

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 17th August, 1899.

Welcome to the Speaker—Message (Appropriation):
Excess Bill, first reading—Papers presented—Public
Education Bill, third reading—Rural Lands Im-
provement Bill, Notice of Amendments—Public
Service Bill, second reading (moved)—Adjourn-
ment.

THE SPEAKER (Sir Jas. G. Lee Steere), having returned from a visit to England, took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

WELCOME TO THE SPEAKER.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest): I should like, before we begin our business to-day, on behalf of hon. members to welcome you, Mr. Speaker, back to the colony, and to express our gratification that you are again presiding over our proceedings in this House. I am sure we are all delighted to see you again; and we hope that your visit to the old country has been a pleasant visit, that you have benefited in health, and that you have come back to us altogether better for the change that you have been able to take. During your absence, I am glad to be able to tell you the Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker of the House, Mr. Harper, has presided over our deliberations, and has in every way followed in the footsteps which you have so wisely laid down as to the procedure in this House. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] He has in every way upheld the dignity of the House. I will also say, on behalf of hon. members, that we accorded to him every support and assistance in the arduous duties which he has been called upon to perform. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I am glad to have the opportunity to express to you, sir, the great satisfaction and the pleasure it gives us to welcome you back to your seat, as presiding over our deliberations in this House. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.]

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I should like to add a word or two to what has fallen from the Premier, and to express the gratification and pleasure of members on this (the Opposition) side of the House on seeing you, sir, again in the Speaker's Chair. It is gratifying to have

you back among us, after your well-earned holiday; and whilst we welcome you back, we also take the opportunity of thanking the hon. member (Mr. Harper) who, during your absence, has occupied your seat as Speaker of the House. The proceedings of the House, I am sure hon. members will admit, have been conducted with all due decorum; and if you, sir, had been here I do not think you would have had any occasion to find fault with them.

MR. SPEAKER: I am sure I have to thank both sides of the House for the kindly way in which hon. members have welcomed me back, and in taking my place again in the Chair. I do not think you will, any of you, say I have lost any time in resuming my duties. I have been very anxious to get back to work as soon as possible, for I have felt that I have been somewhat of a truant. I took the opportunity, on several occasions, of visiting the House of Commons, more especially to see whether there was any difference in their procedure as compared with ours. I observed the procedure there, and especially on the opening day of the Parliament of Great Britain, and I saw no difference whatever. I think we follow as closely as we possibly can the same procedure as that of the House of Commons; and the only thing I noticed to be different was that on the opening day, when members of the Commons are summoned to hear the Queen's Speech read in the House of Lords, the Messenger from the House of Lords, before the Sergeant-at-Arms admits him, makes three taps on the door of the House of Commons and asks for admittance. With the exception of that formality, I can see no difference whatever. I may say that I was received with very great courtesy by the Speaker of the House of Commons, and, when I told him how many years I had been Speaker in Western Australia, he said: "I shall have to mind my p's and q's while you are here, so that you may not find me tripping." It has been satisfactory to me to find that we follow so nearly the procedure and practice of the mother of all Parliaments. Indeed I may say it has afforded me great gratification to find there is so little difference in the matter of procedure in our House as compared with the procedure in the House of

Commons. It gives me great pleasure to be here again and to resume the Chair. I have to thank the Chairman of Committees and Deputy Speaker (Mr. Harper) for having so kindly acted as my substitute during my absence from the colony; but I think that perhaps he himself will not regret my having come back to occupy this Chair which he has filled so well in my absence. (General applause.)

MESSAGE (APPROPRIATION)—EXCESS BILL.

A Message from the Governor was received and read, recommending appropriation for the purposes of a Bill to confirm certain expenditure for the year ending 30th June, 1898.

Bill introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1. Report of Board of Management of Perth Public Hospital. 2. Report of Board of Management of Fremantle Hospital.

By the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS:—Return showing particulars re lighting of wharves and railway station, Fremantle, as moved for by Mr. Higham.

By the MINISTER OF MINES:—Regulations under Goldfields Act (Registration of stacks of earth, etc., on forfeited or abandoned leases).

Ordered to lie on the table.

PUBLIC EDUCATION BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

RURAL LANDS IMPROVEMENT BILL.

NOTICE OF AMENDMENTS.

THE PREMIER moved that the third reading of the Bill be made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next. This, he said, would give time to hon. members to prepare amendments which they might wish to move.

Put and passed.

At a later stage,

THE SPEAKER said that if any member desired to make amendments in the Bill by recommitment on the third reading, notice must be given.

MR. VOSPER: Would notice in writing to the Clerk be sufficient?

