. That appears to me manifestly unfair. Another aspect of unfairness to me is that these loans or advances are only to be granted to these new-comers. If the real object be to encourage agriculture, if the object be (as it professes to be) to increase our production, why could we not lend this money as well to the man who has already established himself on the land, and who wants a little help, as to him who has not established himself, and who may be wholly incapable of farming in Western Australia, however good a farmer he may have been in the old country? I say, why cannot the Government lend money to those who are already here as well as to those who are to be induced to come here by free grants of land? I know what the Premier will say—that we have not the money to do everything. Well then, let the money go as far as it will go to the first applicants, who are prepared to comply with the conditions, whether they are old settlers or new-comers. With regard to the Land Grant Railway Companies, surely there can be no element of fairness to these companies, after having accepted their offer to construct railways for us on condition of our granting them so many acres of land, for work done by them on our behalf, for the Government then to turn round and immediately depreciate the value of those lands, by offering to give the adjoining land away. The Premier, when dealing with this phase of the question, was good enough to say that no one connected with these companies had written to him to complain about it. What of that? Does it follow that everyone who has a grievance should write to the Premier? I scarcely think so. At any rate the Midland Rail-

way Company, we know, have complained that this scheme will depreciate the value of their lands. These land grant companies may very well say, "Who is going to buy any land from us when they can go to the Government and get it for nothing, and have money lent to them to work it?" I have only one other clause to comment on, and that is the forfeiture clause. I do not think it is an improper thing—it seems to me a proper thing—that when we make any kind of a contract or agreement there should be conditions attached to it, and those who enter into contracts must be prepared to abide by the conditions attached to them. Only a few nights ago I ventured to say something of this kind with regard to a certain railway contract, but the Premier on that occasion was not quite in accord with me; his views and mine did not run on parallel lines that evening. What I said then touched certain wealthy people and financiers, and it was not to be expected that people like that should be held hard and fast to the conditions of their contract, voluntarily agreed to. But when we have a number of poorer people coming amongst us to take up these lands, they are to have very severe conditions imposed, and, if they are not able to fulfil those conditions, their land, with all that's on it, is to be forfeited. This is what the Premier himself said about these conditions (which are contained in the 17th section): "That is a very stringent section. . . . If the conditions imposed by the regulations are not complied with, the land becomes forfeitable to the Crown. And, for my part"—the hon. gentleman added—"I do not see any great hardship in these conditions, for those who take up land under them do so with their eyes open, and with a full knowledge of the conditions imposed; and it is not for them to complain if, in the event of their neglecting to comply with those conditions, their land should be liable to be forfeited." Those are the Premier's own words. These people must abide by the conditions of their contract, or their homesteads will be forfeited. All I say is, let us have the same principle laid down for the rich man, or the wealthy syndicate, who enters into a contract with us, as for the poor man who enters into a contract with us. If that were done, I do not know that I

could fairly complain; but, if the Premier uses this language about these comparatively poor men, and uses the language he did a few nights ago with reference to another contract in which wealthier persons are concerned, I think I am fairly entitled to complain, and I shall have to vote for the amendment.

MR. CLARKSON: I think anyone who brings forward a scheme for the purpose of settling people on the lands of the colony deserves the thanks of every member of the community. This question of land settlement, it appears to me, is surrounded with many difficulties, not only in this colony but in every part of the world, and they are difficulties which up to this time have not been overcome. I cannot agree with every part of the Bill now before the House; in fact, when I first looked at it I almost made up my mind to vote against it altogether; but, having given it some further consideration, I think that with a few alterations here and there it can be made worthy of a trial at any rate. The Land Regulations of this colony are so extremely liberal—our land is to be acquired on such very easy terms, and at such a very low price, that anyone wanting land can get what he wants almost for nothing now; but, possibly, when it becomes known outside the colony that we are actually giving away free grants of 160 acres of good land, it may have the effect of inducing people to come here and settle our lands. For my part, I do not believe that if this Bill in its present form, it will be taken advantage of, to any very great extent; but, at the same time, I think the experiment is worth trying. I was sorry to hear the Premier say, when introducing the Bill, and I was very much surprised to hear him say, that the settlement and cultivation of the land had progressed at such a very slow rate during the last five years, or made no progress at all. I feel confident there is some very great mistake in that. In fact, I have been looking over the returns to-day, and I think I can see where the mistake comes in. In the Premier's figures it was only land actually under crop that was taken into account, and I suppose there was very nearly one-third of the land in cultivation which was not included at all, not being under crop nor fallow. I think

