

AYES.
 The Hon. H. Briggs
 The Hon. D. K. Congdon
 The Hon. J. W. Hackett
 The Hon. D. McKay
 The Hon. C. A. Piesse
 The Hon. H. J. Saunders
 The Hon. W. Spencer
 The Hon. J. H. Taylor
 The Hon. E. H. Wittenoom
 The Hon. R. S. Haynes
 (Teller).

NOES.
 The Hon. R. G. Burges
 The Hon. S. J. Haynes
 The Hon. A. B. Kidson
 The Hon. S. H. Parker
 The Hon. J. E. Richardson
 The Hon. F. M. Stone
 The Hon. W. Alexander
 (Teller).

Question—that the words proposed to be struck out stand part of the question—put.

The House divided, with the following result:—

Ayes	10
Noes	7

Majority for	...	3
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NOES.
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 The Hon. F. M. Stone
 (Teller).

Question—that the President do now leave the Chair for the purpose of considering the Bill in committee—put and passed.

IN COMMITTEE.

The Bill was then considered in committee, agreed to without amendment, reported, and the report adopted.

The Standing Orders were suspended.

THIRD READING.

The Bill was then read a third time and passed.

JUDGES' PENSION BILL.

This Bill was received from the Legislative Assembly, and was read a first time.

STREETS AND ROADS (GREENMOUNT AND MARBLE BAR) CLOSURE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): This is merely a formal Bill, for the purpose of legalising the closing of certain streets at Greenmount, and substituting others in their places. I move that it be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

The Bill was then considered in committee, agreed to without amendment, reported, and report adopted.

STREETS AND ROADS (MULLEWA AND BUSSELTON) CLOSURE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): This, like the last, is a Bill to close up certain streets which are not in use, and which are necessary to be closed for railway purposes. I move that it be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

The Bill was then considered in committee, agreed to without amendment, reported, and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House at 6:15 o'clock p.m. adjourned until Tuesday, 22nd September, at 4:30 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 3rd September, 1896.

Question: Bunbury Harbour Improvements—Motion: Leave of absence—Tobacco (unmanufactured) Duty Bill: first reading—Customs Duties Repeal Bill: first reading—Judges' Pensions Bill: third reading—Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill: Legislative Council's suggestions; in committee—Annual Estimates, 1896-7: further considered in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION.—BUNBURY HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, by leave and without notice, asked the Premier whether the plans and specifications of the proposed improvements for Bunbury harbour would be laid on the table of the House.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied that he believed the plans and specifications were not quite ready, but that they would certainly be laid on the table of the House, when ready.

MOTION—LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to the member for the Murchison (Mr. Hooley).

TOBACCO (UNMANUFACTURED) DUTY BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

CUSTOMS DUTIES REPEAL BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

JUDGES' PENSIONS BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S SUGGESTIONS.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House went into Committee to consider the following suggestions for amendments in the Bill:—

Suggestion No. 1.—On page 2, Clause 5, line 4, suggested that after the word "offer" the following words be inserted: "and such offer shall be binding on the owner, if the decision of the Minister to purchase the land shall be notified to such owner by letter posted within one month of the date of the receipt of the offer by the Minister."

Suggestion No. 2.—On page 4, Clause 12, line 2, strike out all the words after "land," and insert the following in lieu thereof: "the question of to whom the land shall be sold shall be decided by lot, to be drawn by the Minister in the presence of the applicants, or such of them as shall attend at his office, after being duly notified that such drawing is to take place on a day to be named in such notification."

IN COMMITTEE.

Suggestion No. 1:

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that this suggestion be agreed to, and said this amendment would be rather an advantage as an addition to the clause.

Put and passed.

Suggestion No. 2:

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said, in regard to the alteration made by the Legislative Council in Clause 12, this amendment would alter the mode of procedure in cases where two or more applicants applied for the same piece of land. The clause as it left this House provided that "If there is more than one applicant for the conditional purchase of the same portion of the land, the Governor shall appoint such persons as he may think fit to select the person to whom the land shall be sold, the preference being given, if other qualifications are equal, to the applicant who gives satisfactory proof of his intention to reside and make his home upon and cultivate the land, and the decision of the persons appointed in that behalf as aforesaid shall be final." In dealing with the suggested amendment, he did not propose to ask the House to disagree with it, because it was not worth while to contest the point, and he did not wish it to go abroad that every suggestion of an amendment made by the Legislative Council would not be favourably considered by this House. If, however, there was ever a bad suggestion made, he thought it was this one. The object which the Government had in view, in framing the clause originally, was to do away with the lottery in the sale of land, and to remove the chances of blackmail being levied or other iniquitous advantages being taken by greedy speculators. The clause provided that a board should be appointed, and that it should select from the applicants the one who, in the opinion of the board, seemed best fitted to occupy and cultivate the land. That appeared to him a wise provision, and far better than the old plan of deciding such a case by lottery, as the present land regulations permitted, and which had not worked well, as he knew from experience. For what happened in such a case? If there was a piece of land that several people desired to select,

whether for speculation, resale or settlement, the probability was that a greedy speculator, or several of them, would put in any quantity of dummy applications for the purpose of securing more chances than would fall to the *bonâ-fide* applicant who put in only one application. Indeed, there was no limit to the number of dummy applications which, under this system, such grasping persons might put in. The drawing by lot was, therefore, in favour of those persons who had put in the most applications; and there was nothing to prevent a person from putting in ten thousand applications, if so inclined, thereby increasing his chances against the *bonâ-fide* applicants. Thus the *bonâ-fide* agriculturist, who wanted to obtain land suitable for settlement, found himself checkmated all round, and he had to buy out the grasping speculator, either before the decision by lot or afterwards. It was to alter this bad procedure that the provision was inserted in this clause; and now, unfortunately, the Council desired, by this amendment, to prevent the Government from introducing that better system. Of course an applicant had to pay a deposit on each application put in by him, or by others on his behalf, but he did not lose by that, because the money was returned if he failed to get the land. The evil was worse in the case of choice pieces of land for which there were likely to be several or many *bonâ-fide* applicants, and it was then that the grasping speculator took full advantage of his opportunity, and worked the lottery system for his own profit and to the detriment of the *bonâ fide* applicants. He (the Premier) had not intended to ask the House to disagree to this amendment suggested by the Council, but his desire was to ascertain the wishes of the House as to whether they would assent to an amendment which would put an obstacle in the way of the better system which the Bill was designed to bring about. It did seem somewhat hard that the Upper House, which was supposed to represent the property of the country to a larger extent than this House, should now take this unwise course.

MR. RANDELL: Is it really so—does it represent the property of the colony to a larger extent?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he was unwilling to lose the

Bill, and therefore moved that this House agrees to the suggested amendment. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Disagrees.] He wished only to obtain the sense of the House, and would rather lose the clause altogether than risk the loss of the Bill. At the same time, he thought the Upper House might be asked to reconsider their amendment, in view of the fact that the Government and this House were trying, in this clause, to introduce a better system of selling and settling land, rather than continue the evils of the lottery system. Seeing the feeling of the House, he would therefore alter his motion, and he now moved "That this House disagrees with suggestion No. 2."

MR. LOTON said he was not particularly cognisant of the principles of this Bill, (it having been discussed when he was not in the House); but if it were now open to discussion he would disagree with some of the principles of the Bill. However, he believed the provision made in this clause was much better than the one which existed in the land regulations, as to disposing of land by lot. His opinion was that if there were a number of applicants for a particular piece of land, it would be much better and fairer, in the interest of all concerned, that such land should be put up to public auction.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: You would have blackmailing.

MR. LOTON said that was the only way of ascertaining the value of a piece of land for which there were several applicants. While he did not regard the Bill as one that was needed in present circumstances, yet he would prefer to see the particular clause stand in the Bill as it passed through this House, rather than be amended in the way suggested by the Legislative Council.

MR. MORAN agreed that the proposed amendment would destroy the whole purpose of the Bill, as a *bonâ fide* cultivator would have no chance under the ballot system. The only objection to leaving the allocation of the land to a board was that the board would have great powers of patronage; but the members were sure to be men who would put producers on the land, instead of awarding it to those who would hold it for speculative purposes.