THE SPEAKER: Notice must be given at a previous sitting of the House. As a fact, the proper time for giving notice had passed; but the Order of the Day for the third reading on Tuesday next might be postponed until Wednesday, and then members who wished the Bill to be recommitted could give notice of amendments they intended to submit.

MR. HIGHAM: It had been his intention, on the motion for third reading, to move that the Bill be recommitted with a view of submitting an amendment that the words "Midland Railway Company," in the second line of Clause 3, be struck out.

THE SPEAKER: The only way in which that could be done would be to postpone the Order of the Day on Tuesday next until the Wednesday, and the hon. member could then give notice of the amendment he intended to propose.

PUBLIC SERVICE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest), in moving the second reading, said: I believe this Bill will be found very applicable to the circumstances of this colony. Session after session for some years there have been questions or motions in favour of the introduction of a Public Service Bill, and no doubt the Government may be rightly charged with not being very eager about submitting a measure of the kind. Last session, however, the Government promised to introduce a Public Service Bill, and the result is the measure now before the House. As I said just now, I believe the Bill will be found a fairly good one, and it commends itself to my judgment as the best and most suitable for our requirements at the present time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is the Bill on the lines of the Victorian Act?

THE PREMIER: The Bill is on the lines of the Queensland Act, which I believe was passed in 1891, and is more recent than that of Victoria; but hon. members will be able to see by the marginal notes which Acts the clauses have been taken from. For my own part I am not very much in love with Public Service Bills, and I question whether the measure is as urgently required at the present time as hon. members who have

spoken in regard to it seem to think. Still, if, in the opinion of hon. members, a measure is urgently required, the Bill before the House will, I think, meet our requirements fairly well. There will be some expense in carrying out the Bill, because it will necessitate a statutory board—a department, in fact—to control in some measure, under Ministers and under the control of the Governor-in-Council, the civil service of the colony. In most of the colonies there are Civil Service Acts similar to the Bill. In South Australia there is a very small Act indeed, not at all as complete as the Bill now before the House; but in Victoria there is a very elaborate Act, which has been changed and altered times out of number.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Victorian Act is very cumbersome.

THE PREMIER: It is very cumbersome, and it contains the defects which are to be found in any law or rule to control a large body of men. If a law of the kind is to be made hard and fast, as such Acts generally are, there is not much room for brilliancy or individual merit; because civil servants get on to a "roster," and promotion is generally by length of service, and there are not many chances for a man of exceptional ability jumping over the head of his fellows. Such a Civil Service Act has its advantages, no doubt, but no one will deny that it also has its disadvantages. In this colony the civil service is not very large, and the question arises in my mind whether it is sufficiently large to require such an elaborate Bill as this to control it. If I were to give my own individual opinion, I should say the Bill is not required; at the same time, I am quite willing to assist in passing the Bill, and doing all I can to give information to hon. members. In a matter of this sort, especially in regard to the public service, we cannot be going far wrong if we follow what has been the established rule in other parts of Australia. The Bill might, of course, be of some advantage in putting an end to, or at any rate, preventing, to some extent, what is usually termed "favouritism." I am of opinion, however, that there is very little favouritism in the public service of this colony. If a person who is appointed to an office by the Government of the day, happen by any chance

to be some sort of connection or relation of a Minister, the fact is seized on at once, and favouritism alleged; but on the other hand, if the person appointed has no friends in the colony and is absolutely unknown to the Government, no charge is made. It seems to me, therefore, very easy to give a good appointment to an unknown person, and very difficult to do so in the case of a person who happens to be known to a Minister. That is not good, because it is much better to appoint or promote persons you do know, for then you can vouch for their probity and their fitness. If persons arriving from somewhere else, about whom very little is known, are appointed to fill important offices, the risk is very great that the best men are not obtained; and I have no fear that any charge will be made against the Government in connection with favouritism. Of course, people will say there is favouritism, but I am prepared to meet anyone on this point. Whenever it does happen, and it happens sometimes, that some connection or relation of a Minister is promoted, or gets some appointment, I am sure we are much more careful and always have been in such cases, than where the applicant is not connected in any way with a member of the Government. In a colony like this, where people intermarry through a long number of years, their relationships extend, so that one might find oneself connected in one way or another with nearly every family in the colony; yet because one happens to be, by some tie of marriage, connected with a large number of people, that is no reason why, if some member of the very extensive family happens to get an appointment, a Minister should have any particular interest in it. I think the administration of the public service in this colony, during recent years at any rate, has been remarkably free from any charge of this sort. When appointments are made, they are made upon merit and for probity; and one cannot overlook long service and a clean record. For my own part, I do not think I have a single blood relative in the whole public service of this colony; and I believe that is the position of nearly every member of the Ministry. The object of the Bill is to secure the suitability of applicants, and uniformity in promotion; and it also has for its object the preventing of the civil