this accounts for the discrepancy in these returns. In my own district, I feel confident, that within the last five years the clearing and cultivation of land has almost, if not quite, doubled; and I think I can say the same of Northam and York. In fact, if cultivation goes on at the same rate as it is going on now, in another five years' time we shall hear no more of the importation of cereals. From one end of the country to the other, land is being cleared and cultivated. But, as I have already said, I have made up my mind to vote for the second reading of this Bill, in the hope that in committee its provisions may be made more suitable. There is one clause to which I take great exception, and that is with reference to the erection of a house. I think no sensible man, when he selected a small block of land, would in the first instance put up a house that would cost him at least £100, as this Bill would compel him to do. Possibly that might be all the money he was possessed of. He would first want to obtain water, either by sinking a well or making a tank, and he would next want to clear and plant some of his ground, not necessarily with cereals at the first going off, but with vines and fruit trees. I think improvements of this nature would be a far better security to offer a mortgagee, whether it was the Government or anybody else, than a house would be; and the occupier would be much more likely to succeed in his occupation than if he spent all his available capital in building a house. It has been said—and I think so myself—that the proposed blocks are too small. I do not consider that 160 acres will be sufficient for these selectors, when it is taken into consideration the class of country now available for selection. But I notice that the Bill provides that there shall be alternate blocks of land, which the occupier of the free grants may take up, so as to increase their holdings. I have heard some members say to-night that they consider this scheme of the Premier's is unfair to the land companies. I cannot see this at all. These companies have got their land, and they can do what they like with it. They can sell it at any price they like, or give it away if they wish. They do not consult the Government as to what they should charge for their land, and why should

the Government consult them? If they think proper to give it away, by all means let them give it away. I do not see that we are doing anything that is unfair towards these companies. I do not intend to occupy the time of the House any longer this evening. I intend to vote for the second reading of the Bill, and I hope that in committee we may make it what we should all like to see it.

MR. THROSSELL: In rising to support the second reading of the Bill now before us, I may say that I consider that a land settlement scheme and water conservation to be the two planks wanting to complete the Government platform. In dealing with the measure before the House my position is this: it is not enough to simply condemn it, but hon. members who do so should be prepared to suggest a better scheme. I am willing to admit that agriculture is now advancing; private owners are awakening to their responsibilities, and every year are doing their best to develop their estates. Still it is plain that agricultural settlement is only in its infancy. That is abundantly proved by the enormous imports of cereals, flour, bacon, cheese, and other necessities of life, the products of the soil. To give members some idea as to what we are doing in the way of importing these products, I may point out that in 1889 we imported cereals and flour of the value of £49,993, and, allowing the very liberal sum of £3 per acre for it, that would be equivalent to 16,664 acres of standing corn. In 1890 we imported £42,095 worth of cereals and flour, equal to 14,032 acres of standing corn; and in 1891, our imports under the same head were valued at £47,398, being equivalent, at £3 per acre, to 15,800 acres of standing corn. Besides all that, it is, to my mind, still more important the enormous sums sent out of the colony for dairy products, such as ham, bacon, butter, cheese, and so on, which have not been taken into account by hon. members. Speaking from memory, and in round numbers, I think that last year we sent out of the colony about £70,000 for actual products of the soil. Hon. members, in dealing with this measure, should look away from cereals altogether. If I could imagine a body of men tied down on 160 acre sections, and producing only

wheat, I should vote against such a measure, for, under such circumstances, these men would simply starve. I think the strongest argument in favor of what I call a homestead scheme has come from the hon. member for the DeGrey himself, in his admirable report, in conjunction with the hon. member for the Murray, upon the irrigation settlements in the other colonies. In that report the Government were strongly recommended to take special measures to encourage small men to settle on the land for the purpose of fruit-growing; and I look upon this Bill as being in accordance with that suggestion. But I cannot support the Bill as it now stands. In my opinion, if it is passed in its present form, it will be a failure. I am in accord with the hon. member for the Swan as to the benefits the wiping out of the compulsory residence clause from the present Act would confer. There are hundreds of young West Australians who, I believe, would be induced to settle on the land were this measure passed, with certain amendments. I do not believe in the clause permitting a loan of £50 on the security of a house costing £100. I take it that the men whom it is desirable to encourage would have sufficient self-reliance to erect their own houses without monetary assistance from the Government. This £50 might well be devoted to the planting of orchards and vineyards. I think the cost of putting down an orchard and vineyard might be estimated at £10 per acre; and I would suggest that each selector should be permitted to draw £5 per acre for every acre properly planted, up to 10 acres; and, in order to simplify the work of supervision, and to secure the best possible results to the State, the £100 should only be advanced for clearing the land. If this plan were adopted, with wise supervision, the best results would be obtained. The expenditure of the £50 in this way, instead of that proposed in the Bill, would ensure the cultivation of about 2,600 acres of orchard land, which, under favorable conditions, would return £30 per acre per annum, after the first three years. Thus, these small holders, who would do very poorly indeed if confined to cereals, would have an income of £300 per annum after three or four years, from 10 acres alone. Then, in addition to this, every