MR. A. FORREST reminded members that when the ballot system was tried in the North-West, dummy applicants' names were put in so largely, in the interests of the people who wanted to get the land, that the latter got as much as they wanted. He did not think the House desired that state of things any longer, and it certainly would not help to settle the land with the proper class of people. It was to be hoped the Council would withdraw their suggested amendment.

MR. RANDELL said that while there was some sort of apparent fairness in the drawing of lots to determine who should get possession of particular blocks of land, he had come to the conclusion that the Bill as passed by this House was preferable to the shape in which the Council desired to alter it. It was scarcely likely that the board entrusted with the hearing of applications would exercise favouritism.

Question—that suggested amendment No. 2 be disagreed to—put and passed.

Resolutions reported to the House, and report adopted.

THE SPEAKER said that as this was the first occasion on which this House had received suggestions from the Legislative Council, asking the Assembly to make amendments in a Bill, it appeared desirable that the Bill should be returned with a message, stating that the Assembly had agreed to make the amendment contained in suggestion No. 1, but that the Assembly did not agree to the amendment in suggestion No. 2 of the Council's message.

Ordered, that the Bill be returned to the Legislative Council, with a message accordingly.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1896-7.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration of the annual Estimates was resumed.

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT.

Crown Law Officers, £3,305—agreed to.

Supreme Court, £6,230—agreed to.

Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, £1,926:

MR. GEORGE said that when it became necessary to trace the property of creditors which had been dishonestly

made away with by insolvents, the Official Receiver asked the informing creditor to guarantee the expenses of recovering the property. It seemed to him (Mr. George) that if there was any justification for the office of Official Receiver, it should be that he protected the mercantile community from fraud of the description alluded to. He would like to hear the views of the Attorney General on the subject.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he had never heard of an Official Receiver recovering property at the expense of the public, to divide amongst creditors, when it had been spirited away by debtors, and he did not think the House would agree to that being done, nor could it be wise to introduce the system.

MR. GEORGE said it was just as much the duty of the Attorney General's department to protect traders against business thieves, as it was for the State to take charge of lunatics or perform any other function for the public welfare. Perhaps some future Attorney General would deal with the matter.

Vote put and passed.

Stipendiary Magistracy, £21,000:

MR. GEORGE asked what rule was observed in connection with the granting of increases to the salaries of stipendiary magistrates, as he noticed that all the magistrates were not treated alike.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said there was no rule on the subject. Having regard to the high cost of living and of house rent, he did not think any of the increases in this estimate would be objected to.

MR. A. FORREST said the salaries of magistrates in the North-Western district were set down at the same amount as last year, while those of some other magistrates were raised. The magistrates in the North-West had to travel long distances, and, in administering justice among the black population, they had to display much tact and ability, besides having to exercise a great deal of hospitality.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the magistrates in East Kimberley, in West Kimberley, and at Broome, were paid higher salaries than any other country magistrates, namely

£500 per annum. No doubt these salaries would be considered next year.

Mr. RANDELL said two magistrates in the North-West were medical men, holding Government appointments, so that their emoluments, altogether, were £700 and £750 a year respectively. Referring to another matter, he would like to see Northam made the place of residence of the Toodyay magistrate, as that place was the principal centre of the district.

Mr. HASSELL said one magistrate, instead of three, could do all the work of the York district.

Mr. CLARKSON said the Toodyay district was a large and populous, though scattered one, and it would not be advisable to make any change in the place of residence of the stipendiary magistrate.

Mr. R. F. SHOLL said one magistrate could do all the work of York, Northam, and Newcastle. He had expected that, with the extension of the railway, which made it easy to reach different parts of a district, the number of resident magistrates would be decreased; but, instead of that, a magistrate had been appointed for Guildford, notwithstanding that the work of the stipendiary bench was lightened by some justices of the peace regularly attending the sittings of the Perth court.

Mr. LEFROY said it was amusing to hear the member for the Gascoyne, who admitted that he did not do any of the work of a justice of the peace, trying to shove all the work in the country districts upon those justices who were willing to do the work. The hon. member desired to take away some of the resident magistrates, and, if that were done, the justices of the peace would have to do the work. The hon. member had always said that some of the magistrates had nothing to do but to kick their heels. As one who had acquaintance with the resident magistrate for Toodyay, and knew exactly what that magistrate had to do, he would like to say there was a great deal of work in the Toodyay district, and that officer was very efficient and careful. The hon. member had also said the magistrate for Toodyay could do the work in his own district and York as well. It would not be possible for one magistrate to do the work for the whole of those districts, for he would have a

great deal of travelling to do. He (Mr. Lefroy) had had some experience of what a country magistrate had to undergo, for, on one occasion, he had ridden 50 miles to fine a man ten shillings.

Mr. CLARKSON said the member for the Gascoyne had been talking about things he did not understand, for the country magistrates had more work to do than some hon. members imagined. The resident magistrate for Toodyay was a most hard-working and painstaking man. At the present time that magistrate was employed fully three days each week at Northam, the work there having increased considerably.

Mr. RANDELL suggested that the magistrate for Toodyay should be treated more liberally. He noticed that several resident magistrates got considerably higher salaries, and yet some of them had perhaps less work to do. For instance, the magistrate for York had only the centres of York and Beverley to attend to, and yet he received a considerably higher salary than the magistrate for Toodyay. The magistrate for Toodyay had a larger district to attend to, and should be placed on an equality with those other magistrates who might be classed as in the same position. He desired earnestly to recommend this officer to the Government for an increase of salary.

Mr. R. F. SHOLL said he did not wish it to be inferred he had found fault with the resident magistrate for Toodyay. That officer had a great deal of work to do, having to attend to his own district as well as Northam, the Moore and Victoria Plains. That was a case in which a really old and efficient magistrate was worked hard, and did not receive sufficient remuneration, when his salary was compared with that of others.

Mr. GEORGE asked whether the Government contemplated introducing, this session, a Bill to provide pensions for stipendiary magistrates, in the same way that they had introduced a Bill to provide pensions for the judges.

THE CHAIRMAN said the question before the House was as to the salary of the magistrate for Toodyay.

Mr. GEORGE said he simply wished to point out that the increases in the salaries of the magistrates would have an important bearing upon a Stipendiary

Magistrates' Pension Bill, on the lines of the Judges' Pensions Bill.

MR. RANDELL asked for an answer to the suggestion he made.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he had endeavoured, in making the increases, to keep the salaries in the same proportions as in the past. Hitherto the salary paid for York had always been in advance of that paid for Toodyay; but he admitted that in this case the Magistrate for York had received an advance of salary in excess of the due proportion; the salary for York, as compared with that increase, amounting to £50, while that of the magistrate for Toodyay was only £35. He would consider the question when the Estimates were recommittees, and would then endeavour to do what he could for the magistrate for Toodyay.

MR. WOOD, referring to item 58, "Lodging allowance, resident magistrate, Esperance, £50," asked if it were correct that this officer was living in a house belonging to the Government.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said if it were correct that the magistrate for Esperance was living in a house that was the property of the Government, he would not be able to draw a lodging allowance. That rule was strictly applied.

MR. HIGHAM, referring to item 93, "Witnesses and jurors' payment, £3,000," asked whether the Government contemplated any change in the present iniquitous system of under-paying jurors. Jurors should be treated now in a liberal manner, for it was unfair to expect a juror to perform his duties in an even frame of mind, at a time when he felt that he and his family had been virtually robbed. The miserable pittance of five shillings a day was paid to a juror for performing the duties; he was often kept hanging about the court from day to day, and he went home at the end of the week feeling that he had deprived his family of the means they required for their support. The Government should remember that prices all round were getting higher, and he hoped something would be done for the benefit of jurymen.

MR. SOLOMON said it seemed hard that a working man, who was earning perhaps fifteen shillings a day, should be taken from his work and forced to act as

a juror for a pittance of five shillings a day.

MR. RANDELL said if they took into consideration the great rise in wages during the last year, they could readily see that jurymen would feel considerable exasperation at getting only five shillings a day. Apart from the artisan, the ordinary working man would get 7s., 8s., and sometimes 9s. a day, and yet might be compelled to act as a jurymen at 5s. a day. He trusted this matter would receive the consideration of the Government, and he suggested that the allowance might be raised to 7s. 6d. a day, at least.