service being over-manned or under-manned. It gives to the board a controlling voice; and it gives power to the board to go into and inspect any public office, and report on it. Hon. members will notice that all through the Bill it does not put the board in a position of absolute supremacy; but the conclusions of the board have to be approved by the Executive Government. For my own part, I do not believe in having these boards that are superior to the Executive Government; certainly not in this colony. You may get a tyrannical sort of board, said to be responsible to Parliament, but really responsible to no one. It is very well to say that such a board is responsible to Parliament; but all the mischief may be done before its doings come under the notice of Parliament.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And may require an Act to undo them.

THE PREMIER: It seems to me best to place the responsibility on the Ministers, and let them answer to Parliament for the acts of officers who are under their direction. It has been one of my objects to place our railways under boards, for I can see that this course will relieve the Government from an immense responsibility; but at the same time it may raise up an autocratic form of administration, almost beyond the control of Parliament, or not directly responsible to it; for so long as such a board is acting under the law in controlling public railways, it would be very difficult even for Parliament to get at the board and control it. By placing these boards in such an independent position you really seem to be undermining the system of responsible government; and though I have often thought it would be a capital thing if the Government could get rid of the management of our railways, because of coming so much into contact with the public, and place them under the control of some board, still it would be detracting from responsible government, as we understand it. Under our present system the Ministers are responsible for every act of administration, and are accountable to Parliament. This Bill has been drawn chiefly on the basis of the Queensland Public Service Act of 1896; and the reason why we chose that Act was that it is the most recent and the most simple of the colonial Acts dealing with this sub-

ject. We do not want to raise up a tremendous machinery for our small civil service; and while we do not want to make our Act so simple, and shall I not say so inoperative, as the South Australian Act, yet we thought we could not go far wrong if we took as our foundation the Civil Service Act of Queensland, and applied it, wherever it required applying, to the circumstances of this colony. Hon. members will notice that, in Part II., the service is to be subdivided into three divisions—the professional, the ordinary, and the unclassified. The professional and the ordinary will be each subdivided into six classes, and the probationary class will contain persons such as those mentioned in the first schedule. The business of recommending the details of increases, the appointments, promotions, and retirements, and as to the efficiency of departments, will be left to a board of not more than three persons. Hon. members will observe that the board might be only one person, but the intention of the Bill is that there shall be three. The members of the board have to be appointed for five years, and will be eligible for re-appointment. They are not to be removable by the Government without reference to Parliament. There you are! You make this board independent of the Government; and, although the board will not have absolute power in regard to these matters, yet the Government in many cases cannot act without the consent of the board, and the board cannot act without the consent of the Government. If a member of the board is appointed from the civil service, and if he is entitled, when appointed, to a pension under the Superannuation Act, he will at the end of the five years stand in the same position as regards pension as if he had not been appointed on this board, and his services on the board will not count in regard to pension. He will not receive the pension while a member of the board, but on retiring from the board he will be in the same position as regards pension as when he left the service. By Clauses 25 to 29, admission to vacancies in the service is to be in accordance with the order in which qualified persons shall apply. That seems somewhat awkward, but there is apparently no other way of doing it. There will be a list kept of applicants who have passed, and if they