holder would produce poultry and pigs, and have his small paddock in which to run a few sheep. Those are my ideas. I think the measure is faulty in detail, but I believe it could be made a thoroughly safe and useful measure, and prove a big advertisement for the colony. I do not approve of the mode proposed for working these loans. It leaves it optional with the borrower to retain the whole of the £150 for seven years. This, I fear, would destroy the measure, and is altogether too risky for the State. Besides, by this plan, if the £40,000 which it is proposed to expend on this scheme were all taken up the first year, there would then be a deadlock, as there would be no money to assist any selectors beyond the first 260 or so; and, I take it, it would be no good asking this House for more, until there were proofs before the country that the plan had been successful. I am confident in my own mind that the only safe method for lending money to farmers is on the building society principle of deferred payments, for a given number of years, principal and interest being returned annually on the 1st March. Thus, if the term was for 10 years, we should have £4,000 per annum of the principal returned annually, to form a permanent loan fund, for those coming after the first borrowers. I shall be prepared to support amendments on these lines when the Bill is in committee. There is one strong argument, to my mind, in favor of the Bill, and it is this: it will attract men from the towns, and render any cry from the unemployed, when a time of depression sets in, less likely or less troublesome. Referring again to the loans, I would strongly urge that the success of the measure turns, in the main, on the time system for returning the money being adopted. If this is not done, at the end of seven years we shall probably find these men unable to repay the loan in a lump sum, and they would in all probability have to have recourse to the money lender in order to obtain the money to repay the Government loan, and thus in a great degree defeat the intentions of the Government, whose object is to plant a body of men permanently on the soil. Besides this, we are about to confer greater political powers upon the people, in the broadening

of the franchise, and it behoves us, in adopting this measure for settling people on the land, to so safeguard the system as to reduce the power of repudiation to a minimum. I will only add in conclusion that the Bill shall have my support, but I shall feel it my duty to endeavor to secure the amendment I have referred to while the Bill is being discussed in committee. I believe, myself, that had the Government included this £40,000 for land settlement in their first programme, not a voice would have been heard against it.

MR. COOKWORTHY: Before coming to Perth I had not the slightest idea that there was likely to be any opposition to this Bill. The papers have been flooded with letters, discussing the scheme, and it seemed to me that the current opinion of the public was that this Homestead Bill was likely to prove a most useful Bill. I know it has been anxiously looked forward to by many people. I know that in my part of the colony the sons of farmers are looking forward to it with hope and expectation; and the only objection I can see to it is that it does not, perhaps, tend to foster that spirit of self-reliance, which the hon. member for Geraldton has been inculcating upon us. I quite endorse the sentiments of the hon. member as to the desirability of encouraging a feeling of self-reliance and self-help among our settlers; but it must be borne in mind that in a colony like this it is out of the question that we should depend upon individual exertions to do all that is necessary for the advancement of the colony. If we were to do that we should have no railways, no telegraph lines, no harbor improvements, no jetties, and no important works undertaken at all. We know very well that in this colony the tendency all along has been to look to a paternal Government to provide us with all our wants. If members want a town hall built, or a park improved, or cockatoos to be shot, they generally come to this House and get the Government to provide the money. I think that disposes of the objection which some members seem to entertain to the Government coming forward to assist the farmers. Why was not the same objection raised to the Government assisting the miners at Yilgarn? I was rather amused with the

hon. member for the Swan, who seemed to be afraid that, if the Government lent a few small farmers £150 to improve their holdings, these people would come to look upon the Government as a sort of milch cow. The hon. member forgot that only last night he was himself calling upon the Government to provide water, not only for the miners at Yilgarn but also for his friends the pastoralists, all over the colony. As for the hon. member for the DeGrey, we had been led to look upon him as the small farmers' friend. The hon. member, I know, has been down to Bunbury lecturing to the farmers, and giving them plenty of advice; and the same hon. member has urged and helped to carry through this House a Bill which puts thousands of pounds out of the revenue of this colony into the pockets of the squatters, of which he is one. But he will not give the poor small farmer an advance of a few pounds. Oh, no. He will give them plenty of advice, but no assistance. He is perfectly satisfied that they should have the advice and he the dollars. I do not mean to say that this Bill is perfect; I do not mean to say that it may not be amended in committee; but I really cannot understand why anyone should object to the principle of the Bill. What does it amount to, after all? Out of certain unexpended loan moneys, which it was intended to spend in bringing out immigrants into the colony, the Government propose to set some £40,000 aside to encourage the settlement and cultivation of the soil. We all know that our immigration system in the past has not been a success. I am not speaking now of nominated immigrants, but we know that the great mass of those sent out here at the colony's expense have been a failure. I know that from personal experience. The Government are aware of it too, and they now propose another scheme. This scheme, I beg to point out, is not, as has been stated, for the benefit of new-comers alone; it will also benefit our own sons of the soil. I fail to understand how anybody can object to the main principle of this Bill, which is this: if a man likes to take up 160 acres of land and settle on it, and builds a house on it worth £100—I may here say that I object to the house, and I believe the Premier has no particular wish to insist

