

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 10th March, 1892.

Hawkers and Pedlars Bill: first reading—Anti-Chinese Petition (Repeal of Imported Labor Registry Act, 1884)—Appropriation Bill, 1892: third reading—Governors of High School Act Appointment Bill: in committee—Error in Police Bill—Error in Customs Bill—Gascoyne and North-West Divisions Crown Rent Remission Bill: motion to discharge the order of the day for second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7-30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

HAWKERS AND PEDLARS BILL.

Read a first time.

ANTI-CHINESE PETITION — MOTION FOR REPEAL OF "IMPORTED LABOR REGISTRY ACT, 1884."

IN COMMITTEE.

MR. MOLLOY moved, "That in the opinion of this Committee 'The Imported Labor Registry Act, 1884,' should be immediately repealed." He said: I have been entrusted with a petition signed by 2,010 residents of the port of Fremantle, praying for the abolition of the Imported Labor Registry Act. It may seem strange that a petition emanating from Fremantle should be presented to this House by myself, being a member for Perth. In explanation of this I may say that I did not intrude myself upon the electorate of Fremantle to take away the privileges of hon. members representing that town. There was a large and influential meeting held in that town on this subject, and at that meeting were two of the members for Fremantle, who were in the body of the hall, and who made themselves conspicuous by taking no active part in the meeting. It seemed, sir, that those members were not in accord with the meeting, and that although they had been requested to take part in the meeting, and to further the object of the persons attending it, they did not respond. It has been conveyed to me, by the hon. member for North Fremantle (Mr. Pearse), that he feels slighted in this matter; but I can assure the hon. member that no slight was intended, so far as I am concerned, and that I took the natural inference, from

his action and that of his colleague at the meeting, that they were not in sympathy with the petitioners. When a deputation, the outcome of this meeting at Fremantle, came to me in Perth with this petition, I took it for granted, for the reasons I have explained, that the members for Fremantle not being in accord with the petitioners, they did not identify themselves with the petition, and that therefore the petitioners had to seek elsewhere for a member to introduce it into this honorable House. That being so, and as I attended the meeting and was in sympathy with its object, I have felt great pleasure in introducing this petition to this honorable House, praying that the Imported Labor Registry Act be abolished, and that some restriction be imposed upon the influx of Chinese to our shores. The subject is one worthy of the consideration of this honorable House. It is a subject of very great importance and fraught with great issues to the interests of this colony. It is a question, sir, whether we are to allow an influx of these people here to compete with European colonists. It is a question whether we are to borrow large sums of money to be expended upon public works, to give employment to population, and to increase the revenue in this colony, and whether we are to do this by the introduction of such colonists as the Chinese. In endeavoring to arrive at a conclusion on this subject, it would be well to consider our experience of these people which we have gained from the time that they commenced to come to this colony in numbers. It is not many years since we had Chinese settling amongst us, and I venture to think that our experience of these people is not of such a nature as will justify us in doing anything to encourage them to settle here. We find there are instances among these people of very great industry. In the market gardeners of this race, we have a thrifty and industrious people. It will be apparent to most hon. members that if it had not been for this class of people we would be seriously inconvenienced in the direction which I have mentioned. They teach us a lesson, in this respect—and perhaps in others—in industry; but then when we come to consider their other habits, and that the men come

here without wives and families, it becomes a serious question whether we should encourage these people and say they are desirable colonists. We have the European colonist who comes here as a laboring man, and if he be married he has to provide for his wife and family, to pay rent for a cottage, to provide food and clothing, and to fulfil the various obligations of a citizen and colonist. He contributes to the revenue in proportion to his expenditure and his means. On the other hand we have the Chinese, a congregation of them living together in some hovel; thrifty, it is true, exceedingly industrious; prosecuting their various avocations with energy, and accumulating wealth. But, I ask, do they contribute to the progress of the colony, in proportion to their numbers, equally with European colonists? I say they do not, and I will quote as instances the numbers of them who are in this city, some 20 or 30 herded together in one common family or brotherhood. They have one common nest, and their expenditure for the whole of these people would not be equal to that of one European resident with his family. I see that one hon. gentleman smiles at what I am saying, but there will be an opportunity for him to address the House after I have finished.

AN HON. MEMBER: Am I not allowed to smile?

