

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10 minutes past 11 o'clock, until the next day.

## Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 28th November, 1900.

Paper presented—Question: Bush Fires, Inquests—  
Question: Perth Ice Company, Railway Rates—  
Motion: Bush Fires and Inquests—Remedies of  
Creditors Amendment Bill, second reading, in Com-  
mittee, reported—Goldfields Act Amendment Bill,  
first reading—Kalgoorlie Roads Board Tramways  
Bill, first reading—Perth Electric Tramways Light-  
ing and Power Bill (private), first reading—Con-  
spiracy and Protection of Property Bill, first read-  
ing—Post Office Savings Bank Amendment Bill,  
second reading, etc.—Appropriation Bill, second  
reading, etc.—Land Drainage Bill, second reading—  
Carriage of Mails Bill, first reading—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at  
4:30 o'clock, p.m.

### PRAYERS.

### PAPER PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Return  
(moved for by Hon. R. G. Burges)  
relating to the produce and revenue  
received at sidings on the Eastern Rail-  
way between Spencer's Brook and  
Beverley.

Ordered to lie on the table.

### QUESTION—BUSH FIRES, INQUESTS.

HON. H. LUKIN asked the Colonial  
Secretary: If the Government would  
favourably consider the advisability of  
holding inquests on the origin of bush  
fires, where damage or loss had occurred  
to property through such fires.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY  
replied:—The Government would favour-  
ably consider the advisability of holding  
inquiries as to the origin of bush fires,  
where damage or loss had occurred to  
property, on the request of any Municipal  
Council or Roads Board.

### QUESTION—PERTH ICE COMPANY, RAILWAY RATES.

HON. C. SOMMERS asked the Colonial  
Secretary: 1, If it was a fact that two  
cold storage vans, loaded with ice, arrived  
at Kalgoorlie from and consigned to the  
Perth Ice Company by the 11 a.m. pas-  
senger train on 22nd November. 2, If it  
was a fact that only a minimum goods  
rate was paid, although carried on a  
passenger train. 3, If it was a fact that  
the Railway Department refused to carry  
ice for the Coolgardie Ice Company on  
passenger trains unless parcels rates were  
paid. 4, What was the goods rate on  
ice, Perth to Kalgoorlie. 5, What was  
the parcels rate on ice, Kalgoorlie to  
Perth.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY re-  
plied: 1, Yes. The vans were attached  
to the 3:25 p.m. train ex Perth, on the  
21st instant, under special circumstances.  
The Ice Company state they advised per  
telephone at 4 p.m., 20th instant, that  
trucks were ready to go forward by the  
8 p.m. goods train; but there is no record  
of such message having reached the goods  
shed. Under the circumstances, the com-  
pany were given the benefit of the doubt,  
and, as a special case, the trucks were  
sent by fast train next day. The com-  
pany have been warned that similar  
requests for despatch of trucks must be  
in, or confirmed by, writing. 2, Goods  
rate was paid. 3, Yes. 4, £1 8s. per  
ton. 5, £2 10s. 3d. per ton.

### MOTION—BUSH FIRES, INQUESTS.

HON. W. MALEY (South-East)  
moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, stringent  
measures should be adopted by the Govern-  
ment to prevent bush fires, particularly by  
means of the Fire Inquiry Act 1887.

No doubt the attention of members and  
the general public had been well directed  
lately to the particular principle involved  
in the motion. When the Fire Inquiry  
Act of 1887 was passed, it was intended  
largely to be operative in municipalities,

and doubtless it was introduced primarily at the instance of fire insurance companies and others who had interests concerned and property to protect in towns and cities. It had, however, a wider meaning, and was also intended to include country districts. Recently certain questions had been asked in this House, and the Government had given distinct and somewhat different answers. We were told on one occasion with reference to the alteration of the prohibited period for lighting fires and doing other acts relating to bush fires started in the country, that the period had been altered at Northam from the 1st October to the 1st December, giving a difference of two months compared with the previous arrangements, which apparently had been satisfactory. The answer given to himself was that in the Katanning and Williams districts the prohibited period was altered from the 1st March to the 1st February, so that in one part of the country the prohibited period was curtailed by one month at the end of the season, and in another part it was curtailed two months at the beginning of the season. It was somewhat invidious that different districts should be dealt with in a different manner. He believed that in the other colonies the prohibited period was from the 1st November to 1st March. That was a period that would apply fairly throughout this colony. Certainly there was a little difference in the seasons. One of the early explorers discovered that in the Williams district the season was a bit later than in the eastern districts of the colony. And year after year had proved the same thing. The season in the Katanning and Williams district was later than in the eastern districts, and it was singular the Government should be so easily prevailed upon. Although he had interests in the district, he had no information a move was being made in this direction, and very few people had any idea the seasons would be curtailed, and that fires would be encouraged by the Government in the hottest month of the year. The first intimation received was placards giving the public permission to light fires in February, when the thermometer stood at 103° in the shade; and whoever made the suggestion to the Government should have his name handed down to posterity