upon that condition—but if a man spends, say £300 in improving his block of land, and is thus in a position to offer a tangible security, the Government will then advance him £150 to carry out further improvements. This money is not a free gift, but an advance, which the selector has to pay back to the Government in due time. It is not actually given away, as in the case of the money given to the squatters, and to Yilgarn. These people have to pay five per cent. for the loan of the money. A great deal has been said about the paltry difference between this five per cent. and the seven per cent. which some members say is the ordinary rate of interest. Let me just give you the case of a typical settler. A young man, a steady hardworking young fellow, with a little money perhaps, takes up 200 acres of land. He has got to go into the bush and work hard, cutting down trees and splitting timber for fencing, and do a little clearing; and all this time he has to feed himself. When his little money is gone, he must either do one of two things,—either go on clearing and run himself into debt, or he must neglect his land. If he runs into debt, there is an overdraft at his storekeeper; and don't you believe that the interest on that overdraft is 5 per cent. or 7 per cent.—more likely it is 10 per cent., and there is such a thing known as compound interest. The result is the poor man is unable to keep his head above water, and down he goes. This Bill will be the saving of many an honest hard-working young fellow of that stamp. The Government, when he has done a certain amount of improvements, will come to his rescue, and keep that man on his legs, and in a few years he will be an independent man. It is a well-known fact that, at present, young men in this colony dread to go on the land, because they are afraid of getting into debt, as I have mentioned. It has also been said that a block of 160 acres will be of no use to a man, and that he can only starve on it. I know one thing: the curse of this colony has been our having too many men with too much land, and not the capital to work it. Down in our Southern districts a man with a small holding—I am not going to say how much he ought to have; it depends a good deal on the amount of capital he has—

can do very well; and, as a rule, people take up too much land. If they would only be content with a smaller area, cultivate it well, and pay attention to other little profitable things which would help him on, such as a vineyard, poultry, and so on—men who would do this in our Southern districts would have a chance of making a good living, so long as they were near a railway and had access to a market. I do not believe in the advantage of large farms, but I do believe in the settling on the soil of a numerous body of steady, industrious men, who will work and delve and till the soil, instead of riding about the country on horseback, and neglecting their land, because they have more than they can manage. As I have said before, this Bill is looked forward to by many sons of farmers in the Southern districts; and I believe it will lead to a large increase of cultivation and production and settlement of the soil. I only hope the Government will stand to their guns, and bring the question to a division, and, should the Bill be thrown out, that they will appeal to the country. [SEVERAL HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] If they do, I know this: no member representing a constituency in the Southern districts who opposes this measure will come back to this House. The opposition to it will only come from those of the North, who, in this case, represent an unknown quantity.

MR. SOLOMON: It was not my intention to speak on this Bill until I had heard what those who are better acquainted with the subject than I am had to say. I am not an agriculturist, and therefore I would carefully listen to what was said about the Bill by those who had been engaged in agricultural pursuits for many years past. But, as an outsider, I may say that I consider the Premier is to be congratulated on the efforts he is making to advance the prosperity of the colony, and he is to be complimented on the fact that he had the courage of his convictions in taking upon himself to introduce a scheme of this nature, which, we have been told, as regards one part of it—the advancing of money—has not hitherto been mooted in any other colony. I hope we shall not hear that fact used as an argument against the scheme—the mere fact that it is a novel experiment, and has not been