MR. MOLLOY: Assuredly he can smile and enjoy himself in his own way; but I took it to mean he was smiling in derision at my argument. I will be very willing to listen to the argument of the hon. gentleman in defence of the position he may take up on this subject. The European colonist is a more profitable one in this respect: that an ordinary laborer with his family would contribute as much to the public revenue as a herd of these creatures, who are engaged in their various pursuits—accumulating wealth and taking it out of the colony—because our experience is that these persons, having hoarded sufficient wealth, go back to China, leaving there the wealth which they had accumulated in this country, and coming back here to hoard more. Looking at this view of the subject, I think it is desirable that we should place some restrictions upon these people in coming here to compete with

European colonists without contributing to the revenue in proportion to the amount which they amass. We have also to consider the habits of these people. There is the question of morality to be considered. We know it is characteristic of these creatures that they are subject to certain vices. Although repulsive in themselves, experience teaches us that they have a fascination for some poor deluded females, whom they get by some means under their control; they reduce them to the depths of depravity; and this being so is it well for us who legislate here to place no restriction upon such people as these who bring vices to contaminate and pollute the community? We have the experience of the other colonies to guide us in this matter. We have the experience of Melbourne, where we are told there are instances of the utmost depravity to which European women are subjected by these loathsome creatures; and this aspect of the question, I think, is of sufficient importance to command the attention of this House, and to induce us as legislators to impose some restriction upon the introduction of this alien race. Surely it is better for us to encourage people of our own race to settle amongst us; people who are used to our habits and our modes of civilisation. These alien people are deserving of no support from us, from the standpoint which I have taken up and endeavored to explain to this House. It is well for us to bear in mind that we are endeavoring to make this country progress, and it is well for us to remember that we are borrowing large sums of money to attain that end. That being so, the class of colonist who will contribute his fair share to meet the expenses upon this borrowed money is to my mind the most desirable class of colonists to encourage. And we have also in our experience of some of these creatures, known that they have contracted disease—in one instance, at all events, it has been notorious that we have been liable to the spread of the loathsome disease of leprosy. The cost to the country in preventing the spread of this disease is well known to the whole colony, and to legislators here in particular; and although it may be said that these people are deserving of con-

sideration, that we cannot make two laws for persons who are willing to abide by the laws, they being British subjects, still we need not encourage these people to come to our shores, and we can follow the precedents of the other Australian colonies in the methods which they have adopted to restrict these aliens from coming into their colonies. We know that in some of the other Australian colonies the agitation upon this subject has been very acute; we know that restrictive measures have been imposed upon the introduction of these people; and I think it is well that we here, in the early stage of this matter, while the subject is not so troublesome as it may hereafter become, should provide a certain protection in the interest of this country, and against the influx of such creatures as these, who are not desirable colonists. I have endeavored to show that they do not contribute to the revenue in the proportion of other European colonists; that they are guilty of vices; that degradation and infamy are their characteristics; that they do pollute and contaminate a certain class of creatures of our own race; and this being so it is undesirable that they should be unrestricted in their coming to settle on these shores. I have endeavored to show that the wealth, which they make in the country, they hoard up, until it is sufficient for them to carry away to enrich other countries. I have endeavored to show that although they are industrious, thrifty, and frugal, and although there are certain qualities in them which the European might well imitate, still their vices more than counterbalance these qualities; that they are undesirable colonists to have amongst us; that they participate in all the benefits derived from our endeavor to make the colony progress; that they do not contribute by their habits and their expenditure a fair proportion to the revenue; that we should compel them by an equitable law to contribute in another way; that if they wish to settle amongst us we should impose some levy upon them before they can be allowed to land on our shores; that if we are to support them while here, they should contribute something in proportion to what they take out of the country. If there is no other means of doing it, we can at least make them contribute to the

revenue; and we cannot do this through their own habits, because their expenditure is so very meagre. We cannot make them contribute to the revenue by the means which they acquire from their occupations, but we can make them contribute in the method which I have suggested, and which would be the imposition of a high poll-tax. I have endeavored to show that this petition deserves the serious consideration of this House. I have endeavored to show that it is an important petition, and has evoked considerable interest in the town from which it emanates. The important town of Fremantle is represented on this petition by 2,010 signatures. That these petitioners are deserving of some consideration I am sure all hon. members will admit; and as we see that the prayer of the petition is directed against the introduction here of such vile creatures as those to whom I have alluded, I think it should command the sympathy of hon. members, and that at least they should do something in this important matter to restrict this evil. I take it that those hon. members who may disagree with the prayer of this petition will yet agree that a high poll-tax should be imposed on these people. I submit this petition to the consideration of this honorable House with all confidence, feeling sure it will receive the consideration which its importance demands. That it is influentially signed will be apparent to any hon. member who will take the trouble to peruse it; and that it is a subject which deserves careful consideration at the hands of this House I am sure no hon. member will deny. At the present juncture, when we are endeavoring to make this colony progress, when after a period of stagnation we awaken to a sense of the responsibilities cast upon us by taking the management of the country into our own hands, I think this is an opportune time to deal with this subject. I say that we, having the responsibility of the management of this our colony, should endeavor to produce such legislation as will attract the best colonists available for the settlement of this vast territory, and that the petition is deserving of consideration on this score I am sure no hon. member will deny. I trust that the decision arrived at in this matter will be such as