as one who had done something calculated to injure settlers and prevent land settlement. In the northern districts a difference of two months in the season proved very serious, and there had been fires there, due in the main to the neglect of individuals in burning off scrub. A few days before the last fire, which did so much damage, he passed through that district in the train, and saw, within a few miles of the line, white gums and other indigenous timber burning without anything being done to prevent the fire spreading. People living in town and owning property in the country were at the mercy of any person who chose to light a fire, and now the Government were found encouraging fires in February. It had been known all through that the Government had been "winking," in the interest, he believed, of the Agricultural Bank, at what had been going on, and nothing had been done to prevent people lighting fires and menacing their neighbours' property. He had seen a farmer, who ought to have known better, stripping in the month of February, and although the thermometer was 100° in the shade, that farmer lighted a bush fire so that he could look after the stripping machine and the fire at the same time. When things like that were done it was time the Government stepped in and put the practice down with a firm hand; and so far as the Katanning district was concerned, he was informed that the highest fine imposed for any bush fire being started was £1. In the settled districts of South Australia, there was one rule throughout the colony, which was enforced, that any person lighting bush fires was immediately dealt with, and on a requisition by six settlers, an inquiry held similar to a coroner's inquest, and that inquiry elicited certain facts which assisted the Government in bringing any offender to justice. In this colony the Government were supposed to protect the people to some extent within the prohibited period, but outside that period the police could take no notice of any fire unless an information were laid against a particular person by the party who suffered the loss, and it was almost impossible for a settler to get sufficient evidence to warrant extreme measures being taken. People naturally did not care to say anything about a neighbour,

and the person who suffered had to be his own detective and get all his evidence together without any assistance from the police. In December last year an immense fire swept over the Katanning district. At that time he was in Adelaide buying stock for a thousand acres of fine land which he had in this colony, but he received a telegram to say that the whole of the grass had been destroyed. When he returned to the colony, he found a great deal of damage had been done, but no inquiry had been held, although the matter was reported in the newspapers and the resident magistrate had almost lost his life in the "fire." In the face of that fire the Government had given the privilege to persons to light fires in February. In that month a neighbour of his saw fit to burn out some 100 acres of country, with the result that the fire spread to his (Mr. Maley's) property, and destroyed another 300 acres of good grass, it being only by hard work that the fire was kept off the agricultural area. It had been said that the best plan was to plough round and then burn, but it must be patent that could only be done within the prohibited period, and this burning round was in itself a dangerous method, and ought not to be resorted to. In fact, every attempt at lighting fires whereby a man sought to gain advantage for himself to the possible disadvantage of his neighbour, should be prevented. He would like to see the Fire Inquiry Act put in force, though he did not approve of the Act, because it did not go far enough. When that legislation was being introduced in 1887, that opinion was expressed by some members of the Legislative Council, and he hoped next session the Act would be amended. In the meantime it was desirable the Government should with a strong hand put down bush fires, and enforce the Act as much as possible. Turning up the *Year Book* of 1896, in which year there was a rather dry season, he found that at York in October the temperature was 94 degrees in the shade, while at Katanning in February the glass showed 103 degrees, and in March 99 degrees in the shade; and in October of the same year he had a large quantity of grass burnt off by a bush fire at Katanning, which was the latest district in the colony. These figures would show how

necessary it is to insist on one rule throughout the country, fixing the period from 1st November to the 1st March, though even outside those dates it would be necessary for settlers to be very careful in the interests of their neighbours.

Question put and passed.

## REMEDIES OF CREDITORS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

### SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell), in moving the second reading, said: This is a very small Bill which only alters one word in the existing Act passed in 1842. The one clause of which the Bill consists provides that in section 5 of the Act passed in the sixth year of Her Majesty, "to extend the remedies of creditors against the property of debtors," the word "ten" be repealed and "six" substituted. The Bill, the second reading of which I now move, reduces the interest from 10 per cent. to 6 per cent.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: From the passing of the Bill?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: From the assent to the Bill. I think members will realise that the days of 10 per cent. are pretty well gone. It seems that 6 per cent. is quite enough.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: It is a bad Bill. It is 8 per cent. in New South Wales.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It seems hard that persons should have to pay 10 per cent.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Why 6 per cent.?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is about the normal rate of interest. I have had some knowledge and experience of business affairs, and I think that 6 per cent. is reasonable interest. Some of us who sometimes have a little money to lend think 6 per cent. is too small. I need not labour the question. I think the Bill will commend itself to members.

HON. R. S. HAYNES (Central): The hon. gentleman is asking the House to assent to this Bill which is drafted by the advisers of the Government. A promissory note carries interest at the rate of 10 per cent., and if you go to a bank and sign a bond you have to pay at the current rate, which varies. While you have to pay the bank 8 per cent., if you are in default you only get 6 per

cent. I come from the colony of New South Wales, which is progressive, and in that country the legal interest is fixed at 8 per cent., which is the minimum rate of the banks. If a person goes guarantee to a bank for some friend—

HON. H. LUXIN: A very bad practice.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: The rate of interest charged is 8 per cent. I think the rate should be reduced from 10 per cent., which is a usurious interest, and fixed at 8 per cent. If next year we find that 8 per cent. is too high, it can be reduced to 6 per cent. We have existed for years with the interest at 10 per cent.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1:

HON. R. S. HAYNES moved that in line 3 the word "six" be struck out and "eight" inserted in lieu.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The hon. member having drawn the attention of the Committee to the question would perhaps not press the amendment. Where a judgment debt was obtained against a person, generally speaking the person was a poor man. He hoped the Committee would not agree to the amendment. We did not want creditors to be oppressive against debtors. That was the spirit of this progressive age.

HON. C. SOMMERS: There was no reason why the interest should be reduced to 6 per cent. Most creditors were glad to accept the principal without interest. In 99 cases out of 100 if the debtor could show the creditor that he was prepared to pay 6 per cent. and that 8 per cent. would be oppressive, no doubt a compromise would be come to. He would support the amendment.