tried elsewhere. If such an argument as that were to have any weight, the world would never have made any advance since the dark ages, and we should neither have railways nor telegraphs, nor any other inventions and innovations, which, however crude at first, have since become important and valuable adjuncts of civilisation. No one who looks at our Customs returns can doubt the necessity for doing something to encourage cultivation and production, so as to stem the large importations of products now coming into the country from other places—products which we ought to cultivate ourselves. I find that we have been paying at the rate of about £4 per head for every man, woman, and child in the colony for importations, a great deal of which we ought to produce in the colony. Looking at the immense quantity of land we have alienated, looking at our millions of acres of good agricultural land, I say it is a disgrace to the colony, which in age at any rate, is in advance of the other colonies, that the declared value of our imports during 1890 amounted to £14,249 in cereals alone. Does it not appear from this that something in addition to our present Land Regulations is required to induce settlement and cultivation? I think the Premier has set us a very good example in bringing forward some scheme that is likely to have this effect, and I should have very much liked to have seen some of those who have had a large practical experience in such matters bringing something forward to assist the Premier in pushing the place ahead. It has been said that Canada, where the homestead system has been very successful, did not advance money to the selectors of land there. But I think that is easily accounted for; there was no necessity for it. Canada is comparatively near to the great centres of population in the old country, whereas we in Western Australia are 16,000 miles away, and, if we expect to attract people here to settle on our lands, we must offer greater attractions than a country like Canada need offer. One thing is very certain, our immigration system in the past has not proved very successful. The number of producers have not increased in proportion to the number of consumers, and I think something should be done towards

equalising these two classes of the community, or the colony must always be dependent on other countries for its supplies. There is one other point I should like to refer to. Those of our farmers who do send their produce to market—many of them, not all of them—send it in such a neglected condition that the result has been most disappointing, and, in too many cases, a disgrace to the place. This has been a great drawback to the sale of local products, and it has had the result of inducing people to send out of the colony for their supplies, when, if they could have depended upon getting a good local article, they would have preferred it to the imported article. This does not refer to all the districts; there are some where the produce sent to market is sent in a very good condition; but, on the other hand—I know it for a fact, as many thousands of pounds in that way have passed through my hands, and it has been a source of annoyance and regret to me—stuff has been sent into the market that would be a disgrace to any colony. I will say no more. I intend to support the second reading of this Bill, though there are some clauses in it which at present I am not in accord with.

MR. HARPER moved the adjournment of the debate until Monday, 28th November.

Agreed to.

Debate adjourned.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

ADJOURNED DEBATE: SECOND READING.

MR. MOLLOY: I rise with very great pleasure to-night, as a representative of the public to advocate their cause, and to endeavor to plead for them, that they may have an extension of liberty in being able to express an opinion upon the government of the colony. As is well known, in the Constitution Act which has been in force for the last two years, there are many restrictions which have been the cause of considerable annoyance to many persons. These restrictions, I believe, in some cases, were never intended by the Legislature of the day; but the Act was framed by a draftsman who was of a most conservative tendency, and the result was, when the Act came into force, it was found that it embodied restrictions which have prevented many

persons from enjoying the privileges of expressing an opinion as to their choice of a representative, and from having a voice in the Parliament of the colony. Now that it is proposed to extend the franchise and to grant more liberal privileges to the people than hitherto enjoyed by them in this colony, I think it would be well if we paid considerable attention to this question, and endeavor to make this measure as perfect as possible while we are about it. In the measure as proposed by the Government there are many clauses which, I think, might be still further amended, so as to make the franchise still more liberal. I think it will be a great hardship to compel people to reside for 12 months in the colony before they are qualified, and that there should be a further condition attached that they must have resided in the district for six months before they are entitled to have their names recorded on the electoral roll, and be able to give their vote at an election for a representative in the Parliament of the colony. I think it will be seen that this is an extreme restriction, and for this reason: that persons coming to this colony and residing here for 12 months may have been in one district for five months of that time, but if they remove then to another district they will not be able to exercise the franchise, because they have not been there six months. I think this a great hardship, and for my part I see no necessity for such a restriction. It is a restriction, I say, that ought to be removed. I take it that our object should be to give a vote to every man who likes to come and settle amongst us, so long as he shows he is not a mere bird of passage; and when a man has resided here 12 months I think that man ought to have the privilege of voting, without hampering him with other useless restrictions, and making it compulsory for him to reside six months in one particular district. I take it that if a man has been a resident in any part of the colony for twelve months—personally, I do not consider it should be necessary for a man to be here twelve months to entitle him to a vote—but, certainly, after he has resided here for that time, he ought to be permitted to exercise the privilege of voting, no matter in what district he may have resided. Wherever he is when the

electoral roll is made up, that man ought to be allowed to have his name recorded on the roll. I think if this provision is made in the Bill, that a person may be entitled to vote in the district in which he resides when the roll is made up, no hardship would be done to anyone.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): They cannot do that anywhere in Australia.