will give satisfaction to the petitioners; and, although this petition has emanated particularly and solely from Fremantle in this instance, still there is a widespread feeling of dissatisfaction at the condition of things at present in respect of these people throughout the colony. If I cannot speak so authoritatively as to the feeling on this subject throughout the colony, I can say, particularly in reference to Perth, that there is a widespread dissatisfaction at the law as it stands in respect to these people. I now submit the prayer of the petition to the consideration of this honorable House, feeling sure that it will receive the consideration which it deserves, and I hope that a conclusion will be arrived at which will satisfy the petitioners in this matter. I beg to move the resolution standing in my name.

THE CHAIRMAN: That motion has been granted, and we are now in committee.

MR. MOLLOY: Then I move that the petition be granted.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): What is the prayer?

MR. MOLLOY: It is before the House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I have got the petition, but cannot see the prayer.

MR. MOLLOY: Then I move that the Labor Registry Act of 1884 be repealed.

MR. QUINLAN: I am in sympathy with the hon. member in his motion before the House, because I think it is highly desirable that such steps as he has asked should be taken in this direction. The petition itself sufficiently shows to the House the intention of the hon. member, in the direction of forbidding such undesirable colonists as these Chinese from coming to the shores of Western Australia. Notwithstanding that they have one or two virtues, there are many other reasons why they should be debarred from coming to this colony; the fact that they are here in sufficient numbers now is a strong reason; and unless, as the hon. member desires, a sufficient poll tax be placed on the Chinese, they will become before very long at least a menace to Western Australia. It has been argued that they are desirable in the Northern parts of this colony, because the white laborers are unable to bear the climate; but I do

not see that it is possible to allow the Chinese even in that portion of the colony, because the fact remains that they would by some means make their way to the Southern portion, and in the interest of the other colonists I consider that if we offer inducements for European colonists to come here and share in the prosperity created by public works and other means of progress, we should take every possible steps to prevent the Chinese from coming here and causing the evils mentioned in the petition. I had a little to do with the Chinese some ten years ago, in the North-West, in batches of 40 or 50 at a time, and I am able to speak with some personal knowledge of them as colonists. I say they are most undesirable, in so far that they do not contribute, in anything like proportion, to the revenue; and in fact they live and sleep like pigs. I had to do with them daily, and saw how they lived, and I know their vices in respect to opium smoking and the immoralities referred to by the hon. member. I think he has placed the matter fairly before the House. The chief object of the petition is to protect ourselves against this undesirable class of colonists, and if the motion is supported by the House, I am sure anything the Government will do in the direction of forbidding such a class of people to come to our shores will meet with the approval of the colony generally.

MR. BAKER: Hearing the hon. members speaking so much against the Chinese, I have felt the want of Chinese very much, and I say we cannot do without them. There is not a man here who will cultivate a garden and grow vegetables, except the Chinese; and as to their vices, our vices are as bad as theirs. They are twice as bad—whisky, for instance. I am not an advocate of Chinamen; I don't like them; but I know we can't do without them. If we had not Chinamen to assist us in the work, there would be a strike every day in the week, and the hon. members who have spoken know it.

MR. QUINLAN: What are you indebted to them for?

MR. SIMPSON: I believe the hon. member employs a Chinese cook in his hotel.

MR. BAKER: Then the hon. member should not run them down. I am sorry to

say we can't get along with the white men as laborers in a hot climate. I would much rather pay a white man three times the price of a Chinaman, but the white man won't work. As to what has been said about them in the North-West, we can't do without them there. What could you do in Perth without Chinamen? You would not have a cabbage or a potato. You have to employ Chinamen cooks for your hotels, I expect. As to the vices of the Chinese, of course we have our own vices, and I suppose we keep them up, too. We don't get out of them, anyway.

MR. CLARKSON: Are they any use in the Kimberley district?

MR. BAKER: There is none in your district; Toodyay, I think. You are too poor down there. I only wish these persons would draw their language a little milder about the Chinese. I have been in the colonies over 40 years; I have worked hard myself, but I got out of it; and I am sure we can't do without the Chinese. I was in Queensland about eight months ago, when there was a strike among the shearers in the West. About 200 shearers on one station told the manager they would not shear unless he sacked the Chinese gardener. He dismissed him, and about a fortnight after there were no vegetables; and then the men said they would not shear unless there were vegetables. They struck again because they could not get the vegetables. I was a witness of that. And what can you do in Perth without the Chinese gardeners? I cannot support this motion.