MR. GEORGE said that, in considering this matter, they should remember that on the previous day they had increased the allowance to volunteers for field-days and such "petty rot." If there should be an increase of the payment made to volunteers for a field-day parade, surely there should be some increase in the payment made to jurors.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that last year this matter was referred to, and an assurance was given by the Government that an alteration would be made. The whole community recognised the necessity for the jury system, and were quite willing to pay the jurymen. The Government should give an assurance that they would make the necessary advance, and he suggested that the amount should be raised to 10s. per day.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said the time had arrived when jurymen should be better paid. He did not know that jurymen anywhere were paid the full rate of wages, and he did not think they should be paid the full rate, but that a balance should be left for honour and glory. The member for Nannine had suggested 10s. a day, and the member for Perth 7s. 6d., while the present rate paid in criminal cases was 5s. He could assure the House that he would consider the question, and endeavour to give effect to the wishes of hon. members.

MR. HASSELL said witnesses were as badly paid as jurymen, and the Government, when considering an increase for jurors, should at the same time take into consideration the fees for witnesses.

Vote put and passed.

Land Titles, £6,899 10s.:

MR. A. FORREST said he had to draw attention, not to any reduction of salary, but to a great injustice that had been inflicted by this department on some people during the last twelve months. It was beyond comprehension that such action should have been taken by the department of which the Commissioner of Titles was the permanent head. He was referring to the manner in which the department had dealt with powers of attorney. People leaving the colony gave powers of attorney to persons to conduct their business, and directly they left the colony those powers of attorney might just as well be thrown into the fire, so far as this department was concerned. Whenever it was sought to transfer property upon the signature of an attorney, the acting Commissioner demanded that evidence should be given that the principal was alive. During the absence of the Commissioner of Titles, the acting Commissioner had, it seemed, found there was some little flaw in the Land Titles Act or in the Powers of Attorney Act, and had refused to accept any transfer of land signed by an attorney, and he still refused to do so. It was a common complaint throughout the colony that transfers could not be effected on the signature of an attorney. He (Mr. A. Forrest) had had a case of this sort in connection with an original title under the Transfer of Land Act, and the acting Commissioner had refused to transfer that land under power of attorney, although he (Mr. Forrest) had got to support him an affidavit from the principal, the man he was acting for, the principal being in the colony at the time. It was a disgrace to any community that this state of things should be allowed, and he hoped the Attorney General would inform the House whether any effort was being made to put the matter right.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he sympathised with the hon. member in the difficulties which had been found in the way of people acting under powers of attorney; but, at the same time, they could not lay the blame at the door of the acting Commissioner of Titles. The difficulty arose because of the state of the law on the subject at the present time. It appeared that the Transfer of Land Act originally contained

a clause providing for powers of attorney being registered in the Titles Office, and remaining in force until revoked, either by notice or by the death of the principal. Unfortunately, in 1878, that prohibition was inadvertently repealed when they were repealing some other words in the same clause; and consequently the section was reprinted in the consolidating Act, without its being observed that some of the words had slipped out. The consequence was that the deputy Commissioner, when appointed a short time ago, could find no authority whatever for taking a transfer signed by an attorney. A conveyance under power of attorney would not be accepted unless it could be proved that the principal was alive, for such a document could be revoked by death or notice at any time. He (the Attorney General) had tried to meet the position, but had found it impossible to tell the acting Commissioner that he was acting illegally. It was difficult for him to take the responsibility on his shoulders of instructing the deputy Commissioner to accept transfers signed by attorneys, and there would be a certain amount of risk, which it was not to be expected the deputy Commissioner would take. If a transfer of that sort had been accepted, and it was afterwards found that the principal was dead at the time the powers of attorney were exercised, the title would have been faulty; and if such a title had come to the hands of the member for West Kimberley, he would have been the first to blame the deputy Commissioner. The difficulty would remain until an amendment was made in the Transfer of Land Act. The Government took steps at once to remedy the matter, and just when they were preparing a Bill, the member for North Fremantle mentioned the subject and suggested that a Bill should be introduced by himself. He (the Attorney General) fell in with that idea, and the Bill had passed the Assembly on the previous night, as amended by the Council, setting everything right as regards powers of attorney. As soon as the Bill was passed, he should feel it his duty to ask the Governor to assent to it instantly. He would also propose to amend the Transfer of Land Act by replacing the words that had been dropped out inadvertently, so that the matter would be put right both in the general

law and in the Transfer of Land Act. He supposed that the inconvenience complained of would not now last more than a couple of days.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, referring to item 2, "Registrar of Titles and Deeds £450, increase £50," said that for months past there had been irritating difficulties in connection with the transfer of land. The Act had been specifically drawn and adopted in all the colonies, for the express purpose of making the transfer of land simple. The changes and regulations in the Titles Office of late had, however, caused a vast amount of irritation day by day. Only a little while ago a circular was issued stating that every title, which went into the Titles Office was to remain there. If a man had 10,000 acres and he wanted to transfer 10 acres, the Titles Office laid hold of his title and kept it. No regulation should be passed that would hinder persons doing business with the office.

MR. MOSS said he knew persons who had subdivided land, and taken the certificate of title out of the colony, so that when purchasers of that land wished to register their transfer, after paying all the purchase money, they found the vendor was not about. The regulation provided that when a person subdivided land, so soon as the title was taken to the Titles Office for registration of the first transfer, the title should remain there to facilitate the registration of subsequent transfers. That was a good regulation, for when a purchaser paid for a subdivision, he should be able to get his title with every facility, and the Titles Office officials, in acting as they had done, were only assisting the general object of the Transfer of Land Act.

MR. A. FORREST agreed with the remarks of the last speaker. It was well known that, in the case of land subdivided and bought on terms, when the time came for the title deed to be handed over it was often found wanting. Parliament should deal with the question, for the same difficulty had cropped up in other colonies, where it had been found that, in the case of subdivided land, when the final payment was made, the purchaser found that the original vendor of the land was perhaps bankrupt, and there was no one to give a legal title to

the purchaser. It should be absolutely necessary that, before a man could legally offer subdivisions of land for sale, the title deed should be lodged in the Land Titles Office, and not be taken away. If a man sold subdivided land which was mortgaged, a purchaser of a block might wish to pay cash and get his title, but the owner could only say he could not transfer the title until he had sold sufficient land for paying the mortgage. That system was iniquitous.

MR. GEORGE supported what had been said by the two previous speakers. Regarding what the member for West Kimberley had stated, a similar instance occurred in his own case in Victoria. He bought a block of land and paid for it, and insisted on getting the title, but he was offered 50 per cent. advance on the price paid if he would not insist on having the title. In the present land-booming age, the State should say that, when a man had subdivided his land, he must not have the power of pawning that title deed again. If the Government looked into the matter it would do good, and put the land jobbers down.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said that if a man who had purchased an allotment in any subdivision desired to protect himself, he could do so by lodging a caveat against any dealing with that particular lot, and no one could interfere with it. For the Land Titles Office to do, by regulation, what no Act of Parliament allowed them to do was a simple outrage, and an infringement of the rights of the people. If a man's title was in the Land Titles Office he could get it, despite any regulation the Titles Office cared to pass. He (Mr. Illingworth) was aware that some of the things mentioned had occurred, but that was not the way to mend them, as the question of a man's title was to be settled by law, and not by regulation. He was in sympathy with what other members had said, but was not prepared to hand over legislation to the Land Titles or any other office.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said he was glad the question had been raised, for it enabled him to give an explanation. The Titles Office a short time ago issued a circular to the effect that, when a large piece of land was subdivided, the original certificate should be deposited. The object of this was most

laudable, for when a large property was subdivided, as was the practice now, the titles of perhaps 200 allotments were on one piece of parchment; and the purchasers of those lots, who were generally comparatively poor people, were given their transfers, and told to get them registered at the Titles Office, whereas at the office they were told the certificate was not there. In some cases the certificate might have been misplaced, or the holder might not wish to give it up; so that those purchasers might be fooled about from pillar to post. Then they might lay the blame on the Titles Office, but that office could do nothing because it had not the original certificate. Therefore, it was with a good object that the regulation lately made was made, and he believed the hon. member for Nannine was the only one who had objected to it. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not correct.] It was correct, so far as the information that had reached him from the office went. He was informed that no other person had objected to it, as others had fallen in with the idea, and preferred to leave their certificates in the office. According to the Act, if a man demanded his certificate, the Titles Office was, he believed, obliged to give it; and, finding that was so, he (the Attorney General) had directed that the circular should be withdrawn, although he was sorry to have to do it, for he believed that nine out of ten owners of land preferred to leave their titles in the Land Titles Office. If they amended the Act, it would be well to make it obligatory on those people who cut up land into minute parts, to deposit the certificate, so that any buyer could obtain his certificate in regular course. A great deal of odium had been cast on the Land Titles Office that was not warranted at all.