get on the list, then as vacancies occur they will be chosen from the list in the order in which those qualified persons have applied to be placed on the list. The qualification is to be obtained either by passing the civil service examination, or the first public examination of a university, or by being a member of some profession. By Clause 36 the Government reserve the power, in any of these cases, to appoint persons not already in the service to places such as that of magistrate or warden, unless the board shall point out someone in the service who is as well qualified. Promotions from one class to another are to be regular, and salaries are to be proportioned to promotion. All promotions are to be recommended to the board, and so is any increase of salary in progressing from the bottom to the top of the class. By Clause 40 the Government retain the power of reducing the number of officers in a department, or of uniting two departments; and the officers whose services are dispensed with are to have the first claim to re-appointment. It will be noticed by Clauses 42 to 46 that no officers can be dismissed except in accordance with the provisions of the Bill; and ample powers are given to prevent injustice in this respect, or the infliction of any lesser penalty. I think hon. members who have studied the Bill, whatever else they may say in regard to it, will have to confess that if the Bill is passed it will almost preclude the possibility of favouritism, and I think also it will preclude any injustice or harshness to an officer. I commend the Bill to the consideration of hon. members; and, as I have said, there is plenty of room for question as to whether the Bill is absolutely required at the present time, although there is a great deal in it. While the Bill will stop favouritism and prevent harshness, it will also have some disadvantages, for it will make promotion in the service almost absolutely by rule and not by great merit, and there will not be so much room for individual exertion or for brilliancy in the performance of duty. At the same time, you cannot have everything, for if you want to have a hard-and-fast rule in regard to the civil service, you must have a Bill somewhat on the lines of this measure. I beg to move the second reading.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading, generally, because the Bill is in accordance with one of the planks of the platform on which I was returned to this House some half-dozen years ago. This is also the law in most of the colonies of Australia; and having in my own case had five or six years of Parliamentary experience as to the touting for positions in the civil service by numerous applicants, I, as a member of this House, cannot help speaking somewhat feelingly on this matter. There is no doubt a great deal of influence is sought to be brought to bear in the appointment to positions in the civil service in this colony; and it will be impossible for any member of this House to candidly say he has not been more or less pestered with requests from people to get them appointed to some position in the civil service. I do not know that every member or even a great number of members can say that in every case they have always made particular and careful inquiries as to who was the most desirable candidate for any position; because, if they said so, each head of a department could show them bundles of letters in various pigeon-holes round the office, containing those hon. members' signatures.

MR. VOSPER: And most importunate letters, too.

MR. MORAN: Most importunate. We have, to guide us in this matter, the great example of the Indian Civil Service; for we know that the entry to that, the greatest of all civil services in the British dominions, is by examination, and that the entry to civil services in European countries is almost entirely by examination; and we are only coming into line with the other Australian colonies in introducing this kind of legislation. Of course, as the Premier says, such legislation has the effect of creating a general, all-round, hard-and-fast rule; and the old objection to this sort of thing, that individuality is to a certain extent crushed out, is possibly true. But, on the other hand, is it not better that there should be some test for admission to the civil service, rather than that such admission should be gained, as it must inevitably be, and as it is now, in a haphazard way, and under conditions which Governments in other parts of the world—I do not say

here, for I do not believe it is done here—have in the past greatly abused? Very undue influence has often been brought to bear by a party in power to tamper with the civil service. Persons who come from Victoria are particularly aware of that fact. There have been evils, and great evils of this kind, in the other colonies; and we know also that one of the greatest evils to-day in the United States of America is the out-going and in-going of different sets of civil servants after every quadrennial election. It has been said by eminent writers on the Constitution of America that this nuisance will do more than anything else to disrupt society and good Government in the United States—the out and in-going of the officers in the large departments of the service, with every change of President.

MR. VOSPER: Too many political prizes.

MR. MORAN: Too many political prizes. Men fight for plunder in every part of the States; because, when the election comes round, they know that victory carries with it access to the leading civil offices in their particular districts.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The “spoils to the victors.”

MR. MORAN: “To the victors belong the spoils”: that is the cry in America. I have always been a supporter of this reform; and during every session of Parliament since I entered this Chamber many of us have cried out for a Civil Service Act. It has been a plank in the political platform concerning which I have always felt strongly. I reserve to myself the right to criticise the Bill in all its details at a later stage. I agree with the Premier that it would be absolutely futile to bring to bear on a small colony like this the cumbrous Act of Victoria; and I think the Government have done wisely in adopting the latest legislation of this character from a colony whose political situation is almost exactly identical with ours, and certainly resembles that of Western Australia more closely than does that of any other colony as regards climatic influences, extent of territory, and the large area over which the civil service operates. I shall have great pleasure in watching this Bill very closely, because I think we are now instituting one of the greatest reforms ever intro-

duced in this Chamber. We are altering the method of appointment, and, to a large extent, the method of governing an enormous army of our citizens. The civil servants are an army of great importance throughout the whole of Australasia, because the Governments of the day perform so many functions in these democratic countries that the civil service is growing larger and larger every year. I earnestly hope and trust that, following on this Bill, we shall have some sort of legislation dealing with civil service pensions, and perhaps dealing in particular with the railway service.

A MEMBER: And with old-age pensions.