MR. A. FORREST: I regret I am not in accord with the hon. member for Perth in his motion, because I think it is to be seen that a move in this direction would not at all suit a very large proportion of the colony. I have the honor to represent in this House a Northern district, and I am sure it would not do for that district to exclude the Chinese, because we have to depend on them as shepherds, cooks, gardeners, and so on; therefore I must oppose the motion. We find that the petition brought to this honorable House has not the support of the town of Fremantle, for the hon. members who represent it are absent to-night; and if it had been in accord with the wishes of the people of Fremantle, I suppose it would have been introduced by one of the members for that

constituency. I am informed by people living in Fremantle that this petition is not influentially signed at all; that it is not signed by those who live in Fremantle and employ labor. I think the hon. member need not have brought this matter before the House at all. We are fully aware of the class of men the Chinese are; they are not the best samples who come here, but there are Chinamen who are equal to any in the world. In Sydney last year, during the Convention sittings, we were all entertained by a Chinaman, and right royally, too; everything on the table was of the highest order, and of the best class; and at this banquet, given by a Chinaman, we found the leading men of Australia. There are Chinamen in this country who have made gardens, particularly about Perth, and to do this must have cost money or much labor, which is equal to money; and I think those people who have to live in Perth would be very sorry to find the Chinese altogether excluded. I heard a remark by an old colonist some years ago, when he saw the Chinese beginning to come here, that we were progressing, because they would not come to a country that was not progressing. How many Chinese are there in the colony? The Chinese introduced into the Northern District invariably return to their own country at the end of the three years or so of their engaged term. I say the time for this change is not opportune. There is no great cry for an alteration of this system of imported labor. There are not too many Chinamen coming, and when they do come in great numbers, then will be the time to move in this direction. We do not want to fill the colony with an alien race, but at the present time how many have you got? The hon. member would be the last man in the world to be contented when he found there were no Chinamen in Perth or Fremantle. A few years ago we know it was impossible to get vegetables at all. When there is any large influx of Chinamen into the country, these petitioners will have the sympathy of all hon. members in this House; but at present I fail to see what good this motion can do, and I am sure the hon. member will not be able to carry it through this House. Those carrying on stations would have to

abandon them, without Chinese labor. Those Europeans who can work won't work except at very high wages, which cannot be paid. I shall oppose the motion.

MR. CLARKSON: I do not feel inclined to support this motion. I think the Chinaman is painted a little bit blacker than he really is, in some respects, and I very much doubt if an equal number of the lower orders of Europeans would not be found, in their vices, to equal the Chinamen. When they congregate in numbers they become objectionable, but in the country districts of the colony they are very useful indeed; and they are not only useful in the Northern districts, but also in the Eastern districts, where they are employed as fencers and grubbers, and in ordinary farm work, and they make very good laborers indeed. I have frequently had them employed as servants, and I have never had much fault to complain of; and as ploughmen I know they are in many respects superior. The greatest objection against them is that they work at a lower rate of wages than Europeans, and they are unpopular with the working class on that account; but I do think it would be very wrong to prohibit Chinese from coming to the colony, and I believe they would be a great loss. I hope the hon. member will withdraw his motion.

MR. RICHARDSON: No doubt this is a question that affects the Northern districts of the colony very much more seriously than the Southern districts. It may be laid down, as a rule, that all sensible and patriotic men and all true Australians have no wish or desire to see a large influx of the Chinese race in any such numbers as would form a menace, by entering into very serious competition with the white race in various business transactions or modes of livelihood. Most members of this House would think very seriously indeed before they would incur the risk of any such number of Chinese or any alien race coming here as to make it uncomfortable or disagreeable for the European race to work with them. I think every member in an European community would rise against that state of things; but has that state of things arrived or is it imminent? Are we menaced by a large influx of this alien race? Are any of the occupations of our

people rendered unprofitable by this alien competition? I cannot think that state of things has arrived yet. Furthermore, we have a very large colony indeed, and different degrees of climate, and in legislating for one portion of the community down here, we might be doing very serious injury to the other portions; and to legislate wholesale on such a question as this might be doing very serious injury to other portions of the community. The day that you bring in a bill to oust or prohibit the introduction of the Chinese or any alien race, you might just as well sign a separation bond for the Northern districts, because I do not think they would consent to row in with us, under these restrictions. Although I agree that there are sections of this community and portions of our public prints which say we would be better without our Northern community, still, when they say this they speak unthinkingly, and show some ignorance of the condition of other portions of the colony. But what is the great objection to this Chinese race? The hon. member for Perth has put forth a number of elaborate and ingenious reasons, but a great many of them are imaginary, and some of them are trivial. My experience is that these Chinese contribute very considerably to the revenue. I have seen Chinamen spend their wages very freely, except when they intended to leave the country. I cannot think they are a very undesirable class, in that respect. I cannot help thinking that the real objection to the Chinaman, the *cruz* of the whole question, is the competition that ensues in the labor market. It cannot be denied that the Chinese are a most patient and industrious race; that they accomplish things that the Europeans do not make a success of; gardening is only one of them—and, whether fortunately or unfortunately for us, their great characteristic is patient industry. We may come next to their morality. Well, I think the less the Europeans say on that point the better. They talk about the Chinamen herding together. Ask any intelligent person to say whether the Europeans who herd in the East End of London are any better in their social condition or habits than the Chinese. I think the verdict will be rather against the European race. It is a well-known