MR. MOLLOY: The hon. gentleman says it cannot be done anywhere in Australia. I thought I heard the hon. gentleman say the other day that it was his intention to make inquiries as to the practice in the other colonies with regard to transferring a vote from one district to another, in the event of a man having once qualified himself to vote. I find that this clause exists in the colony of South Australia, and I believe it has been exercised there with a very good effect.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fresh Parliaments about every three months.

MR. MOLLOY: One hon. member says that the result is a new Parliament every three months. I fail to see, myself, how the hon. member makes out that the privilege of transferring a voter's right from one district to another is the cause of short Parliaments. I fail to see the logic of the hon. member's contention. So long as a person only exercises the right of recording one vote, I fail to see where the objection comes in. But the Bill as it now stands will hamper and hinder many persons from exercising the franchise at all, and I say this is an unnecessary restriction, and one that should be swept away, and I trust this House will see that it is swept away. I trust that in committee this Bill may be so amended as to give effect to the suggestion which I now make, that transfer forms may be provided by which a person moving from one district of the colony to another may not become disfranchised, and lose his privilege of voting, no matter how short a time he may have been in the district he has removed to, so long as he is otherwise entitled and qualified to vote. For myself, I see no reason for any other qualification than a residence in the colony for a certain time, and I think six months is ample time to qualify a man to exercise the right of voting, and having a voice in the management and good

government of the country. It may be contended by some hon. members that it is necessary, before a man should be entitled to vote, that he should have what is called a "stake in the country." It is said that unless a man has a stake in the country his opinions should have no weight in the management of the affairs of the country. But I would point out that it is not everyone who may be blessed with a property stake in the country; we cannot all have a property qualification, and I take it that the laboring man who comes here is as much interested in the good government of the country as the man with means at his command is. If such men are to be deprived of the privilege of voting in Western Australia, and they find that the privilege is to be confined to men of wealth and property, we shall find that we are not likely to attract the laboring classes here. A man who has elsewhere enjoyed the privilege of recording his vote, and whose vote had as much value as that of the rich man, is not likely to be attracted to Western Australia if he is to be deprived of this privilege, and that it is only those who have a "stake in the country," in the shape of wealth and property, who are to have a voice in the representation of the country. I trust that when we are dealing with this franchise question, hon. members will not ignore the rights of the people; and by the people in this connection I mean the laboring classes. I am pleased myself, and proud, to be able to stand here to-night and to acknowledge myself as a representative of the "people" in the sense I am now using the word. I have been elected to the position that I hold in this honorable House principally by the votes of the classes in whose interests I am here pleading to-night; and I trust that this measure will not pass in its present form, with any hampering restrictions and vexatious clauses that will effectually debar these people from given expression to their views in the election of men to represent them in the Parliament of the country. I notice with pleasure that it is intended to do away with the property qualification of members of this House, and I congratulate the Government upon having the courage to sweep away that hampering qualification, because, by doing so, they will be giving a number of persons

who may possess the necessary intelligence to fit them for the high position of a member of this House, but who have not the present property qualification, to offer their services to the free and independent electors of the colony. It will increase the area of selection, and give a wider choice to the people in the selection of their representatives. I consider this a step in the right direction, though, for my own part, I should have been glad to have seen this Bill go a step further. I am aware that many hon. members may not be in accord with me; still, I think that while we were about it, while we were proposing to amend our Constitution, by sweeping away the property qualification of members, we might also have provided for the payment of members. I notice that some hon. members laugh at this expression of opinion; but I am not one of those who will be put down by trifles of that kind. I stand here to advocate this principle of payment of members; for I think it is a proper one, for this reason: according to the Constitution at present, persons of means only, who can give up their time for nothing, having plenty of means, are the only persons who can afford to occupy a seat in Parliament; and, in this way, many capable and worthy men are debarred from seeking a seat in this House, and the choice of the electors are to that extent restricted, and will still be restricted to some extent when the property qualification of members is abolished. It is only the select few who are at present in a position to hold a seat in the Parliament of the country, and, although they do not at present get direct payment for their services, it cannot be gainsaid that indirectly they do so, for they are in a position to give effect, by legislation, to measures in the direction in which their sympathies, as the representatives of wealth and property, naturally incline, and they will take good care to protect their own interests. [Mr. LORON: No.] I say, yes; and why should not those who do not possess these advantages of wealth and property have an equal right to be rewarded for their services, services given in the interests of the country? I see no distinction myself. I do not see why members of Parliament should not be paid for their services as well as those hon. gentlemen who occupy seats in the