HON. A. JAMESON: It was to be hoped that Mr. Haynes's amendment would be accepted. It was always a good rule to follow the bank rate of interest in any country. If the bank rate varied the Bill could be altered.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	12
Noes	...	...	8
			—
Majority for	...	...	4
			—

AYES.  
Hon. G. Bellingham  
Hon. R. G. Burgess  
Hon. C. E. Dempster  
Hon. J. T. Glowrey  
Hon. R. S. Haynes  
Hon. A. Jameson  
Hon. H. Luxin  
Hon. J. E. Richardson  
Hon. C. Sommers  
Hon. F. M. Stone  
Hon. F. Whitcombe  
Hon. D. McKay (Teller).

NOES.  
Hon. J. W. Hackett  
Hon. S. J. Haynes  
Hon. W. Maley  
Hon. C. A. Piessio  
Hon. G. Randall  
Hon. J. M. Speed  
Hon. W. Spencer  
Hon. T. F. Brimage  
(Teller).

Amendment thus passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment, and the report adopted.

#### GOLDFIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

#### KALGOORLIE ROADS BOARD TRAMWAYS BILL.

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

#### PERTH ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS LIGHTING AND POWER BILL (PRIVATE).

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by the HON. R. S. HAYNES, read a first time.

#### CONSPIRACY AND PROTECTION OF PROPERTY BILL.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by the HON. R. S. HAYNES, read a first time.

#### POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randall), in moving the second reading, said: This is a Bill necessitated by the fact that by and by—some time next year probably—the post and telegraph offices of the colony will come under the control of the Federal Government. It is necessary that the Post Office Savings Bank, which is entirely a Western Australian institution, and is worked here for the benefit of the people in this colony as far as possible, shall be removed from the control of the Postmaster General to that of the Treasurer of the colony. It is possible that after a while arrangements may be made—perhaps as

soon as the post and telegraph offices are taken over by the Federal Government—to have a commission to take over the work of the Savings Bank, as is the custom, I believe, in the other colonies. Clause 2 says the Savings Bank shall be managed by the Colonial Treasurer. Clause 3 states that in the second section of the Act the words “Post Office Savings Bank” shall be substituted for the words “General Post Office.” Clause 4 says the Colonial Treasurer may appoint a manager and officers of the Post Office Saving Bank, and may prescribe their respective duties and pay them such salaries as are voted by the Parliament in that behalf. These are only matters of form, but they are very necessary. Clause 5 provides that the Colonial Treasurer may make arrangements with the authorities of the Commonwealth for continuance of services. I need hardly say the Savings Bank is a very large institution. It has deposits amounting to, I believe, about a million and a quarter, indicating the thrift of the colony, and the colony may be proud of the fact that its people have been able to accumulate savings to such a large extent. The Act provides that only one-third shall be invested in landed property, because it is necessary we shall have funds available for the depositors at any time they may demand them. The Government and the Metropolitan Waterworks Board are borrowers, and I think the Municipal Council of Perth and also the Agricultural Bank have borrowed. This institution is particularly safe, for it is secured by the consolidated revenue of the colony. Members will see the necessity of this Bill, and I trust I shall have their cordial support.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell), in moving the second reading, said: It is not my intention to

occupy the attention of the House for any length of time, because it would be unnecessary to do so, hon. members having had the Estimates in their hands for some considerable time, and having, perhaps, made themselves familiar with the details of the various departments there dealt with. The Estimates were laid on the table of the House about the same time they were laid on the table of the Legislative Assembly, and hon. members may have read the full and exhaustive speech which was delivered on that occasion in another place.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: We cannot refer to that speech.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: We cannot refer to the speech, but hon. members must be more or less familiar with the remarks made on that occasion.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: We read it last year: it was the same speech.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was a review of the operations of the Government in the various departments throughout the year ending 30th June, 1900, and on the whole I think it was a very excellent statement of the progress the colony has made in public works, embracing railways, harbour works, the Coolgardie water scheme, extension of telegraph lines, and the erection of post offices and schools and other conveniences, all of which show the desire on the part of the Government to overtake the necessities of the community. In a colony of such large extent as this, where the population is very sparse, a larger expenditure is required than in a more centralised State, and the Government here is carried on at a more expensive rate than that of other colonies, where the population is larger and gathered in a smaller extent of territory. Ministers in the various departments are continually requested to afford facilities of one kind and another, and to grant assistance to people in the way of providing the comforts and conveniences of life; and it is always with pleasure that Ministers are able to comply with these requests; but, as hon. members are aware, it is not always possible to do this, inasmuch as while the revenue of the colony is very large for a population of 180,000, every request cannot be satisfied. I have, unfortunately, had to postpone the consideration of applications with consider-

able regret to myself, but the exigencies of the case have compelled me to do so; though some of these requests have been granted and I hope in the near future other requests may be attended to. When schools are requisitioned for an attendance of twelve or fourteen scholars—