fact that we do possibly get the lowest order of Chinese here. My experience of them is that they are more intelligent and better educated than the average of the European race in their own particular class of life. They can all read and write, and they can all calculate and do sums, and before they have been here a few months they can tot up a business calculation much more quickly than the average of the laboring Europeans. It may be said that is the bad effect of our Education Act in respect of the Europeans. There is one more phase. I think it is a great objection to this race that they enter into competition not only with labor but with business men. I for one would be happy to support any legislation that would act in that direction. I do not care what sort of bill is brought in if it will prevent competition by aliens in conducting business or in setting up establishments here. But what I do say is that if we keep the Chinamen in their proper place as hewers of wood and drawers of water, as assistants to the European race, and do not allow them to enter into competition, they will be no danger to us, and the Europeans will be the better for having a class of labor on which they can depend for menial services; for the European has, rightly or wrongly, a steadfast objection to menial work, and a decided aversion to many walks of life which suit the Chinese. Europeans will not do this menial work, and if you ask them to do it, they will simply tell you to do it yourself. As to gardening, let us ask any average European to attend to a garden in the summer time and carry water for it, and we should find he would soon tell us to look after it ourselves. If he did try it, he would get a very small bucket indeed, and would carry one bucket at a time, and not many times either; whereas the Chinaman would carry two kerosene tins balanced on his shoulder-stick, and would keep them going; he would work in the hot sun, and make your garden flourish, and be of great assistance to a settler and his family in the bush. Before a European would consent to do this he would want such a tremendous wage that the settler would find it better to do without him. There are other walks of life in which it is very desirable to have

the assistance of Chinamen; and if we can keep them within limits by legislation it will be very much better for the European working man, and much better for his wife and family, in being able to employ a little cheap labor for domestic purposes. Then I say let us have legislation whereby the Chinese laborers will be allowed only to enter into written agreements to serve white men for a term of years, and that at the end of the term they may arrange with the same employers again, or they must go back to the country they came from. That will keep down the numbers, and will also keep them in their proper places as hired laborers in this colony. If they do not choose to come to the country under these conditions, then let them stop away.

MR. CLARKSON: Make slaves of them.

MR. RICHARDSON: No; a slave is not a free agent, nor does he receive wages; but these men will engage to come here of their own free will, and will receive wages, and when their time of hired service expires they can go away and spend their earnings where they like. I think the laboring class of the European population will see that it is much to the benefit of themselves to have this proportion of Chinese sprinkled in the community as hired laborers and household servants, to chop wood and draw water, and do the rough work of scrubbing. I do not see the necessity for this cry against the Chinese. A great deal that has been said against them might be said equally against a great many of the Europeans; and if it is necessary we should put a high poll-tax on them. In case they won't go back to their own country at the end of their term, I say put a £20 poll-tax on them.

MR. SIMPSON: It is a pity that the hon. member who introduced this motion was not able to have laid before hon. members, as a first step, the return for which he moved the other day, showing the details of the importation of Chinese under this particular Act, so that he might learn how many Chinese returned to the place from which they came. The hon. member, in introducing the motion, referred to the public meeting from which this petition emanated. I was at that meeting and addressed it,