MR. MORAN: I do not know whether old-age pensions are likely to be included. But after these long years of waiting, I have great pleasure in seeing this Bill before the House, and in giving the general principles of the measure my hearty support.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I also desire to congratulate the Government upon their bringing in this Bill, for which I have always consistently pleaded ever since I have had the honour of a seat in this House; and I also desire to compliment the Ministry on their judgment in carefully avoiding the Victorian Act. One of the most formidable difficulties that has been present to my mind when I have argued for a Civil Service Bill, was the knowledge of the defects that existed in the Victorian Act, and of the abuses which arose in its operation. I have read this Bill with considerable care, and have very little objection to take to it, though possibly I may ask for some small amendments in Committee. My only object now is to thank the Government for giving attention to the expressions of opinion of hon. members on this question. I think, however, that in every case when a Bill is copied from the Act of another colony, it is well to give the House, in the marginal notes, the benefit of a knowledge of that fact. In this Bill there is no reference whatever to the source from which it is taken; and it would have been of assistance to me, when the Bill was first laid on the table, had I known from whence it had been derived. There is an objection mentioned by the Premier to all legislation of this character, namely, that it establishes a kind of machine, which will only work in

one particular direction. You cannot get emotion into a machine; and, looking at the civil service, we find it to be a growing entity in all our colonies. I think I am safe in saying that at the present moment about one in 20 of the working population of this colony is in the civil service, while in Victoria the proportion is, or was a while ago, one in 33, though I do not know exactly what was the effect of the recent retrenchment in that colony. But, when we come to think of the very large number of people who are dependent to a great extent upon Parliament, or rather upon the Government of the day—people who are the servants of the State; one of the difficulties presents itself here which has arisen in America: that the Government of the day have an inordinate amount of power—not, perhaps, that they exercise it improperly; but the very knowledge of the fact that the Ministry have the power to make appointments, in itself becomes an evil in connection with responsible Government. Again, I think hon. members have had enough experience, even in the short Parliamentary history of Western Australia, of what a nuisance, to say the least of it, and what a vexation of spirit, it is, to be constantly pestered to give letters of recommendation to men who simply come from your constituency, whom you know very little about, and are unable conscientiously to recommend; and yet you do not know enough about them to say they are unworthy of the positions they seek to fill. It is inevitable that such a civil service will become crowded with men who frequently have no higher recommendation, no preferential recommendation, for the positions they hold than the fact that they have, or say they have, been some hon. member's supporter at the last election, though perhaps they have voted against that member, or perhaps have never had a vote at all. I contend that such influences ought not to be brought to bear upon the service of the State. The State is supposed to pay good wages, and to treat its servants well; and therefore the State may reasonably demand the best service which is obtainable in the country. We ought to have the very best skill in the civil service, and the only way in which we can really get it, to a certain extent at all

events, is by examination, and by promotion upon merit by an independent board. That there are difficulties I know. I perceive that the Premier, who is in charge of the Bill, is not present at the moment; but while this Bill is before the House, I should very much like to ask the Ministry, and perhaps the Attorney General will note the point as worthy of consideration, whether it is not possible to establish in the civil service the eight-hours system. By the eight-hours system I mean this: we expect men to give us equivalent service for the money they receive. It is no secret that any number of men in the public service in this colony do not work five hours a day; that even the heads of departments are not in their offices till 10 o'clock, and that the same men leave at 4. In the outside world we expect a man to work eight hours; and an eight-hours system is looked upon by the general public as being to the advantage of the worker. There is one principle to which I hold very strongly, that is an honest day's work for an honest day's pay; and I think another principle just as forceful in its application is that of an honest day's pay for an honest day's work. The effect of the unequal distribution of the working hours of the civil service is that there are men who are working twice the number of hours they ought to work for the money they receive, because the work of the department has to be done; and it is done by the willing man; it is done by the man who is anxious to please; it is done by the man who is anxious to retain his situation. It is a matter of common talk and common knowledge that there is a large number of men in the service who for some reason, whether by favouritism or otherwise, are able to earn their weekly or monthly wages and to do precious little for it. They come to the offices late; they begin work perhaps an hour after they enter the office, and they leave the office before the regular time, and as a consequence they never put even in five hours' work a day.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Have you proof of that?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have abundant proof. How many of your officers work eight hours a day?

THE PREMIER: Do not all of them work eight hours?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am asking that the Government should consider the desirableness of providing in this Bill for an eight-hours day for all the men in the service. A navvy working out in the open, exposed to the broiling sun, has to work for eight hours, and is expected to do so. Men have to work on our railways, where the eight hours are stretched out to nine and sometimes to eleven, although the lives of the public are at stake; but when a man is nicely enclosed in an office, with all the advantages and comforts that surround him, he cannot even put in five hours' work.