MR. MOSS suggested that, in the amended Land Act then before the House, a provision that might meet the case should be inserted, to the effect that on a plan of subdivision being deposited in the Titles Office, the certificate of title should be lodged therein; and that when the buyer of a subdivision wanted his title, the vendor should be required to lodge a statutory declaration, showing what subdivisions he had sold or agreed to sell, and the vendor should then receive his certificate for the untransferred re-

mainder of the subdivision. The Attorney General might include, in the amending Bill, a series of provisions embodying that suggestion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said the suggestion made by the Attorney General was incorrect, as referring to him (Mr. Illingworth), for in not a single case did he ever give an individual a transfer to go and lodge, as in every case he lodged the transfer himself, on behalf of the individual. In no single instance was the transfer accepted by the Titles Office without the first title being presented along with the transfer. His point was, however, that it was not in the power of any department to make a law, and the regulation was an infringement of the law. If it were desirable to make a change, the Government should bring in a Bill for making the change, and should not interfere with the rights of property by making regulations. If the Attorney General would bring in such a Bill he would support it; but he contended that such a regulation as had been issued was an interference with the rights of Parliament. It would necessarily throw the whole of the land business into the hands of capitalists, as the small men could not possibly subdivide unless they had the first certificate in their own possession. The suggestion that he had any personal object in the matter was a misrepresentation, as there was not a single subdivision title of his in the hands of any bank in the colony; but he objected to the Titles Office taking upon itself, during the last few months, to interfere with the rights of people, contrary to Act of Parliament. In item 2, he noticed a well-merited rise was given, as that officer was one of the best in the Titles Office; but the Assistant Registrar of Titles was also an excellent officer, and although for three years he (Mr. Illingworth) had called attention to it, he noticed no advance had been made, and the salary still stood at £300.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said if that officer's salary was not increased last year it was increased previously, as during the last three or four years it had been very considerably increased. He would not recommend this officer to receive more than the chief clerk in the Supreme Court, who received £300. There were some officers for whom nothing would induce him to propose

increases; although he did not say this was such a case. He would not ask the House to grant an increase, though he admitted the officer in question was an excellent one.

MR. GEORGE said it appeared, from the remarks of the Attorney General, that if an officer was kept without an increase for three years it meant he was wanted to go.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: This officer had an increase of £40 last year.

MR. GEORGE said the member for Nannine must have been arguing on wrong premises. Referring to item 19, "Junior draftsman, £100," and item 20, "Cadet draftsman, £100," he asked what was the difference between a junior draftsman and a cadet.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said there was no difference. He supposed they wanted to keep a certain number of junior draftsmen, and that, requiring further assistance, they called the second one a cadet. He thought the distinction was merely to show the seniority of the one officer, but he could assure the hon. member there was no wickedness in it.

MR. GEORGE asked for information on item 24, "Temporary clerical assistance £500, increase £300."

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said temporary extra clerical assistance was required when there was a rush of work in the office, especially in connection with indexing, which could not be kept up by means of the usual staff, so that for the last two years he had had to sanction the employment of extra hands when required.

MR. GEORGE, referring to item 26, "Officers employed duplicating deposited plans, £1,000," and item 30, "Duplication of deposited plans, £500," asked if these were temporary officers, or were they included in items 1 to 23?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) said they were not included in the preceding items, and for that reason they were put under the sub-heading of "temporary salaries." It was highly necessary that the plans deposited from time to time should be duplicated, and these temporary officers were employed in that work.

At 6:35 p.m. the CHAIRMAN left the chair.

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

Vote (discussed before the adjournment) put and passed.

RAILWAYS AND WORKS DEPARTMENTS (POSTPONEMENT).

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked that the Estimates for Railways and Works should be postponed until after the annual report of the Railway Department had been placed on the table of the House, as it would not be a wise proceeding to enter into these Estimates without having that report before hon. members.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the annual report of the Railway Department was in the hands of the Printer, but it might not be ready for distribution among hon. members for some weeks yet. The expenditure for last year was shown in these Estimates, every item being set forth; and what the annual report of the department could have to do with these Estimates he did not know. No such objections had been raised in previous sessions. The report might show that the working expenses of the railways were in a certain proportion to the revenue, but the report would not give the information which the Estimates contained, for they set forth every item of expenditure for the last year, and hon. members could make the most complete comparison they might desire. No Government in Australia supplied so much detailed information to Parliament, in the annual Estimates, as were contained in the Estimates of this colony, as prepared in recent years, for in the second column of figures there was the expenditure on every item in the past year shown distinctly. This detailed information was very convenient, not only to the House, but to the Government. If the hon. member for Nannine could show any reason why the consideration of the Railways and Works Estimates should be postponed, he would be glad to comply with the request now made, as the Government did not wish to force these Estimates through the House.

MR. RANDELL said there was a very general feeling in the House that the Estimates for Railways and Works should be postponed to a later stage. He did not know whether it was necessary to have the annual report before them, before considering these Estimates, though it was desirable to have it if they could get it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the Estimates for these departments might be postponed till the last.

MR. RANDELL said that would be convenient. He would like it to be understood that they were to be postponed till after the next week.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) then moved that the Estimates for Railways and Works be postponed until after the other Estimates were disposed of.

Put and passed, and the Estimates of the two departments postponed accordingly.

CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT.

Lands and Surveys, £39,015 10s.:

MR. RANDELL said he wished to speak generally on the Estimates of the Lands Department. The department was growing considerably, and he remembered that, long before the advent of Responsible Government, the desire was frequently expressed that this department should grow. There were now several sub-departments which did not exist at a former period, and these indicated development. A Surveyor General seemed to have been appointed at last.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said that was not quite correct, for the acting Surveyor was away on three months' leave, although it was understood he intended to retire, and probably a Surveyor General would be appointed, provision being made in these Estimates for the purpose.

MR. RANDELL said a plan had been adopted, which would commend itself to the judgment of the House, for dividing the officers of the department into different branches; and this was desirable in view of the great and growing importance of the Lands Department. He desired to refer to the sub-department of Forestry.

THE CHAIRMAN said that branch would come before the committee later.

MR. A. FORREST said he wished to speak generally on the administration of the department.

THE CHAIRMAN said the Lands and Surveys vote was now before the committee.

MR. A. FORREST said he wished to speak on the administration of the Survey Department. He wished to know from the Commissioner of Crown Lands whether it was intended to provide any relief, by reduction of the rents charged for pastoral lands in the Northern districts of the colony. The hon. gentleman has been in office two or three years, and yet he had done nothing to grant relief to the pastoralists.

THE CHAIRMAN said that was not the subject before the committee.

MR. A. FORREST claimed that he could speak generally on the subject of the Lands Department, and point out where the head of the department had failed in his administration. This was the only chance of speaking on the maladministration of the department. The Commissioner of Crown Lands had occupied the position for two years, and had not attempted in any way to give relief to the people who, he must know, were suffering severely under these heavy rents. It was well known to members of the Government, and to members of this House, that it was absolutely necessary that relief should be granted to the Northern pastoralists; and the Commissioner, who was a pastoralist himself, should do something to help those who were, to all intents and purposes, ruined. It would be noticed, in the reports published by the department year by year, that there was a steadily lessening area rented from the Crown in these Northern districts, and there must be some reason for the decrease. The reason was that squatting did not pay; and one reason why squatting did not pay was that the rents charged by the Crown were altogether in excess of the advantages which the lessees derived from the lands they occupied. He had been hoping that, when the hon. gentleman took this office, he would be the first to lead a movement in the direction of granting relief to the Northern pastoralists. The Commissioner himself, as one engaged in pastoral pur-