and subsequently I heard a statement made by a member of the legal profession, and I have no hesitation in saying that had I known that he was going to make such a statement, I would have had nothing to do with it. He said off the platform that he knew of hundreds of instances wherein this Act was evaded; that he knew of numerous men in the colony who employed servants under this Act, and did not comply with its conditions. As a member of the legal profession, he had also his duties as a citizen, and I say he ought to have supplied information to the Crown that he knew of such things existing, and his not supplying this information as a citizen was exceedingly corrupt. With regard to the undue influx of Chinese into this colony, my views are known in this House. I have no idea of building up an argument against the Chinese on the ground of comparative morals, that being one of the most ridiculous things that was ever started in Australia. I have seen tens of thousands of Chinese in Australia, and I appeal to hon. members here to say if they ever saw a drunken Chinaman. The key to the whole position has not been touched. We are not afraid of the virtues of the Chinese in the least. I consider that the Anglo-Saxon laborer can hold his own with any colored man in the world, under any conditions. The practical way to look at the question, as to the manner in which they crowd together, was very practically put before Australian statesmen by the Chinese Ambassador who visited the Chinamen in Australia a few years ago, and who said there should be sanitary regulations and strict enactments to govern that class of labor; that these people were compelled in China to live under conditions which prevented the possibility of the spread of disease, bad morals, or any menace to the social habits of the people. I was surprised to-night to hear some of the gentlemen who supported this motion say they thought that as an extreme resort we might perhaps impose a poll-tax. I believe this expedient of a poll-tax is paltering with the devil. For £20 a year we are prepared to admit a man who is said to be not a good citizen, not a useful colonist. The key to the whole position is that the Chinese laborer does

not compete with our Anglo-Saxon laborer on equal conditions. The Anglo-Saxon laborer, as a rule, has a wife and two or three children to support; he wishes to put boots and socks on them, to send them to school, to provide some home comforts, and to see them grow up in such a manner as will gladden his old age. There are over 50,000 Chinese bachelors in Australia; and while our Anglo-Saxon laborer works and endeavors to support four persons as the average of a family, the Chinese bachelor supports only one. As to the opium question, it is a disgrace to Australia that, knowing the result of opium smoking, any of our Parliaments should be content to take revenue for aiding in administering the laws of the land from what is distinctly known as the vice of an alien race. With regard to Chinese labor, I am utterly opposed to its introduction in this part of the colony as I am to its introduction in the whole of Australia, unless the Chinese compete on equal conditions with our own laborers, and are compelled to live under sanitary conditions, and to contribute their proper proportion towards the cost of the Government of the land.

MR. H. W. SHOLL: I am sorry to say I cannot support the motion of the hon. member for Perth. I have had many dealings with the Chinese, and if a bill is brought in to prohibit their introduction into this colony, I must oppose it, for the Northern parts of the colony cannot do without them. In Albany lately I saw in one of the leading hotels a Chinese cook and a Chinese assistant, and I was told the people there could not do without the Chinese. It seems that as far as the Perth district is concerned, you cannot do without them either. As to gardeners, you cannot get white men to do the work.

MR. THROSSELL: I am afraid it is the Chinaman's virtues you are afraid of, and not his vices. The Chinaman's industry and perseverance are very liable to be described as vices. In the Eastern districts we are glad to employ the Chinamen as grubbers, because we cannot get Europeans to do the work. I have found the Chinaman an honest, sober, and industrious workman, and why we should cut off that supply of labor before we have supplied a suitable

class of Europeans is not for me to say. I must oppose the motion.

MR. CANNING: The motion of the hon. member for Perth is deserving of consideration. China is not very far from us, and I think it is only right that a certain amount of watchfulness should be exercised over their coming here. The hon. member, in bringing forward his motion, has only given effect to the wishes that have been communicated to him from other parts of Australia with regard to Chinamen. We must not allow them to come into competition with European workmen in parts of the colony where they are numerous. I think, on the whole, the motion is a very proper one, and if it should not lead to any definite result at present, still no harm can be done by attention being directed to the question.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): No doubt this is a lengthy petition, as the signatures are something like 2,010, and it does surprise me that this petition has emanated from Fremantle, where I suppose there are very few Chinamen indeed. The petitioners desire to point out to us their sense of the danger to which the civil, political, religious, and domestic rights of the white population are exposed by the existence of this Act. But I think it is painting in rather too high colors at the present time to say there is a sense of danger to the civil, political, religious, and domestic rights of our colonists. The petition goes on to point out that these men, as I may call them—although one hon. member calls them vile creatures—when the term of their indented service has expired, are free to enter into competition with white laborers in all parts of the country, that they undercut them in rates of wages, and so on. Well I deny all this. I do not think, it has been proved before us at all that European workmen in this colony are displaced by Chinese competitors who work at lower wages. As soon as there is any danger of white labor being displaced in the Southern portion of the colony, I for one shall be quite ready to join in passing restrictive measures, for the reasons pointed out by the hon. member for Geraldton, because I do not think any country should suffer an alien race to displace its own labor.