HON. R. S. HAYNES: How about the hospitals, of which we know something?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Little centres are being created not only on the goldfields but also in the agricultural districts.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Hospitals?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Hospitals have not been created to any very large extent, but I believe one or two have been established.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: They are not a credit to the Government.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: These hospitals are assisted by the Government, and I am sorry to say the Government have had to contribute a very large amount for their support. It has been an object of mine, since I have been in office, to decrease that amount and induce people in scattered districts to assist these institutions as far as they possibly can, and in many instances this has been done. On the whole, I am able to congratulate the country and the House on a more satisfactory state of things than existed two years ago.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: How about the select committee's report on the Perth Hospital?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: A reduction in the expenses has been made, and the efficiency of the hospitals, generally speaking, is very satisfactory; but owing to a large number of people living in tents and having little facilities for the treatment of disease, should it unfortunately break out, the Government cannot see its way to withhold aid to these institutions, and so long as the money is well spent by careful committees, and not wasted in salaries, a satisfactory result is obtained. Schools have been established in many parts of the colony, and even since the end of last year we have been enabled to meet the need to some extent; and now there are not many places in the colony, even very small places, not supplied with schools. I am sorry to say the expense of these small schools is very great, but I believe the Legislature do not

begrudge the amount placed on the Estimates for the education of the children of the colony. This is one of the votes the Government are most pleased to grant, and I am pleased to say that members of the Legislature are as anxious as the Government that the children of the colony should not grow up in ignorance of the rudiments, at any rate, of education. I am proud to say that the schools of this colony obtain very high rank, and have received eulogism from persons outside, being spoken of in one district, at any rate, as almost a model for other parts of the world. I hope this state of things will continue, and that the schools of the colony which are, perhaps, not giving a high education, will give a good sound businesslike commercial training, fitting the young people for the varying ranks of life which by and by they will occupy, whether in agricultural or mineral districts, or commercial centres. We are also giving technical education, training the eye and hand of our students, and the advantages thus offered should be availed of to a considerable extent. A sum of £2,381,157 will be expended out of the general revenue during the year, and from the general loan fund there is an estimated expenditure of £1,748,520, or, with probably some little saving, a total expenditure of £4,129,677 in the colony during the year, an amount which should be productive of a vast amount of good. A considerable amount of this money is taken up in salaries, but there are a large number of public works of greater or lesser utility set forth in the Estimates to be undertaken for the benefit of the country. East and north of the gold-mining districts, a telegraph and postal service has been established, even to Lake Way, which is a very distant part, and a telegraph line has been carried to Mt. Malcolm. It is also proposed to put a line between Menzies and Kalgoorlie, to reach Mulline through various centres which intervene, probably at Cane Grass, and this will be the means of assisting the development of centres which are growing in importance every day. It is also intended to take a straight line from Niagara to Malcolm, the present line following a circuitous route, and the business there demanding further facilities. It is intended to begin the railway line from Cue to Nannine, and to

put in hand almost directly, a railway between Menzies and Leonora. This latter line will tap very rich country, sometimes spoken of by those who are interested there, as likely in the near future to equal, if not eclipse, the celebrated "golden mile" at Boulder and Kalgoorlie. There are many indications that a very rich country has been found, which will be the means of adding to the wealth and prosperity of the colony, providing an outlet for the agricultural products which will be sent from the coastal districts. The population of the colony is increasing steadily, if not to a large extent, the increase monthly being on the average about a thousand. There may be a little set-back, and probably at the present time we may find a little decrease because of the exodus to the other colonies for holiday-making, but these people will return, and, on the whole, the increase of population is satisfactory. The way in which the population is increasing at the present time is more satisfactory than it would be if there were a large influx of people, for whom we should find a difficulty in providing employment. At the present time, generally speaking, affairs are looking much better than they did twelve months ago. There are not many people out of work; at any rate, not many who are able and willing to work; and nearly all the house properties in Perth, except perhaps small shops, are pretty well occupied. I am told by some of the agents that rents are going up a little, and there are indications that the colony is on the right road, and that the little set-back we got in 1898 is being followed by a period of comparative prosperity. I hope we may congratulate our agricultural friends, on the whole, on a very good ingathering of the fruits of the fields by and by. I suppose, as always is the case, there will be some drawbacks; and there has been, unfortunately, some losses by fire, which we all deplore, in the eastern districts, and also losses by water. But, on the other hand, I believe in some of the pastoral districts in the north, such a good season as the last has hardly ever been known. The rains which fell around Lake Way, and places intervening between there and Lawlers, came as a surprise to the oldest inhabitants. I saw two pictures the other day—indeed, I

have them at my house—in which a boat is shown as sailing on a splendid lake (Lake Miranda), which is apparently very large; and this is a sight which has never been witnessed there before, but which we hope will be repeated, because I am sure such rainfalls must tend to the fertility of the country generally. All that the country requires is a rainfall to make it prosperous, and there are demands for labour and openings for enterprise. The revenue for the past year was over £2,900,000, and though the expenditure was large, the deficit was paid off, and a credit balance of some £12,000 left in the Treasury on the 30th June. I believe the estimate for the expenditure this year is £2,381,157, and the revenue is calculated to leave a small balance in hand. The revenue to be obtained from the railways is set down at £1,250,000, at a cost of some £900,000 odd, showing that there will be a surplus towards paying the interest on the borrowed money and paying off the debt. Reports have been issued from the various banking institutions of the colony showing a state of affairs which is very encouraging. The deposits in those institutions have increased considerably, and at the present time money is very plentiful in Perth awaiting a safe and profitable investment. There never was a time in the history of the colony when there was so much money available for investment. This will have the necessary consequence of reducing the rate of interest somewhat, and it will tend to open up various enterprises. Men will find that they can get money at a reasonable rate, and they will embark on enterprises which they will not enter upon if they have to pay 8 or 10 per cent. for the money. I have some information, if members desire it, on the various items in the schedules, which comprise ten departments, from His Excellency the Governor down to the Colonial Secretary. The Railway Department comes in for an expenditure of £1,252,456, and I am sure it is something surprising that the earnings of the railways are so great, and there is every prospect of the earnings increasing. Of course the expenditure will increase, because if we extend our railways into the interior the cost of fuel and other things will be increased. At the same time we have the satisfaction that the