suits, knew that those engaged in the industry were suffering, and no one knew better than the Commissioner that the rents charged were excessive. In some districts of the North, very little rain had fallen for some years; the stock had been depleted; the price of wool had gone down, and the pastoralists were suffering severely. Those who resided on the land, who improved it, fenced it in, and made it carry more stock than the land could carry in its original condition, were not able to get a return on their investment, the seasons having been so bad of late years, and the price of wool being so low. The Government helped the mining industry by sinking wells, building railways, making roads, and in other ways doing everything they could to develop mining; and why should not the Government do something to benefit the pastoralists in the Northern districts? The Premier had moved to take the duty off imported machinery, particularly for benefiting the miners; and surely the Government could also give some relief to Northern pastoralists, in the direction he had indicated. Those members of the House who were identified with pastoral operations had supported the Government while in office, and he hoped they would continue to do so; but it was time that the Northern pastoralists should have some relief in the rents that were charged. This was a matter in which he, as a pastoralist, had felt the shoe pinch, and he defied any member to say there was one pastoralist in the North making anything out of his squatting. He asked that those who rented pastoral lands from the Crown in the Northern districts should be allowed to leave out the bad land and select only the good, or that the rents charged should be reduced 50 per cent. That reduction would mean giving to the pastoral industry perhaps £20,000 or £30,000; but in districts in the South and East of the colony the Government had been spending large sums—he might almost say millions—in supplying water for people and helping them in other ways; but there was no one to provide water for pastoralists in the North, when they travelled along with their herds and stock. The time had arrived when Northern pastoralists should ask, as a right, that a Bill be

brought into this House to amend the land laws in the direction of reducing rents for Northern pastoral country. He believed that not one member who understood this subject would say the rents now charged were right and fair. This was all he had to say in reference to the administration of the department, and he must repeat that the head of the department had completely failed, in not having brought in a Bill for giving relief in the direction he had named.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said no one was likely to accuse him of having any special predilection in favour of the squatters, but he did think there was a good deal to be said on the lines of the hon. member's complaint. The statement just made, however, was not absolutely borne out by the printed report of the excellent speech which the Premier had recently delivered, on the financial condition of the colony; for in that speech the Premier had shown there had been a very distinct decrease in the quantity of pastoral land under lease, namely a decrease of 42 million acres during last year, while on the other hand there had been an increase of 163,521 sheep, and an increase of 12,877 cattle. These facts pointed in one direction, showing that the pastoralists were selecting the best land they could get, and as a consequence were throwing up poor land which, if it could be utilised, might be bringing in some revenue to the State. There must be a reason for this large decrease in the occupation of pastoral country, and the reason appeared to be that the rental charged for it was more than the industry could sustain. As a consequence, while the pastoralists were giving attention to certain tracts of good country, the effect was the decrease of stocking by decreasing the quantity of land held as runs. It must be an advantage to a State to have its unused land leased at some price, rather than that it should be totally unoccupied. The Premier and other Ministers were fond of quoting Queensland for precedents which suited them, and were particularly averse to receiving any precedent coming from New Zealand. But if hon. members compared the rates charged for pastoral country in the North of this colony, which was similar in character to large tracts in certain portions of Northern

Queensland, they would find the rate here was much higher than the rate charged for similar land in Queensland. The time had come when there should be some classification of pastoral country in this colony, in order to give some encouragement to those occupying it, as experience had shown that it could not be occupied continuously at the present rental. Supposing they let the land, for instance, at a rental of 2s. 6d. per thousand acres, as compared with 10s. charged now, then, if it were a question between 2s. 6d. or nothing, it must be a distinct advantage to the treasury of the colony to have the land leased even at the lower price, rather than have it unoccupied. He was not prepared to say the rentals for all pastoral lands should be reduced, but the time had come for a judicious classification which would lead to the encouragement of those who would occupy and improve pastoral country. The tenure should be made more secure, and that country which was, to a large extent, worthless in its present condition should be placed at the disposal of those who were willing to improve it, so as to make it of some value, even if no rent were charged; because, if it were occupied and improved, there would be an absolute advantage to the State by having the pastoral industry maintained in a prosperous condition, whether any rental were received from it or not. It could not be an advantage to the State to have any industry crippled, or to have the conditions such as would compel those carrying on the industry to narrow their efforts instead of expanding them. While he was not in a position even to suggest what course should be taken, he did think there were members in this House and other gentlemen outside who could give the necessary information, and who would be glad to enter on an exhaustive inquiry with a view of making recommendations that would place the pastoral industry of this colony in a better position.

MR. CLARKSON said the squatters who had to go out into the wilderness, and cut their own roads and sink their own wells, ought to have their rents lowered, so that they might make a living out of their work, which added to the producing resources of the country. The squatter had one advantage over the miner, from the country's point of view,

in that the squatter was always in the colony—he was too poor to get away, if he wanted to—and the improvements he put on the land were not removable. The squatter spent his life in opening up new country; and when his land became valuable to small holders, he had to move farther afield, and begin his work over again. He (Mr. Clarkson) certainly thought the squatter deserved most liberal treatment, as a great deal of the land he held was practically worthless country. It would be well to give such land to people who would do something to improve it.

MR. HASSELL said that, owing to the regulations of the Lands Department, a man had to take up a great deal of poor country in order to get a small proportion of good land, and had to pay the same price for the bad as for the good. The only way to throw up the worthless country was to cut up a run and get someone to take over the inferior portions, with a view to abandoning them later. A great many people could not make a living out of the land, and the department should accord them more liberal treatment than they now received. The Government ought to amend the regulations, so as to allow of the good land being taken up and the bad left alone. The time had arrived when something should be done to assist the pastoralists of the colony.

MR. MORAN said the squatters already received material assistance from the Government, in the shape of the tax imposed on the importation of meat and live stock, the result being that the people were groaning under the high price of meat. The tax of 30s. per head on cattle was a bonus given to the squatters, and it was only now that the Select Committee on the question of meat supply had recommended the removal of the duty on tinned meat, which could hardly affect the squatters of the North. If the member for West Kimberley would support the taking off the stock tax, he (Mr. Moran) would vote for the reduction of the pastoralists' rents. He did not want to crush the squatters, but the people of the colony should be enabled to get their meat as cheaply as possible, and *minus* tuberculosis.

MR. GEORGE said he could understand that, acting upon his high sense of

public duty, the Commissioner of Crown Lands had been reluctant to propose a reduction of the rents of pastoralists while the hon. gentleman had his own interests in the North; but, at the same time, that should not stand in the way of the rents being reduced, if that was the right course to adopt. There was no doubt that the Stock Tax was a bonus to the meat-producing industry of the colony. The recent shipment of 600 head of cattle, that had been described in the newspapers as the largest consignment ever placed aboard one boat coming from the North-West, meant that 900 sovereigns had been given to the squatters; and therefore he did not think they ought to come to this House and cry out in the way that they had done. He did not cry out because his business had been injured by the proposed taking off the duty from mining machinery.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said he had had the subject of reducing the rents of pastoral areas under consideration, and if the Parliamentary draughtsman could prepare the measure in time for it to be introduced this session, a Bill for the consolidation and improvement of the land legislation of the colony would be placed before the House. In this Bill a system of classification would be provided for, based upon the zone or district system, so that lessees of land away from the sea-board should pay less for their land than those who were close to the port of shipment. But, after all, this would only be a rough system of classification; for a run close to a port of shipment might consist of inferior land, and an inland run might have much better ground; so that it was difficult, in a matter of this kind, to give exact justice to everyone. The matter could be further considered when the Bill came before the House. He was glad there appeared to be a disposition on the part of the House to recognise that pastoral pursuits were not as flourishing now as they were a few years ago, when it was a cry in the newspapers that the squatters ought to pay more for their holdings. But the profits that were made in those good times had been sunk on the land in improvements; and now that there was a decline in the industry, further improvement and development could not be

attempted, as in many cases the lessees had overdrafts or other loans upon their property. This was not a good state of things, because the prosperity or decline of the producing interests had effect on the trade and general welfare of the colony. He believed that, if the pastoralists of the colony could go on developing the stock-carrying capacity of their holdings, there would not be any need to import meat from the other colonies, for there was plenty of good land in Western Australia, especially inland, that would be capable of carrying large flocks and herds, if water could be conserved and other improvements effected. The amending Land Bill, of which he had spoken, would also deal with revised timber regulations. In conclusion, he might say he had felt diffident, on account of his connection with the pastoral industry, about proposing a reduction of the rents of the runs; but he could say that his direct interest in the North was now very small, and it was not likely to influence him one way or another.