But all this is "high falutin'" at present. There is no competition with white labor at Fremantle—if so, where is it?—on the jetty. It is absurd to say there is any displacement of white labor by Chinese in any part of the colony, let alone in all parts, at the present moment. Our complaint is that we cannot get white labor throughout the colony. Let the hon. member try this by offering a job to white laborers, and he will find that he will have to offer it to a number before he finds one white laborer who will take it. I make bold to say that none of these gentlemen, as you call them, would accept a spade from the Government—they would want a pick and shovel—that is to say they are railway men, and they want railway work, and, if you offer them farming work, they will tell you they don't want it. They want railway work with high wages; but as to cultivating the soil, they are not dreaming of it, and they won't undertake any job of that description. I say there is no displacement of white labor, and as soon as there is any apprehension of displacement I won't wait for it, but will at once go for restricting the importation of alien labor into the colony. The petition goes on to say the Chinese have introduced the vice of gambling in Australia.

MR. BAKER: Don't we all gamble?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I don't think Australians should say much about Chinamen introducing the vice of gambling. The Chinese do gamble among themselves, but I don't think they trouble anybody else by so doing. I have yet to learn that they gamble generally with the white population, but I do know the white population gamble enough themselves without the aid of Chinamen, and they have got nothing to be taught in that respect, from the highest to the lowest. They are inveterate gamblers—except myself. The petition refers also to the habitations of the Chinese. As the hon. member for Geraldton has said, it is no use railing at the Chinese on that subject, for we can remedy the complaint at once, if we think fit. Representing as I do a Northern constituency, I must say that in the North-West we cannot do without Chinese labor. There is no question of the Chinese labor competing with white labor in that district.

White labor there cannot be obtained ; and as we are bound to employ labor of some sort, the Chinese labor is easily obtained through the Imported Labor Registry Act. Our law on the subject is the same as in all the colonies of Australia, with the exception of the operations of the Imported Labor Registry Act of 1884 ; that is to say that we allow Chinamen to be brought from Singapore and ports about there, under agreement, and when their period of service has expired, the Chinamen so imported have to be sent back to their own country. I am not prepared to say that this Act cannot be amended in some respects, and made a little stricter with a view of preventing abuses, and while endeavoring to serve the requirements of the North, taking care to prevent Chinamen from coming to parts of the colony where they are not wanted and may compete with the white population. It may be true that these indented servants are not all sent back at the end of their term. The fact is they prefer to remain in the district, to earn the higher wages obtainable ; but it is not the case that many of them find their way to the Southern districts. Many of them stay and take employment in the district at a higher rate of wage than they agreed to leave their own country for. I say the Act may possibly be improved with a view of preventing any leakage down to these parts ; but at present I do not think there is any fear of competition in the South. For these reasons I do not find myself able to support the proposition which has been moved by the hon. member for Perth.

MR. BAKER: They talk about Chinamen as beasts. Now, if they are beasts, I propose that we should put up a fence to keep them in the North. We will fence them in with barbed wire, same as they do in Queensland to keep the vermin out. As to Chinamen coming down here to seek railway employment, there is work here in West Australia for anybody. I have been a laboring man and have worked for wages in mines for years, but I got out of it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I should like to say one or two words. My views are, to a very large extent, expressed by the Attorney General, and also expressed by the hon. member for

Geraldton and others, in some particulars. I agree that it is not desirable, but very undesirable, to have a large number of Chinamen as colonists in the temperate parts. Our desire is to build up in this part of the world an English community ; we want to reproduce the institutions of the country our fathers came from ; and we do not intend to encourage, or even to allow, Chinamen to come here in large numbers. There are many reasons why they are undesirable colonists. They have no sympathy with us ; they do not belong to us. They are an alien race, belonging to another nationality ; and I shall always be glad to support any measure which would have in view the object I have stated. We have to ask ourselves now this question : is there any necessity at present for any strong measures against these people ? As the Attorney General has stated, they cannot come here in any ship in a greater proportion than one Chinaman to every 500 tons of the ship's register, so that a vessel of 2,000 tons cannot land more than four Chinamen ; and the same law prevails in the other colonies of Australia. Our law is different only in allowing this imported labor by engagement for a period ; which means that persons who desire Chinese labor may apply through the registry to have laborers sent here under engagement as servants for a term, and in that way no doubt a considerable number of Chinamen could be introduced. Probably the Act may be amended so that better notice may be taken of those who come, and better means be provided by which they may return at the end of their service. I think there might be some amendment in that way, and of course it can be considered. I am sure, however, that in the present condition of the colony, the Chinese are an absolute necessity in the Northern parts, because white labor is scarce there, and a lot of very hard work has to be done in improving the pastoral properties, such as fencing, dam making, and tank sinking—all very hard labor, which the white man does not like. Very few white men like to work under a tropical sun, and I believe that if white men do try it they will find it injurious to their health, and they will become prematurely old. That being so, why should we put restrictions on the