country is being developed and that it will benefit the manufacturer, the agriculturist, and the horticulturist. Every one must be satisfied with the result of the first half of the financial year, and we may look forward to the new year with promise. Perhaps it will be wrong for me to sit down without referring to the great event, the proclamation of the Federal Parliament of the Commonwealth which is to take place on the 1st January in the city of Sydney, and in a short time the Federal Parliament will be meeting in the city of Melbourne. Soon this colony will be called upon to elect eleven representatives to take their seats in the Federal Parliament.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: About what date?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: About the end of March. It is expected the election will take place about that time, but I cannot speak definitely. It is not probable that the Post Office and other institutions will be taken over by the Federal Government until about July next. However, these events will be marching along; time is passing, and we must ascertain what will probably be the result on the prosperity or otherwise of the country. The great mass of the people are looking cheerfully to the change which will take place, and I hope they will meet what is coming in a broad spirit. The brightest feeling exists amongst all classes of the community, which will be productive of good to the colony and its advancement. I do not know how Parliament will be affected by this change. Some think, and I am among the number, that probably the two Houses of Parliament will not perhaps be looked upon as of so great importance as they are at present, inasmuch as we shall have lost control of the post and telegraphs, the customs, the defences, navigation, lighthouses, and so on. It may be anticipated, perhaps, that the work which has to be done by the Parliament of this country may not be so great or so important as at the present time. But seeing that we have an immense territory to develop, there is sufficient to call forth the energies and talents of those amongst us, and those aspiring to positions in these two Houses in the near future, especially in one House, and as vacancies occur in this one. I feel sure, as has always been the

case, when the necessity arises men will be found to carry on the business of the country; though we shall have to regret the loss of one who has been the most prominent man in the country for the last ten years; one who has embarked us on our immense public works policy, who has been the means of developing the country, and through whose action the bald desert has been dotted with prosperous towns. I feel sure members will look with a good deal of curiosity and concern, and I hope with intelligence, on the events that will be transpiring in our midst in the course of the next few months. I hope the selection made for the other branch of the Legislature will be a wise and good one, and that men will be returned who have the best interests of the country at heart, and who will do all that lies in their power for this country. I do not intend to go into the details of the schedules and I must, to some extent, ask the forbearance of the House for that. If any necessity arises, which I hope will not, I will furnish hon. members with all the particulars that I can. I hope the House will not desire to make any amendment in the Appropriation Bill which has had long consideration in another place, and which has received the serious consideration, not only of the Colonial Treasurer, but also of the other members of the Ministry. Although some retrenchment has had to be made in consequence of the enormous demands to be met, and which cannot be met by the anticipated revenue, still I think on the whole that the civil servants of the country are fairly well paid. I am told by those who are supposed to know that the salaries in the lower grades of the service will bear favourable comparison with the salaries in other colonies. In the higher branches, the civil servants perhaps do not receive the same amount of remuneration as in some of the other colonies the officers receive, but these things will right themselves in time. I admit the country cannot bear a continual addition to the salaries of the civil servants of the country, and sooner or later each individual position will be fixed by the commission, and the pay which is considered a fit and proper reward will be attached to the office. When the positions in the service are fixed, from that time forth we shall have

less dissatisfaction and disappointment on the part of those who think they do not receive the reward they should. But these things will happen in any service. An attempt has been made to pacify the civil servants, and has been partly successful. I know a very earnest effort has been made in one department to do this, and although there was a little difficulty in one department, it seems there was an oversight, and the matter will be rectified later on. I am sure of the concurrence of the House when I say it is intended that the civil servants shall be well paid for their services, so that we shall ultimately have a satisfied and contented public service. If hon. members desire any information on any particular point and I am able to give it, I shall do so with cheerfulness. Already two Supply Bills have been passed, one for £300,000 and another for £400,000. The amount of this Appropriation Bill is £2,381,157 6s. 1d.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

#### LAND DRAINAGE BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell), in moving the second reading, said: This is a Bill I am not very well acquainted with. However, I dare say other members in the House understand the question very well, and will be able to deal with it. The general principle of the Bill is one that is not new, inasmuch as we find it is adopted in regard to the Metropolitan Waterworks Board and some other institutions. The Bill is intended to assist persons, or at any rate to encourage persons, to settle upon lands which are more or less subject to an overflow of water, in the districts which the hon. member (Hon. E. McLarty) represents. It is a Bill which seeks to get people to help themselves. It provides that the Governor, from time to time, by Order in Council, may, on petition in that behalf from a majority of the ratepayers in any part of the colony, declare any lands to be a drainage district for the purposes of