MR. LEAKE: Consider the stuffy atmosphere.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes; the atmosphere may be stuffy, but he goes out two or three times a day for "a whisky." I do not desire to make any attack upon the civil service: that is not the point. If we are to establish an Act which is to be, to a certain extent, a machine, we ought to establish in that Act the principle that a civil servant is expected to do a day's work for his money, and not to leave his work to some willing man who is content to put in 14 or 15 hours a day to clear off the arrears of the office. If we would in this Bill recognise the principle that eight hours is a day's work, we should go a long way to assist the outside public to establish that principle; and I hold that eight hours honestly worked, whether in an office or in the field, is sufficient for any man to put in for his wages, and ought to be as much as the State should demand. I was saying before the Premier entered the House, that we have a right to demand the best talent and the best available service for the State. We are prepared, or ought to be prepared, to pay the best wages, and the best services should be demanded for the money.

THE PREMIER: I know of no instance of an eight-hour day in public offices.

MR. GREGORY: What about telegraph operators on the fields?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am told a great many officers are worked many more than eight hours.

THE PREMIER: We must go by precedent a little, you know.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A great many men are working more than ten hours a day in the public service of the colony,

and I am speaking of what I know; and I contend that the reason is that a number of men in the service do not do a fair day's work, and their duties have to be handed over to other men. I do not desire to make a hard-and-fast-line, and the dinner hour might be counted in the eight hours, if thought necessary. But if a man comes to his office at ten o'clock in the morning, goes out for an hour and a half for dinner, and leaves at four o'clock, how can he give an honest day's work to the State? In a merchant's office, employees are expected to be there at nine o'clock, and not to leave until five; and in banks, the chances are the clerks are kept ten or eleven hours, if the cash happens not to balance. What is desired is a condition of things under which the State shall get a fair day's work for a fair day's pay, and that encouragement shall be given to men who do their work, without over-working them simply because they are willing and have incompetent colleagues in the service. I can only say again that I receive this Bill with great satisfaction, and I compliment the Government upon keeping a long way from the Victorian Act.

MR. MORAN: That is wonderful, from the hon. member!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not know that it is wonderful; because I have often held that Victoria's example is one to serve rather as a beacon of danger than one to be followed. If the Bill can be honestly worked, which I think it can with some small amendments, the civil service will receive a great impetus in the direction of right management in every department. By the Bill, encouragement will be given to the mass of the public service, in the feeling that they will be fairly treated and properly promoted. It is all very well to speak of one or two men who may be bright and particular stars. No doubt we like to see those men in the service, but, after all, the work of the world is not done by bright and particular stars, but by ordinary kinds of individuals. What we want is to encourage the men generally, and let them feel that they are being fairly treated by their employers; because, after all, the State is only an employer of labour, and ought to treat public servants in the same way as people treat their private servants. While the encouragement I have indicated

is given, the Government ought to see they get good service, no more being demanded, however, than is reasonable for the pay given. I have every pleasure in supporting the Bill.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): I also congratulate the Government on the introduction of this measure, and I intend to give the principles it contains my strongest support. For a long time such a Bill has been advocated from this side of the House, and I am glad to see the Government have finally decided to introduce this legislation. There are one or two directions in which the Bill might, no doubt, be amended in Committee with advantage. First of all, I would like to say that civil servants employed on the goldfields, in the North-West and the more remote parts of the colony generally, should have some guarantee given to them under the Bill, of a fixed allowance in addition to their ordinary salaries.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is done by regulation now.

MR. VOSPER: At the present time, although provision is made by regulation for certain persons to get goldfields allowances, there has been a desire on the part of the Government for economy, a desire which the permanent heads of departments have in a very praiseworthy manner endeavoured to reflect. This, however, has led to cases of severe hardship. I have in my mind at the present time, the case of a person in the postal department, who was consumptive, and who applied to the head of the department to be removed to the goldfields, having been told by his medical adviser that in such a change lay the only chance of his life being prolonged. This was a man of excellent abilities, who had been some time in the service; but because he had the misfortune to be consumptive, and because it was at his own request he had been transferred, he was informed he would not be allowed the Government allowance of, I think, £30 a year.

THE PREMIER: It is in connection with new appointments that allowances are being done away with.

MR. VOSPER: I do not think so; because I understand the exception was made in this case because the transfer had been at the man's own request. But even if the allowance is being done away with