MR. A. FORREST thanked the Commissioner of Crown Lands for the explanation he had made to the House. It was very satisfactory to learn that an amending Land Bill would come before the House; and it was to be expected of the Commissioner of Crown Lands that, knowing the land of the colony and the disabilities of the pastoral industry so well as he did, he should see the necessity of liberalising the land laws. It was a very important matter, in the interests of the colony generally, that the pastoralists should be relieved of some of the disabilities under which they suffered. As to the statement of the member for the Murray, that the Stock Tax was a bonus to the squatters, he might point out that the constituents of the hon. member had the same protection in producing fodder.

Vote put and passed.

Surveyor General, £500:

MR. WOOD hoped the Government would see their way to treat the retiring Surveyor General in a liberal manner, after the many years' service of that officer.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said he had contemplated increasing the superannuation allowance of the retiring Surveyor General, on his own responsibility; but, if it were the wish of the House, he would ask the House to

extend some special consideration to him. It was not contemplated to make any wide departure from the rule applying to such cases, as it would be a dangerous precedent to do so.

MR. HASSELL, referring to items 82 and 83, "Road surveyor, £350; ditto, £350," said he congratulated the Commissioner upon the appointment of two road surveyors, although he did not think these would be enough for the work. A difficulty with road boards had always been the getting of surveys made for new roads. These surveys were generally done by contract and the work rushed through, with the result that it was rarely done in a satisfactory manner.

MR. RANDELL asked what would be the duties of these two surveyors. Some years ago, a road inspector was appointed, but he died, and it was said the road boards had killed the poor man. These two road surveyors would, he supposed, make surveys of new roads, supervise construction, and give advice to the boards.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said these roads surveyors would have nothing to do with the supervising and construction of roads, but would simply mark out new roads, selecting the best routes with a view to cheapening construction. He had not been long in charge of the department before he came to the conclusion that large sums of money were lost annually through roads being badly surveyed, the surveyors not spending sufficient time on the work, having been employed by contract. A great saving would be effected to the country if all new roads were properly surveyed, and with that view he had appointed those two surveyors, having secured two good men to undertake the duties. He was inclined to think that two men would not be sufficient for the work, but the Government proposed to make a start with them and see how they got on; and, if the duties were too heavy for them, more could be appointed. He was also of opinion that the time had arrived when road inspectors and supervisors would have to be appointed, because the construction of roads was getting beyond the amateur skill of the members of road boards. Thousands of pounds, he was convinced, had been wasted in the construction of roads, and this money

might have been saved had the supervision been intrusted to properly skilled men. The salaries of these road surveyors might seem rather high, but he considered it necessary to get thoroughly good men for the positions, and he could not get them for less.

MR. CLARKSON said the appointment of road surveyors was a step in the right direction, and it was a pity they had not been appointed years ago. The making of surveys for new roads had always been a trouble to the road boards, and all the boards now were constantly receiving applications for the making of new roads. In some cases claims for compensation were coming in for the taking of private land required for new roads. With regard to the construction of roads, that matter might safely be left in the hands of the boards, and he did not think a Government supervisor could do much good.

MR. LEFROY understood that these road surveyors would make surveys of the roads that were to be constructed. This was an important matter, for in present circumstances a road could not be declared until it had been surveyed. [THE PREMIER: No.] The road boards were put to great expense in having surveys made; and if Government officers did the work the roads would be better marked out than they were by contract surveyors. The surveying of roads by contract had proved a failure, and it sometimes became necessary to pay the surveyor to go over the ground again. In his own district he had found it necessary to mark out the roads himself, and allow the surveyor to follow him, in order to get a good road. In one case he had gone over a road 15 miles in extent and marked it out, before the surveyor set to work; and he was confident that a better road was thus secured than if the whole of the work had been left to the surveyor. In order to get the best lines for a road, it was necessary to go over the ground again and again. The making of surveys would be done more cheaply by Government officers than by contract surveyors. As to the constructing of roads, nobody in the colony had more experience of that work than the members of the road boards; and he would be borne out in that statement by the Director of Public Works,

who for many years had taken the greatest interest in road making. He (Mr. Lefroy) was satisfied the making of roads would be better done by the boards than by the Government, and he should be sorry to see the principle of self-help abandoned as regards the work of the road boards. If members of this House would move about the colony more, they would see that a great deal of useful work was done by the road boards. He had been for 20 years connected with the road boards, and should be sorry to see the making of roads taken out of their hands.

MR. HASSELL said that, some years ago, an inspecting engineer appointed by the Government did some work in his district, and he not only increased the cost of making the roads, but made them badly, and constructed drains where they were not needed.

MR. LEFROY said that when he remarked that roads had to be surveyed before being declared, he meant roads that passed over ground that was alienated. In the Central districts there were few places where roads could be made without touching alienated land.

MR. RANDELL, referring to Item 107, "Surveys, £16,000," asked the Commissioner whether sufficient provision was made in this vote for the surveys.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said a vote to the same amount had more than carried out the surveys last year. However, if more money was required, he supposed the department could take a little overdraft. This vote referred chiefly to contract work.

MR. GEORGE, referring to Item 109, "Incursion of rabbits, £300," asked how this money would be allotted, and whether it would be sufficient, seeing that £815 14s. 10d. had been spent on the work done last year. The incursion of rabbits was a most serious matter, and it was important that effectual means should be taken to check the rabbits, if necessary. He was afraid this provision would not be sufficient, and he asked for all the information available as to what had been done in the matter.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said he agreed that the incursion of rabbits was a most serious matter indeed, and the House could not regard it too seriously.

He had sent a party to the South coast to discover what extent of country the rabbits occupied, and the direction in which they were travelling, also to estimate how long it would be before the rabbits would probably reach the settled districts. This expedition had cost a few hundreds of pounds, and at an early date he hoped the information collected would be complete, so that they might learn a great deal more about the matter, and especially as to whether it was possible to stop the inroads of the rabbits.

MR. MORAN : How many rabbits did the party find ?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS said the officer in charge of the expedition killed 13 rabbits and saw thousands of tracks, but did not find any tracks until reaching the coast line. The party also found a large number of cats that had gone wild, and those cats might have effect in preventing the advance of the rabbits.

Vote put and passed.

Forestry, £2,210 :

MR. GEORGE said he was glad to know the Government had risen to the occasion, and had appointed a gentleman permanently to look after the forests of the colony ; but the salaries provided for the assistants to the Conservator were scarcely sufficient, considering the amount of travelling they would have to do and the importance of their work.

MR. RANDELL said the Conservator had recommended the planting of soft timbers for the purpose of creating an important industry. He (Mr. Randell) would like to know whether the Government intended to carry out the suggestion, and, if so, the localities in which they proposed to start planting.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said a forest nursery had been started in the neighbourhood of Guildford, and a considerable number of seedlings were coming up. The Government were renting, temporarily, a piece of ground for the purpose, and would be able to plant out the seedling trees and see how they succeeded. The Conservator had been sent to Bunbury to select a site for planting seeds of trees there, so that there should be a fair crop of seedlings for planting out next year. If the experiment succeeded, the department would be able to

undertake the planting of soft timbers on a larger scale, with a view to supplying the local demand. There was, however, this danger in connection with the matter, that bush fires getting into a pine forest might, in a few hours, sweep away the work of years.

MR. RANDELL said he would like to ask whether the Commissioner had considered the capabilities of sandy districts near the coasts for the planting of soft woods. He thought those districts would carry pine forests very well. In the part of England where he had lived, plantations were numerous in which soft woods were grown alternately with oaks and other woods, the fast-growing pines sheltering the slower growing trees, and being cut down when the latter were strong enough to stand without shelter; and the pine poles were sold to owners of coal mines for use as props. It was important that these timbers should be grown in the colony for the use of the mines.

MR. WOOD asked how the sandalwood nursery was getting on. It was a most important undertaking.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the nursery for sandalwood was getting on very well. The nuts from India had not germinated well, but the local nuts were doing fairly well.

Vote put and passed.

Fisheries, £2,445—agreed to.