this Bill, and may, in such order, define the boundaries and give a name to such district. This may, however, be altered afterwards by the same process being repeated. It is intended that after the district boards are constituted they shall declare a rate on all ratable property and make valuations for that purpose; also that they shall recommend a main drain (if I may use the expression), which is to be cut through those districts, and the people living in those districts will afterwards undertake to connect their lands with that main drain by smaller drains. The object of the Bill is that the people who constitute the district board shall keep this drain in order. It is provided they shall strike a rate upon the inhabitants, and shall be able to borrow money from the Government for the purpose of constructing this drain; also, that they shall pay the money back by instalments from time to time out of the money accruing from the rates. They are to be charged 4 per cent. for the loan of the money, and are to provide a sinking fund of, I think, 2 per cent., to eventually liquidate the loan. I believe there are some very rich lands in that part of the country, but they are totally unfitted for cultivation (at any rate, in the winter time); and it is believed that this measure will enable people to help themselves and encourage a spirit of enterprise among them, so that a considerable area of country will be brought into cultivation to the benefit of the whole community. I believe this subject engaged the attention of the Lands Department and the Minister of Lands for a considerable time, and also the attention of the manager of the bank, who is a practical agriculturist. It is intended that an engineer shall construct these drains, as it would be certainly undesirable to place the work in the hands of unskilled men. Clause 7 provides that a drainage board shall be elected for every district, consisting of six members, any three of whom shall be a quorum for the transaction of business. Elections shall be held on the third Thursday in December in every year, at such place within the district as the returning officer shall appoint. I think hon. members will find that the *modus operandi* is very much the same as that which prevails in regard to a local

roads board. Then arrangements are set forth in Clauses 8, 9, 10, 11, and subsequent clauses. Clause 13 provides :

Every drainage board shall be a body corporate under the name of "The Drainage Board of the District of \_\_\_\_\_," with perpetual succession and a common seal, having a capacity to hold lands and to do and suffer all things which a body corporate may do and suffer.

The Bill also provides that the board shall have certain officers to transact their business. Clause 16 says the Colonial Treasurer may, with the approval of the Governor, from time to time expend, for the purposes of this Bill, in the construction of main drains within any drainage district, or in such other drainage works as the Governor, on the recommendation of a board, approves, sums not exceeding on the whole £30,000. Hon. members will see it is not intended to make a very large beginning, and although I do not profess to know very much about the matter, I think this is a very wise Bill. As this system is experimental to some extent, it is wise not to begin on too large a scale. Clause 17 says :

A board may, from time to time, apply to the Minister for the construction of main drains or any other drainage works within the district of the board, and if the Governor approves of the application, the board shall execute to the Colonial Treasurer an instrument creating a sole charge upon the drainage rates under this Act.

Clause 18 provides that, at the request of the Minister, the Director of Public Works shall, through his officers, construct these drainage works. I think that is a very safe provision to make, for it is desirable to have skilled persons to construct and lay out these drains so that they shall not be failures when constructed. Clause 19 provides that all drains and drainage works which shall be constructed under this Bill shall, when completed, be vested in the board. Whilst Clause 20 says :

It shall be the duty of the board to cleanse, repair, and otherwise maintain in a state of efficiency all drains and drainage works vested in the board, and for that purpose the board may exercise all or any of the powers hereinbefore conferred on the Director of Public Works for the construction of the same.

Clause 21 provides that : On the application of any owner or occupier of any land within the district, the board may autho-

rise such person to make branch drains communicating with any main drain on such terms as to maintenance, cleansing, and otherwise as to the board may seem fit. Clause 22 provides that the board may levy a rate, and Clause 23 says :

The rates received by the board by virtue of this Act shall be applied in the first place to paying to the Colonial Treasurer interest at the rate of four pounds per centum per annum on the amount borrowed by him on debentures, and in the next place to the sinking fund for the repayment of the amounts paid or applied to meet the cost of construction at the rate of two per centum per annum on the said amount and, after such payments, to the management, maintenance, and improvement of the drainage works within the district.

The rate is to be levied in the manner directed in Clause 24. Clause 28 reads :

Where any drainage works constructed under this Act improve unoccupied Crown lands in the district so as to promote settlement there, the Governor may make a contribution to the funds of the board to such extent as he may see fit.

This is rather an important clause, and I think a very proper one. It is only right that if Crown lands are benefited by drainage work undertaken by these boards the Crown should share in the expense. I think that principle will commend itself to hon. members. I do not know that I need refer to any other clauses of the Bill. There are miscellaneous provisions in clauses numbered 31; 32, 33, to the end. Clause 39 says :

Every board may make by-laws for the better carrying out of their duties and for the regulation and drainage under this Act.

I think one of the eminent features of this Bill is that it promotes self-help and encourages enterprise on the part of would-be settlers upon the land. From what I have learnt from time to time there are lands which are quite capable of improvement, and if so, it is very desirable that the Parliament of this country should encourage enterprise and cause land which is in an unprofitable state at the present time to be made profitable and of advantage to the country.

HON. C. SOMMERS (North-East) : I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill, and I congratulate the Government upon having introduced it, although it is rather late in the day. I hope the Government will treat in a liberal manner that clause referring to subscriptions by

the Government for Crown lands improved by the construction of these drains. That is most important, because I fear that in many districts the amount of rates the boards will be able to levy will be insufficient to pay interest and sinking fund; and any money they may receive will have no appreciable effect upon the Lands Department. We know that particularly in the South-Western district, which it is proposed to drain, and in regard to which this Bill is mainly introduced, there are some of the finest lands in the colony; magnificent lands, lands that I am sorry to say have been alienated in such large quantities as they have been already; lands alienated by people who were led to believe years ago that the Government would introduce a system of drainage whereby they would benefit from this land. Had that been done, we should have had smiling homesteads, and some of the finest farms in the colony. There is a magnificent rainfall. The land is close to a railway and to a city, and instead of being practically a sea in winter, as it is now, we should, as I have said, have had smiling homes, had drainage works been carried out.

HON. D. MCKAY: Better late than never.