in connection with new appointments, I would point out that in the more remote portions of the colony, the conditions of living are not any easier or less costly to-day than they were four or five years ago, and there can be no reason for a general abolition of the system. There may be districts which have become more civilised than they were a few years ago and where the allowance may not be necessary, but taking the greater portion of the area of the colony, it may be safely conceded that, in the majority of instances, allowances should be made, and also a guarantee given of some kind of annual leave. Civil servants on the goldfields and other outlying districts are entitled to the greatest consideration from the heads of departments and from the House, and, whether by this Bill, or by regulation, there should be some fixed allowance to civil servants in remote parts, and also, as I say, some definite guarantee of annual leave. Any concession of this character would be most gratefully received by the whole service, and would so far as from impairing, probably increase efficiency, and, altogether, would be money well spent. The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) alluded to the prevalence of touting for positions in the civil service, and I must say that the practice up to the present time is nothing short of a deplorable nuisance. People with no qualifications at all come to members of Parliament for letters of recommendation, and some members are so good-hearted as to comply, and thus the pest is transferred to the heads of departments. This takes up a lot of time of members, and a vast amount of patience, which might be put to more useful purposes, and the whole system is a source of trouble to everyone concerned. I must say that as a general rule I have not been troubled by my own constituents; because most of the people who want to live and batten on the Government are residents of Perth and the coastal districts generally, who come to members for the goldfields, probably because they think those members more tender hearted than others.

MR. HAEFER: They think those members have more influence.

MR. VOSPER: That is possible, but I cannot imagine whence they get their belief. Applicants when seeking recom-

mendations often say that they voted for the particular member at the last general election. I was returned by 370 votes, but judging by the applications since, I must have received about 3,000 votes.

MR. MORAN: Have you no possible policemen in your constituency?

MR. VOSPER: No, none; and it is safe to say that more people come from North-East Coolgardie than ever went there, so far as these applications are concerned. By the Bill, or some other means, steps should be taken to put an end to this state of things. I would go so far as to say that it should be made a disqualification for a candidate to obtain, or try to obtain, political influence in any way. I am told that is the law in Victoria, and I know it is the rule in the Perth City Council, under a regulation recently made. It is a very wise and salutary rule, and it would be excellent if it could be applied to applicants for posts in the civil service.

MR. MORAN: A man might desire to help his own constituents.

MR. VOSPER: If members choose to put up with the nuisance, it is their lookout. I am very much in sympathy with the remarks of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) as to the adoption of the eight-hour system in the public service. In some cases, civil servants do less work than the country is entitled to receive, and, on the other hand, a large number are underpaid and overworked. No department sins more in this direction than the department controlled by the Commissioner of Railways; because in almost every branch of the railway service men are worked outrageously long hours.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The men are paid for extra work.

MR. VOSPER: That is true; but no amount of pay can excuse the employment of persons for inordinately long hours in the line telegraph offices and signal boxes.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I do not think the extra work is so much as represented.

MR. VOSPER. I am informed that signalmen especially are employed for hours entirely incompatible with the public safety.

THE PREMIER: Cite a special case, and it can be looked into.

MR. VOSPER: I should be willing to do that, but I have not thought it necessary to do so at the present time. If inquiries were made, it would be found that the long hours I have indicated occur to a greater extent than the Commissioner of Railways imagines.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I know there are cases, but they are quite unavoidable in many instances.

MR. VOSPER: There are accidents in the shunting yards in the colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: But these are not connected with extra work.

MR. VOSPER: I do not know that. Recently a newspaper at the Boulder published a list of 14 accidents in 14 days in the Kalgoorlie railway yard, and accidents which were more or less of a serious character, involving the loss of fingers and hands and so forth, were said to be due to employing inefficient men for long hours. Railway work requires special and skilled attention, and all the best faculties a man possesses, and if a railway official be employed for more than eight hours his faculties become impaired and he is not fit for the work.

MR. MORAN: A ticket collector?

MR. VOSPER: There is no reason why a ticket collector should be overworked, and certainly in the cases of signalmen, engine-drivers, and shunters the hours should not be too long, or, otherwise, public safety is jeopardised, and the property of the Commissioner placed in considerable danger. These are matters to which I think it right to call attention at this stage in the progress of a Bill intended to control the public service; and I make these remarks in no unfriendly spirit, but with a desire to see the service made as efficient as possible. The reason I single out the Railway Department for special comment is because that is the department which concerns the safety of the travelling public. In nothing do we risk so much as when we take a railway journey, and when a man places his life in the hands of the department, he is entitled to some guarantee of safety. That the department is remarkably free from accidents of a serious character, I admit, and I congratulate the Commissioner on the fact; but, at the same time, I would warn him that immunity of that