Inspection of Stock, £5720 5s. :

MR. A. FORREST, referring generally to the expenditure proposed for stock inspection, said scab had been entirely eradicated, and yet there was to be an increase of £50 in the salary of the Chief Inspector, and a new item for a clerk at £225. This increased expense was rather good, when the greatest portion of the work—that of eradicating scab—had been completed. A new scare had cropped up, and no doubt there would be scares from time to time; but he hoped the time would come when they would not require such a department, or, at any rate, not a large staff. He did not object so much to the Chief Inspector getting another £50, though a rise seemed hardly necessary now; but what did the department want a clerk for, seeing they had done without one for 30 years? After all that time, it was suddenly found they

wanted a new clerk at £225! This appointment was not necessary; but if a clerk must be appointed, and the young gentleman was to be someone from outside, he hoped the Commissioner would consider whether it was necessary to pay so much to start with. Last year a total of £1,072 was voted for this department, but over £400 more was spent; and now this House was asked to vote a total of £5,720. He would like the Commissioner to give some information as to why the increase was necessary to the Chief Inspector, who also received £200 travelling allowance, and why a clerk should be appointed at that period.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said he hoped hon. members would not object to the rather tardily given increase of £50 for the Chief Inspector, who had been underpaid. His salary now was not commensurate with the appointment or the qualifications of the officer. With reference to the clerk, it had to be remembered that, with the enormous increase in the importation of stock, it was found absolutely necessary to have the Chief Inspector located in Perth, and he could do very little without a clerk. The clerk was a shorthand writer and typist, and he was the Chief Inspector's own recommendation, as it was found he could not get anyone he could depend on for less.

MR. A. FORREST: Who is the man they intend to appoint?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the clerk was appointed already, and his name was Malcolm. It should be remembered that the colony was in great danger of getting disease introduced with the large importation of live stock, and it was necessary to have competent men. Recently, they had had to appoint an inspector for the port of Fremantle alone.

MR. CLARKSON said the Chief Inspector was doubtless an able officer, but it was doubtful whether he understood the new disease in cattle—tuberculosis. He had seen that disease in stock in the colony for years past, and it was not infectious. With the great quantity of stock now imported, they needed a capable Chief Inspector, and he (Mr. Clarkson) was glad a slight increase had been made to the salary.

MR. WOOD said the increase of £50 was a miserable advance to the Chief Inspector, who, in his department, stood in the same relative position as an under secretary. Members knew that under secretaries were paid £600 a year, and they did no more in their departments than the Chief Inspector did in his. There was not sufficient difference between the Chief Inspector and the assistant inspectors, while the clerk started straight away with £225, or a difference of only £75 between him and his chief, whose salary should be increased to £350.

MR. A. FORREST said the member for West Perth was most anxious to increase salaries, forgetting that the Chief Inspector received £200 as travelling allowance. The Commissioner should be careful to appoint only those who were competent, as it was well known that reports had been made lately by inspectors and others who had no expert knowledge of disease in cattle. The Government Veterinary Surgeon was the only officer competent to give an opinion on the present disease in cattle, and he (Mr. A. Forrest) would rather pay a man £1,000, and know that his opinion was worth taking. Although, in a general sense, there was not a better man in Perth than the Chief Inspector, yet he (Mr. A. Forrest) differed from him very much as to diseases in stock, because that officer had had no experience in that line of duty. He (Mr. A. Forrest) was not prepared to take the opinion of men who did not understand what they were reporting on, and he hoped the Commissioner, when making fresh appointments, would be careful to get men who understood something about the matter, and not appoint such men as had been engaged in raising ostriches in South Australia.

MR. SIMPSON congratulated the Government for having recognised the fearless way in which the Chief Inspector had done his duty. He (Mr. Simpson) suggested to the member for West Kimberley that those men who broke the laws were those who had the least liking for a policeman; so that when this House found that importers of stock were strongly opposed to the Chief Inspector, it was much in that officer's favour. Now that they were rid of the scab, they

should take every means to prevent its appearing again.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the member for West Kimberley appeared to think all stock inspectors must necessarily be qualified veterinary surgeons; but that did not follow at all, as a man might be qualified by practical experience to perceive when an animal was diseased, without his being qualified as a veterinary surgeon.

MR. HASSELL, referring to item 8, "Assistant Inspector, Albury, £260," asked whether the person now employed was intended to be kept on.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said he did not know, positively; but an official would be stationed there.

MR. MORAN said the salary of the Assistant Inspector at Coolgardie should be increased. There was in that district a great amount of disease among the camels, and the inspector had an immense district to travel over.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the salary of that officer could not be made larger than that of other inspectors; but the Chief Inspector was making special provision, and a larger amount for travelling allowance would, he believed, be granted in that case.

MR. GEORGE, referring to item 19, "Government Veterinary Surgeon, £300," said that last year it was stated this expert had been brought over for a special purpose, and it was then pointed out that part of his duties would be the inspection of stock at Fremantle; yet it now appeared he was rarely at Fremantle when wanted. It was stated that the Government must have a professional man to report on any matter, when wanted, and he was to be allowed private practice; but this year there was created a new office of Veterinary Surgeon at Fremantle, and that, he considered, should do away with the necessity for having a consulting veterinary surgeon in Perth. If the Government must have a veterinary surgeon, it was time they arranged to have one who would give the whole of his time to the work required by the Government.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said that whenever the Government Veterinary

Surgeon was called on to do anything in his official capacity, he did it willingly, and that was all they could expect.

MR. GEORGE supported the suggestion that the Government should have the call on the whole of this officer's time, and pay him accordingly.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said it was not necessary to make that arrangement at present.

Vote put and passed.

MINES AND EDUCATION (POSTPONE- MENT), ALSO POSTS AND TELEGRAPHS DEPARTMENTS.

MR. SIMPSON said the annual report of the Mines Department for last year had not yet been laid on the table, and he thought it should be before hon. members when dealing with the Estimates of this department. He had been told it would be ready that night.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir. J. Forrest) said he had not seen the report yet; but, as to other annual reports which were on the table, he had not observed that members referred to them much, in dealing with the Estimates to which they related. For instance, the Defence Department report was on the table, and he had not observed hon. members refer to it, when dealing with the Defence vote. However, in the hope that the Mines report would be available in a short time he moved, for the convenience of the House, that the consideration of the Mines and Education Estimates be postponed until after the other Estimates were disposed of.

Put and passed, and those Estimates postponed accordingly.

Postal and Telegraph. £323,934 9s. 6d. :

These Estimates (also under the direction of the Minister of Mines) were considered.

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked whether any steps had been taken for obtaining efficient officers, either from England or the colonies, with a view of placing the Postal and Telegraph Department in a more efficient condition. It was understood that various reports of an expert character had been made for the information of the Government, and that these contained recommendations for placing this department in a more efficient condition; therefore he asked whether

any steps had been taken for giving effect to the recommendations, particularly in the direction he had indicated. The condition of the postal and telegraphic services was such that, *primæ facie*, these services were not efficiently worked, because no country should be expected to carry on its postal and telegraphic services at a profit; and, at the rates charged to the public for the services in this colony, it was impossible to carry them on at a profit, and at the same time pay the men a sufficient wage. The country was prepared to make all necessary sacrifices for carrying on these services efficiently, and at low rates of charge; but what the country asked for, as an indispensable condition, was efficiency. What the country did not get was efficiency. The country was crying out for efficiency in these services, in all directions.

THE PREMIER: Climatic influences, perhaps.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, that might be so. About the most brilliant idea ever evolved from a Ministerial or other brain was the proposal to shut up the telegraph department for three or four days, to enable it to overtake the arrears of work. That had been suggested as a remedy, and if that was the kind of remedy the people were to expect, it was a very dreary expectation. He wanted to emphasise the fact that the country did not desire to make a profit out of these services, and did not want the men who were carrying them on to be underpaid, nor that the services should be stinted in any part of their operations. The country wanted these services to be made efficient, and he therefore asked whether the Government, or the head of the department, had taken any steps with the view of placing capable leading men in the various portions of the department where management was required; also, whether any steps had been taken to procure efficient instruments and appliances. He understood there was a great difference in the capability of the telegraph operators, as, for instance, some men could send three times as many messages in an hour as other men could send; and, there being this vast difference amongst the men employed in the same department, there seemed to be a great need for more efficient selection and supervision.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the remarks of the hon. member for Nannine would lead one to believe that the officers in charge of the various branches of the post and telegraph service throughout the colony were not efficient. He (the Premier) was not in a position to say much, personally, as to the qualifications of the various officers, as the department was not under his direction; but he kept himself in touch with what was going on, and had noticed, from reports in the press, that whenever an officer was removed from one district to another in the postal or telegraph service, the public presented him with a purse of sovereigns or gave a dinner in his honour.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Glad he was going, perhaps.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): If that was the case, he (the Premier) thought very little of the people who got up these friendly demonstrations. [MR. SIMPSON: It was often done.] Well, he had noticed that on the goldfields as in other places, whenever an officer of this department had been removed to another district, there was a complimentary send-off.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The result showed it was otherwise.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member was a good hand at asserting, but his (the Premier's) reply was that the men in charge of the post and telegraph offices in the colony were efficient. As to what the Government had done in respect to obtaining more competent telegraph officers, he could state that they had sent to England for 30 good operators—he believed that was the number—and these, or some of them, were now on the way. He believed they had been carefully selected. It was a curious fact, but it was a fact, that no complaints now came from the general public in regard to the telegraphic system of the colony. Hon. members would observe in the newspapers a record every morning, showing that in regard to telegrams on this side of the border the line to the Eastern colonies was clear, but that there was a certain number of messages waiting to go on to Adelaide. This fact showed that the telegraph wires in this colony were better able to keep pace with the work than the wires on the South Australian side of the