HON. C. SOMMERS: Yes; better late than never. I hope the Government will not allow the grant stipulated, £30,000, to be used for other purposes in a number of districts in other parts of the colony, until this particular district in the South-Western portion of the colony has been properly drained. Thirty thousand pounds will do an immense amount of good. It will drain hundreds of thousands of acres, and the main thing is to see that the money is properly distributed. If a drain should be 10 miles in length, it will be no use for the Government to say: "We have not enough money for that, but only sufficient to do five miles." The policy adopted by the Government in the past of making small grants to roads boards, and special allowances for small drains, is no good. A thorough scheme is wanted, and a main channel must be constructed, or it will be no good. The policy at present is to make small drains in a number of localities, but the effect is that the localities are badly drained. They are partly drained, and water is poured down

to a lower level, more harm than good being thereby occasioned. I hope the Government will liberally subscribe to the work, because there is a vast amount of good Crown land which can be improved, and it will be only an act of justice to induce people to settle upon this land. I speak from personal experience when I say it is utterly impossible to do anything with this land until provision is made for the construction of main drains. I repeat that I hope the Government will be liberal in their contributions to the boards, and I trust that a commencement will be made this summer. Only during a few months of the year is it possible for the work to be carried on, and if this summer is allowed to go by without the work being undertaken, it will mean the delay of a whole year.

HON. W. MALEY (East): The Bill will commend itself to the coastal members for the colony. No doubt a large area can be brought to good account, and certainly from Albany round to Perth there is a large quantity of swampy land, which should be properly drained and dealt with; and I am hoping to see the measure self-supporting. Some ten years ago I was invited by the Premier to make suggestions in reference to the first agricultural area selected in Western Australia, and I suggested that an area should be reserved for a main drain. That, I believe, was not done, but the necessity for such provision has been felt since. I do not think clause 16 will be found so effective as is hoped. I suppose some of the £30,000 will be given in small amounts to begin, probably £1,000 in a particular district, and the money will drain a large extent of Government land; but four per cent. per annum amounts to £40, and if we have to rate eighty settlers at ten shillings a year, am afraid it will be found a difficult rate to collect; so that if the drainage board could be merged into the local board so far as rating is concerned, it would be very desirable. Settlers would object to pay for the drainage of Government land, and there are other difficulties; but I am not opposed to any part of the Bill simply pointing out the difficulties, which I hope will be surmounted later on. I hope to see the time arrive when local governing bodies, such as roads boards

instead of coming to the Government for grants to carry on their operations, will be self-supporting, and when the people in the localities will contribute the amount required for roads; in which case they will see that the money is expended properly. I have no doubt that money contributed by private enterprise will be well and faithfully laid out under the Bill, but clause 16 will scarcely be found a working clause.

HON. E. McLARTY (South-West): I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill, which has been anxiously looked forward to for a considerable time by a great many new settlers in the part of the country in which I reside. Settlers who have taken up land and spent all the money they possess in making improvements, have arrived at the conclusion that unless a drainage system is undertaken, they must abandon their land, and lose all they have expended. A great deal of good can be done by drainage, but, at the same time, it will be necessary, in appointing boards, to make such selections that the money will not be frittered away. I see it is suggested to have deep drains in places, but from my knowledge of a good deal of the country, I think these would have very little effect. At the same time, I am satisfied that main drains in certain portions of the different agricultural areas would enable a great number of small farmers to connect their small drains with very good effect. No doubt the land in the south-western part of the colony is capable of producing fairly good corn crops, and a great deal is suitable for producing heavy root crops, but the difficulty is as to the water in the winter months, which so disheartens settlers that many hundreds have left their properties, and gone to the gold-fields or other places, intending to return if this land drainage scheme is carried into effect. I know of no other question which has agitated the public of these districts so much as this one of drainage. Scarcely a week goes by but some disappointed settler, who has put in crops and lost almost the whole of them by wet, calls on me to urge on the Government to undertake this drainage scheme. Only last week I introduced a deputation to the Minister for Lands on the subject, and the deputation pointed out that it was utterly

useless for them to cultivate the land unless relief were given in this direction. One settler stated that he had expended the sum of £90 out of his own pocket in opening out a watercourse, which I know very well, and he urged the Government to spend a small sum in continuing that drain. He pointed out that his funds were exhausted, and he certainly thought he had done his share, and his opinion was that by a further expenditure of £30 or £40 much good would result to a considerable number of settlers. The Minister, I am pleased to say, at once granted the small sum to continue the work, and drains have already been opened under the direction of the manager of the Agricultural Bank.

HON. C. SOMMERS: We want the rivers opened.

HON. E. McLARTY: And these drains are having a splendid effect, but they require extension and the water led away to the estuary. We can understand that by starting near the ranges the water is concentrated, but when it spreads over the country it simply floods out the people living to the westward, and I think the experience already gained of what has been done is sufficient to show that by proper management and an extension of the works, great relief would be given to the people in this part of the colony. I am not able to speak of the Bill, because I have not had an opportunity of reading it or considering its provisions; but, speaking generally, I am sure such a measure will afford great satisfaction to a large number of settlers. No measure would give more satisfaction to the small farmers, and I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill, because something of the kind has been called for for many years. At the present time a large area of our best agricultural land is unavailable, an area amounting, according to a computation of my own, to about half a million acres. While I tender my congratulations to the Government for having brought in the Bill, I must say I so far differ from hon. members who have spoken, in saying that I do not think the Bill will do any appreciable good; but I gladly welcome the measure, if only on the ground that it is a step in

the right direction, and we shall be able to find out its weak points and defects and introduce later on an amending Bill which will be beneficial to the districts to which it is intended to apply. My objections to the Bill can be very easily summarised; and I join with Mr. Sommers — at least I imagine I am now expressing his thoughts—in saying that before anything is done under the Bill there will be found a demand growing up among the people who live along the large choked-up rivers of the south-west, for the rivers to be opened, and a free waterway provided to the sea at the Government expense, and that on the very same ground that water is being supplied to Coolgardie, though I do not say how the payment is to be made. There is a still better precedent in that rivers are being dredged and snagged; for instance, the Swan, which has been snagged, giving access to the very pleasant abode of Mr. Saunders.