Ministry. Where does the distinction come in? There are other officials in this honorable Assembly who are paid for their work, and some of them are only the same time engaged as ordinary members are. I cannot see myself why members who give up their time to work in the interests of the country should not be paid for their services as well as these other officials attached to the House, so long as the public consider they are fit and proper persons to represent them in Parliament. It would be no great charge upon the revenue of the country if our members were paid at the same rate as they are in some of the other colonies. I fail to see any occasion for hon. members to sneer and laugh at these expressions of opinion. They may depend upon it, although this principle of payment of members is not embodied in the present Bill, the day will come, and it is not far distant, with the progress the colony is making at the present time, and the large influx of population to our shores from countries where this principle has been adopted—I say the day is not far distant when provision for the payment of members will be a part of the Constitution of this colony. With regard to the present Bill, I am sure it will receive due consideration at the hands of all hon. members, but I am also aware there will be considerable opposition to many of its provisions on the part of some members. I hope, however, I have said sufficient to indicate to hon. members how necessary it is that the masses of the people should be adequately represented in the Parliament of the country, and I trust that when the Bill is in committee the clause dealing with the extension of the franchise will be further liberalised, by reducing or modifying the residential qualification. I hope we shall be able to remove all unnecessary restrictions in the way of the people exercising the franchise, by allowing them to vote as I have suggested, and also by providing for the transfer of an elector's right from one district to another, in the event of the elector changing his residence. I will not weary the House by pleading this cause any further, beyond repeating that I am strongly opposed to the 19th clause of the Bill, in so far as it compels a man to reside twelve months in the colony, and six months in one particular district, before

he becomes entitled to exercise his right, as a free and independent voter, to a voice in the representation and government of the country. I would sweep away all such restrictions in the way of the exercise of the franchise, and, as I have said, I would also be in favor of payment of members. I do not expect that this House, constituted as it is at present, is likely to be with me in that view; but it will not be long before payment of members is an accomplished fact. I congratulate the Government even upon the small instalment of reform proposed by the present Bill. I think we have reason to congratulate ourselves as a community that, at this early stage of Constitutional Government, the Ministry have come forward boldly and admitted the necessity for wiping away the restrictions placed upon voters in this colony in the past, and that they are not afraid to meet the people face to face, and permit them to express their opinion as to what is good in the government of the colony, and to elect representatives of their own choice to a seat in this honorable House, the popular Assembly.

MR. SOLOMON: I rise to say a few words in support of this Bill. There is only one clause which I think might be modified, and that is the provision which requires twelve months' residence in the colony to entitle a man to a vote. I think, with the hon. member for Perth, that six months' residence should entitle a man to that privilege. With the Electoral Act as it now stands, if this clause remained as it is in the present Bill, it would entail a residence in the colony of nearly two years.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We are going to alter the Electoral Act too.

MR. SOLOMON: I am glad to hear it; and I hope when it is altered that provision will be made for the holding of at least four courts of revision of the electoral roll annually, otherwise, even with six months' residence, a period of eighteen months might elapse, in some instances, before a person could get on the roll. I hope, as we are going to amend the Act, it will be amended in this direction. I think, when we are dealing with this question of the franchise, we may as well be liberal at once, and give the people the franchise in its

purity. I am in accord with the Bill, except in regard to the period of residence, and I have much pleasure in supporting it; and I congratulate the Government on being so liberal as they have been in the measure they have brought forward.

MR. PEARSE: In common with other members, I desire to say a few words on the Bill now before the House. In the first place, I desire to congratulate the Government on the very liberal measure they have brought forward. I think that on the whole the measure is a good one, and one that is likely to commend itself to the inhabitants of the colony. Some exception has been taken to the proposed qualification of voters, with reference to the time they should be in the colony before they become entitled to vote. Twelve months is the shortest time laid down, but I think myself that six months is quite long enough. Any person who has been here six months surely ought to be entitled to the privileges of the franchise; and, for my own part, I should be agreeable to give him those privileges, and I trust the Bill will be amended in that direction. I am very glad indeed to find the Government also providing for an alteration in the Constitution as regards the Upper House. No doubt, in a very short time, we shall have an elective Upper Chamber, and I think that will be a change that will cause very great satisfaction to the community. I am also very glad to find that the property qualification, as regards the members of this Assembly, is to be abolished. I think it is only right and proper. Surely the people themselves are the best judges of those they wish to represent them, and I do not see why they should be limited in their choice as they are at present. I certainly shall support the second reading of the Bill, but, when it goes into committee, I intend with others to vote in favor of reducing the term of residence from twelve months to six, which, I think, will give more general satisfaction to the community than the time proposed in the Bill now.