border; and these reports also showed that the state of the weather, and particularly the season of the year, had something to do with the good or bad working of the telegraph wires. He was glad to be able to inform the House that already 160 miles of the new overland wire, westward of Eucla to a point known as Eyre sandpatch, had been completed, and on Tuesday last the new line was being used as far as it went. Good progress had also been made with the new line from Dundas to Eyre, and one advantage would be that this line went farther inland than the present line to Eucla. Unfortunately one vessel, containing 60 miles of telegraph material for this colony, had been wrecked, and it might be necessary to supplement that quantity if the wire could not be recovered. He believed the working of the telegraph system would be better during the coming summer than it was last year. In regard to the telegraph line to the Coolgardie goldfields, one effect of the opening of the railway was that teams were now taken off the road; and as some of the teams used to knock down the telegraph wires continually, without even reporting the fact, the serious trouble caused in that way was now got rid of. A trunk telegraph line was being built from Perth to Coolgardie, and when it was completed, a really good through telegraph service from Perth to Coolgardie would be available, as well as a good through service to Eucla along the new road by way of Dundas, this line going farther inland than the old line, which would also be alternative. He had kept himself closely informed as to what was going on, and he must say the Telegraph Department had done very well indeed, and in a short time the new lines under construction would be completed. When that was so, there would be a great advantage to the public and the department. He had made some remarks, in his annual Financial Statement, in regard to this department, to the effect that whenever there was a block in the telegraph service, it did not matter how efficient the men might be, the public who were inconvenienced by the block would not be satisfied with any explanation. He had given some offence to an important officer in this colony recently when he said, in reference to certain com-

plaints which were then so general: "You cannot expect me to be satisfied, when the public are all crying out that they are dissatisfied;" and that was a fact. The desire of Ministers was to try and satisfy the public; and, so long as the public were not satisfied, they would cry out and abuse and censure the department, no matter how good the officers in that department might be. That was especially so in the Postal and Telegraph Department, whenever the pressure became too great for the service to be carried on smoothly; and, as a result, the Postmaster General has been burned in effigy in one place, and at other places he had been hooted or abused whenever his name was mentioned. He (the Premier) hoped all this, although disagreeable for the time, would do good to the service, by keeping the department on its mettle, and by making the officers more anxious than ever to serve the public well and satisfactorily. He hoped the complaints which had been made—and made for good cause, he admitted, so far as the public were concerned—would not be repeated, and that there would be no cause in the future for complaints. The Minister at the head of the department, and everyone in authority, wished to give satisfaction to the public.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) said he desired to say a little in defence of the Post and Telegraph Department, as he knew something about it, having had experience in it years ago. There were officers on the electrical staff equal to any the world could produce, and operators as good as were to be found anywhere. Some of the operators came from the other colonies, and as the code used in Western Australia was different from the code in the other colonies (except Tasmania), there had been at first some difficulty and perhaps some mistakes in the transmission of messages, while the new-comers were learning the local code. There had been, in fact, very much difficulty in this matter, and no doubt the want of familiarity with the code here had led to many mistakes from time to time. But taking into consideration the fact that the Postmaster General had had to employ men who had to learn a code that was new to them, he (the Commissioner of Railways) was rather surprised there had not been more errors

and difficulties in carrying on the service, bearing in mind how rapidly the messages had to be transmitted, owing to the great rush of business, while many of the operators were only learning the code. He did not question the efficiency of the imported operators when in their own country, using their own code; but these men would find the new code and the signals rather confusing during the first few months of work in this colony, and they might have some difficulty in carrying out their duties until after they had become thoroughly efficient as operators. The ability of the officers in charge of the Telegraph Department had been testified to by those experts who had been invited to come here from other colonies to inspect the working of the service. Some of the officers who had been the subject of these encomiums were West Australians, and they were a credit to this colony. The Inspector of Telegraphs and the Manager of the Department were men who had proved themselves to be competent, and the value of the work which had been done by the officer in charge of the construction branch had been just mentioned by the Premier, in referring to the new line between Dundas and Eucla. That officer was also a West Australian, and in making this important extension he had shown he was capable of rising to the occasion. Moreover, in the face of great difficulty, in working through a desert country imperfectly supplied with water, the telegraph line had been constructed inland between Eyre and Eucla in a very short space of time. The whole of this new line would be completed a few months hence, and there would then be direct communication between the goldfields and Eucla along the new route. This was something to be proud of, and the men who were accomplishing the work of construction had been doing their best under very difficult conditions. In the Postal Department there were men who were most earnest in doing their best for the welfare of the colony, and of advancing the interests of the service with which they were connected; but some grumblers had blackguarded them, from the Postmaster General downwards. No doubt, like most other people, they had sometimes been in fault; but, throughout the great pressure on the department, they had stuck to their work and carried

it through. He believed that very little would be heard of any further trouble. The staff would, in a few months, have better opportunities of proving worthy the position they occupied. The officers, as a whole, were a very deserving class of men. The enormous increase in the business of the postal department ought to be remembered, whenever there arose some cause of complaint; and, as an example, he might mention that the mail contractor between Southern Cross to Coolgardie, in applying for a remission upon a water rate, stated that whereas he had taken the contract upon the basis of carrying hundredweights of mail matter, he now had tons to carry. A great reason for the miscarriage of letters and newspapers was the very illegible and imperfect way in which many of them were directed. It was a matter of surprise that so few packets went astray in the post, considering the carelessness of the senders in addressing them. He believed that if managers for the post and telegraph departments were brought to this colony from other parts of the world, they would not be more efficient than the officers now in charge. The equipment of the service having now been so much improved, he had no doubt these officers were able to give general satisfaction to the public, in the performance of their duties.

MR. A. FORREST expressed the hope that, when the new mail contract to Northern ports was let, a faster and larger boat than the steamer Albany would be employed in running between Fremantle and Wyndham.

On the motion of the Premier, progress was reported at this stage, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 10 o'clock, p.m., until Tuesday, 15th September; the week's adjournment being for the convenience of members attending the opening of the railway extension to Kalgoorlie.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 15th September, 1896.

Post Office Savings Bank Bill: Legislative Council's amendments; in committee—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: returned from Legislative Council; Message, and irregularity of procedure—Customs Duties Repeal Bill: second reading—Annual Estimates, 1896-7: further considered in Committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

The Legislative Council having made amendments in this Bill, the Council's message was now considered, the amendments being as follow:—

No. 1.—On page 1, Clause 2, line 1—Strike out "shall be" and insert "is" in lieu thereof.

No. 2.—On page 1, Clause 2, line 3—Strike out "shall be" and insert "is" in lieu thereof.

IN COMMITTEE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the foregoing verbal amendments were agreed to.

Ordered, that a message be sent to the Legislative Council accordingly.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

RETURNED FROM THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

MESSAGE, AND IRREGULARITY OF PROCEDURE.

The Legislative Council having amended this Bill by inserting a new clause, the Council's message was now considered, the new clause being as follows:—

To stand as Clause 6.—"Notwithstanding anything contained in Section 8 of the Amendment Act, the seats of the members elected at the first election of members for the North-East Province (which seats would, by the said section, be vacated on the completion of a period of two years from the date of election, and each succeeding period of two years) shall be vacated on the 21st day of May