kind cannot be long continued if the railway servants are overworked. I urge on the Commissioner of Railways, whether this Bill pass or not, to take steps to discover how many railway servants are being overworked, and to mitigate the evil as far as he can; and I know that representations of this kind will have their effect on the hon. gentleman. I conclude by saying practically what I said at the beginning, that I shall give this Bill all the support I possibly can.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): It will be remembered that some years ago a Civil Service Commission was appointed by Parliament, and I had the honour of being one of the members; so that it stands to reason that a recommendation from that body to bring in a Civil Service Bill should have my support, in regard to the Bill now before the House. Every member will agree that there has been great dissatisfaction with regard to many of the appointments made in the public service, and particularly in the Railway Department. I believe there are memorials before the Commissioner of Railways at the present time, from two or three hundred men, calling attention to the appointment of one officer to be the head of a branch in the Railway Department; and if this Bill will do away with the dissatisfaction which exists in that and other cases, and will create confidence in what is being done, that alone will be a great gain and will be important to the working of the civil service generally. There is no doubt the appointment by examination and promotion by merit will be a step in the right direction; and it is only fair that those who are in the various departments should, when they show that they merit promotion by attention to duty and general capability, be enabled to rise to better positions. In many cases it has been said—whether fairly or not I am not in a position to state, though I do know that great dissatisfaction has been expressed—that there are men who, as strangers, have been placed over those men in the service who, by ability and merit, have proved that they should have been raised to a better position when opportunity occurred. The Bill no doubt be of great service to the colony in removing such grievances; but it is not alone in one part of the colony that this dissatisfaction has arisen,

for it seems to be pretty general. With regard to the eight hours work for clerks in the public service, I think that in this climate such a regulation could not be carried out. If clerks in the public service, like clerks in mercantile houses, were to go to office at 9 o'clock in the morning, working till 12, then an hour for luncheon, and one section of the staff relieving another, so that the office should be continually open for business in the middle of the day, and the service to continue till 5 o'clock in the afternoon, that would be seven hours work in the day, and would be quite sufficient in a climate like this. Generally, I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill as a step in the right direction, and it shows that we are marching with the times and in the wake of the other colonies.

MR. CONOLLY (Dundas): I have much pleasure indeed in congratulating the Government on this Bill. I believe all members of this Assembly have welcomed the Bill as one that should have been introduced at an earlier period, but is none the less appreciated now that it is here. Many members will agree that the Bill has a bearing on some of the most important workings of Government affairs, and on the control of affairs in the colony; for it bears directly on sound and economic management of the public service and the expenditure of the public money. I rise to express my opinion with regard to some salaries which I know are being paid in some departments of the Government service, and I allude more especially to the post and telegraph services as carried on in distant goldfields. I would like to say, especially with regard to the more remote mining centres, that the anomalies which exist are in my opinion most remarkable; for in such goldfields as I have the honour to represent, men in the Government service are expected to do their business in a good, sound, business-like manner, to meet the public with courtesy and to maintain themselves in proper respectability, and yet these men receive smaller salaries than are paid to ordinary working miners on the fields. Such a condition of things is absolutely unreasonable; and it cannot be expected that we shall get good, sound work from our civil servants on a mere living salary. More than this, I maintain that to under-pay civil ser-

vants jeopardises the safety of public affairs, more especially in monetary matters. In my part of the country it has happened not once or twice, but several times, that money passing through the post-office has gone astray; and this occurs I know not only in my district, but in other parts of the colony. To use the argument of the right hon. gentleman (the Premier), although the country is not expected to pay for honesty among civil servants, still we know that the greater the necessity, the greater the temptation. For the safety of public affairs, and also for the sake of ordinary fairness, I do hope this Bill will at least so regulate salaries of civil servants as to give them something more than an ordinary living wage. I can assure the House that I am not exaggerating when I say that on the northern goldfields, and those that are the more remote, where the cost of living is very considerable, public servants are getting a smaller salary than is paid to an ordinary working miner on those fields, and these public servants work longer hours. I hope that, among other great reforms following the introduction of this Bill, we shall see our civil servants paid a proper and adequate salary.

MR. LEAKE: I move that the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and passed, and the debate adjourned to the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER said there was not much business on the Notice Paper, and he moved that the House do now adjourn.

The House adjourned at seven minutes to six o'clock, p.m., until the next Tuesday afternoon.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 22nd August, 1899.

Paper presented—Weights and Measures Bill, third reading—Business postponed—Dividend Duty Bill, first reading—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: By-laws, Municipality of North Fremantle.

Ordered to lie on the table.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES BILL.

Read a third time, on motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, and *passed*.

BUSINESS POSTPONED.

On the Order of the Day for second reading of the Customs Consolidation Amendment Bill.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell) said: So few members being present this afternoon, it would be inadvisable on my part to go on with any further business, and it would be unfair to the members who are away. Two or three Bills are of a non-controversial character, yet in my opinion it is better that we should not take second readings this afternoon, though I would personally prefer doing so. I therefore move that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

DIVIDEND DUTY BILL.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 5.25 until the next Tuesday.