MR. TRAYLEN: I also shall be glad to support the second reading of the Bill. Let me take this opportunity of applying a little salve to the wounded feelings of the hon. the Attorney-General, who has been twitted with not having very skil-

fully drafted the Homesteads Bill so as to meet the views of some hon. members; let me congratulate the hon. and learned gentleman on the superior skill he has certainly shown in the drafting of the present Bill. The attempt made in the same direction by a former occupant of his position resulted, as we all know, in a signal failure; for I do not believe it was ever intended by the Legislature of that day that the Act dealing with the exercise of the franchise should have proved so ineffectual as it has proved. The House, no doubt, trusted to the legal skill of the then Attorney General, and the result was the passing of a measure which deprived many worthy persons of the advantages of the franchise who were otherwise entitled to those privileges, and whom, I believe, the Legislature intended to include in the franchise. I am free to say that I thought, some little time ago, seeing that the colony was progressing so nicely, and the Government were engaged in so many important works, that it would be well to defer this question another session; but the Government having taken it up, I shall gladly go with them, and as they have taken the initiative, they will have my best support to their measure, though I shall be very pleased indeed if it can be improved in some particulars, so as to carry it even further than it goes now. I think the House will do well to fall in with the suggestion that has been made already, that the boundaries of the proposed electoral divisions should be referred to a select committee; and I hope that may be done. The main thing that makes me think this Bill desirable, and one that should be carried through now that it has been introduced, is that the circumstances of the colony have changed very much during the last year or two. Within that time we have had indeed an unexpected—although I do not forget the glowing pictures drawn by the facile hand of the Premier—an unexpected influx of immigrants into the colony, which has completely changed our circumstances. Thanks to our goldfields and the impetus given to the colony, we have now amongst us a large body of desirable persons who seem to be fitly described as nomadic. The greater portion of them are miners, and many are mechanics and artisans who find work in this place to-day and in

another place to-morrow. The greater portion of these men, at present, have no voice in the government of the country, and, under the existing law, they would be almost greyheaded men before they were entitled to a vote. Surely it is too much to assume that most of these persons are unfit to exercise the franchise; I prefer to assume that nearly all of them are capable of exercising it in as intelligent a manner as we are. Of course I do not mean to say they know all the circumstances of the colony quite as well as we do, but I should be sorry to think that among the class of persons coming here now there are any great number who are unfit to exercise the franchise; and, therefore, I must express my opinion in favor of reducing the required term of residence from twelve months to six. Without knowing the secrets altogether of the new Electoral Bill, I may point out that, as things will be if the Bill now before us is carried in its present form, the most advantageous time that a person could arrive in the colony would be on the 9th April. Even then he must wait twelve months before he can apply to have his name placed on an electoral roll. Unless the term is very much shortened from what it is now, in the Electoral Act, it will be another six months before he is able to actually vote. Therefore, I cannot help thinking it is unfair to those persons who have cast in their lot with us to compel them to wait so long a time before they may have a voice in the government of the country. All that I think is necessary is that they should stay here long enough to establish their *bona fides*, to show they are really persons who have come to settle amongst us; and, if they have been in the colony six months, it shows they are not merely tourists, or birds of passage, or commercial travellers, come here with specimens of their wares, and who go away again. I am not saying these people are going to reside here all their lives; there is an influx and efflux in all colonies, and it will be the same here. But, so long as they show their *bona fides*, and establish themselves here in their respective callings, it will be ample warrant for us to give them the right to vote. I shall also advocate that a residence of three months in one electoral district should

be sufficient to give a man the right to be placed on the electoral roll of that district—instead of six months as proposed in the Bill now before us. The Bill, as it stands at present, will be disappointing to a large section of the community. It reminds me of one of poor old Æsop's yarns, about the fox who invited the crane to dinner, and promised him what an excellent feast there would be, and then dished all the courses on soup dishes, so that the poor crane could get nothing to eat. There has been a considerable flourish of trumpets about helping the "swagman," and so on, but I think the clause of the Bill as now framed will effectually shut out the swagman and his class from voting; and I shall be only too glad to support some amendments in this particular clause when we get into committee.

MR. QUINLAN moved the adjournment of the debate until Monday, 28th November.

A division being called for, the numbers were :—

Ayes	15
Noes	6

Majority for	...	9
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AYES.
Mr. Canning
Mr. Clarkson
Mr. Cookworthy
Mr. Darlôt
Sir John Forrest
Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Loton
Mr. Monger
Mr. Pearce
Mr. Phillips
Mr. R. F. Sholl
Mr. Solomon
Mr. Venn
Mr. Quinlan (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. DeHamel
Mr. Hassell
Mr. Molloy
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Traylen
Mr. Richardson (Teller).

Question—That the debate be now adjourned—put and passed.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at a quarter past 10 o'clock p.m.