HON. H. J. SAUNDERS: Four miles more remain to be done.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The river is already snagged for twenty miles, and only four more miles require to be done to reach the hon. member's residence; and all that without imposing any burden on the ratepayers.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Twenty miles from where?

HON. J. W. HACKETT: From the mouth of the estuary. Until a number of rivers which could be mentioned are opened up, the flooded waters will not be allowed free way, and a large system of draining cannot be undertaken. The Bill is defective as to the powers of initiation, which are altogether too complicated and cumbersome, and carry with them too serious responsibility to allow of their being taking advantage of. Insufficient power is given both to the drainage board and the Director of Public Works, and a still more serious objection is that the drainage board and the Director of Public Works or the Government are brought in to, I will not say a state of collision, but a state of rivalry, and in some respects a state of jealousy, which will be found, I am afraid, absolutely fatal to useful work being done. A number of clauses will require revision, not this year, but next year, because we have no time now to do more than pass the Bill. Clause 24 is

an instance of a clause which has been introduced without sufficient consideration. It declares:

Any such rate may be levied in manner as directed by the advertisement thereof, which may from time to time be altered or revoked by the board, either—(1.) On a uniform scale; or (2.) On a graduated scale according to the classification of lands in the district.

There is no power given to classify or to alter the scale, and the moment the board begin to graduate lands, or to declare that one piece of land shall pay more than another, friction commences, with the result that nothing will be done under the Bill. I believe—and I say this in a kindly sense—that while this is a thoroughly well-intentioned Bill, it will not fully meet the object of the framers. Nevertheless let us get the Bill on the statute book, because it will show the Government have risen to a sense of their responsibility in regard to this great district, which is almost as it was fifty years ago, and which is enough to break the heart of a settler who takes up land there and finds himself flooded out for three or four months in the year.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is the Premier's Bill.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The Colonial Secretary tries to put the responsibility on the Premier, who, however, would be glad to have the Colonial Secretary's assistance. I welcome the Bill, and trust it will be passed as nearly as possible in its present shape; and we will then be able to discover its defects, and to prepare amendments for next year. Let me warn the Colonial Secretary nothing will be done under the Bill until the Government undertake the bounden and primary obligation of clearing the closed-up water ways between the Darling Ranges and the sea.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### CARRIAGE OF MAILS BILL.

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

#### BILLS OF SALE AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by HON. J. M. SPEDD, read a first time.

## ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6:30 o'clock, until the next day.

## Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 28th November, 1900.

Paper presented—Sessional Order, Amendment—Boulder Health Rates Validation Bill, first reading—Perth Electric Lighting and Power Bill (private), third reading—Kalgoorlie Roads Board Tramways Bill, third reading—Goldfields Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Conspiracy and Protection of Property Bill, third reading—Bills of Sale Amendment Bill, in Committee (resumed), reported; third reading—Railways Act Amendment Bill, second reading, etc.—Carriage of Mails Bill, second reading, etc.—Criminal Law Amendment Bill, in Committee, reported—Trustees Bill, Council's Amendments—Motion: Imperial Federation (amendment passed)—Motion: Government Railways, Control by Commissioners, discharge of order—Police Act Amendment Bill, discharge of order, division—Retrenchment of Mr. H. W. Hargrave: Report adopted—Motion: Minimum Wage in Government Contracts—Motion: Cavalry Horses, Breeding (amendment passed)—Adjournment.

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

## PRAYERS.

## PAPER PRESENTED.

By the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Railway survey, Newcastle-Bejoording line, as ordered.

Ordered to lie on the table.

## SESSIONAL ORDER, AMENDMENT.

On motion by the PREMIER, resolved that the House do sit onward till 7:15 o'clock (without interval), on this day.

## BOULDER HEALTH RATES VALIDATION BILL.

Introduced by Mr. RASON (for Mr. Moran), and read a first time.

## PERTH ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS LIGHTING AND POWER BILL (PRIVATE).

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

## KALGOORLIE ROADS BOARD TRAMWAYS BILL.

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

## GOLDFIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

## CONSPIRACY AND PROTECTION OF PROPERTY BILL.

Read a third time, on motion by Mr. EWING, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## BILLS OF SALE AMENDMENT BILL.

## IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Consideration resumed from 26th November.

Clause 2—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time, on motion by Mr. WILSON, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

## RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

## SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading, said: The object of this Bill is set forth in Sub-clause 2 of Clause 3. Under Sections 4 and 5 of the Act, 44 Vict., No. 17, there is an arbitrary provision that a notice board, toll-board, or time-table, to be painted in black letters on a white ground, should be exhibited at all railway stations. It is found to be inconvenient and impracticable to have all these times exhibited on notice boards of this particular character, and to be exhibited in every small station; for while it might be convenient to have these times printed and exhibited in the large stations on our railways, yet it is not practicable to do all these things at every small station; therefore this amending Bill provides a remedy by enabling the department to exhibit the time-table in printed form, and to have