importation of Chinamen for developing the Northern parts of this colony? Settlers there do not want the restriction of Chinese labor, and after all they are the people to be considered; for I do not know that people in Fremantle have a right to dictate as to what the people in the North should have or not. I do not think it is even fair that they should dictate to those living in the tropical parts as to how they should manage their affairs. No doubt these petitioners fear they may be interfered with in Fremantle through the operation of this Imported Labor Registry Act, but a much more reasonable way would be to restrict the Chinamen from coming to Perth or Fremantle; for to say that all those persons who live in a tropical climate shall not have the advantage of this imported labor, when there is no other labor available, is going far beyond what is reasonable at present. The hon. member in bringing this matter forward has placed it before us in a lucid and fair manner, but I think the motion is too sweeping, even in the interest of those in whose behalf the hon. member is moving, and he will not get much support at the present time. As far as the Government are concerned, we are not prepared at present to abolish this Act, for by doing so we should find ourselves in a terrible difficulty, as there would then be no labor to work the stations at the North; and although the hon. member for Geraldton has said the Englishman can do as much work under the same conditions as any other countryman, still we know there is a great diversity of opinion about that, and even Sir Samuel Griffith—the Premier of Queensland, and the great champion of white against colored labor—has lately had to change his tune on the colored labor question, and has appealed to the people of Queensland to concur in extending the term within which the imported Kanaka laborers may be engaged to work on the sugar plantations. In making that appeal, Sir Samuel Griffith told the people that he did not like the black labor, but he liked the ruin of the country still less; so, as a choice of evils, he chose to have black labor for a further period, rather than see the colony ruined. I think the time is not opportune for this motion in this colony; and therefore, if the hon. member

does not choose to withdraw the motion, we must vote against it.

MR. MOLLOY: Just a few words in reply. The hon. the Premier said there was no displacement of European labor by the Chinese at present. With regard to that point, I observe that the first item on the Notice Paper is for repealing the present law relating to hawkers and pedlars. Who are these hawkers and pedlars?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): Not displacing anybody.

MR. MOLLOY: Is it not a fact that these hawkers and pedlars are the Chinese?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): No; they are Afghans and Indians.

HON. MEMBERS: East Indians?

MR. MOLLOY: There seems to be a unanimous shout that they are not Chinese. Well, notwithstanding this unanimity amongst hon. members, I say decidedly, and emphatically, they are Chinese; that if you like to observe the gangs of hawkers in this city for one day, you will find them with boxes and bags of knickknacks slung across their shoulders in the Chinese manner, hawking from house to house. They are an intolerable nuisance in this city, and is this not undue competition—is this not displacement of European labor? Are the Europeans to be displaced from the profits arising out of their investments, by such people as the Chinese, whose importation this motion is intended to restrict? The majority of the Chinese in this city are hawkers and pedlars.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): You are wrong.

MR. MOLLOY: Notwithstanding the hon. gentleman, I assert most emphatically I am right, and these Chinese hawkers are supplied from five or six depôts in this city. In regard to the point raised by the Attorney General, as to the religious aspect of the question—

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt): I quoted altogether from the petition.

MR. MOLLOY: I allude to the religious aspect as one of the points on which the hon. gentleman addressed the House. I assure the hon. gentleman there is considerable menace in regard to

the morality of the question. Having regard to the instances of debauchery practised by these people, it is necessary that some restrictions should be placed on their undue license in this respect. In regard to the Premier's assertion that these people are necessary in the Northern portions of the colony, I remember reading in one of the hon. gentleman's addresses on this subject that he stated it was necessary to restrict the Chinese from working in the mines, while he has told us to-night that the climate prevents white labor from being employed in the North. If so, what is the necessity for the hon. gentleman restricting them from working in the mines? Surely if the white laborers cannot work on account of the climate, they cannot work in the mines; therefore there is as much necessity for the Chinese to work in the mines as there is necessity for them to work in other avocations.

MR. BAKER: The hon. member has alluded to pedlars. I have seen very few Chinese pedlars in Perth; they are those Afghans. As to debauchery, let the hon. member look at his own fellow hotel-keeper in Perth. Why should he pass remarks on other people?

THE CHAIRMAN suggested that the word "immediately" should be inserted in the motion, to give definiteness to the time.

Suggestion agreed to.

Motion—put and negatived.

APPROPRIATION BILL, 1892.

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

ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE ON GERALDTON-MULLEWA RAILWAY.

The report of the committee, authorising an additional expenditure not exceeding £50,000 on the Mullewa Railway, was brought up and adopted, and the resolution of the House ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council.

GOVERNORS OF HIGH SCHOOL BILL.

This bill passed through committee without amendment or discussion.

ERROR IN POLICE BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

The following Message from the Legislative Council was read:

"The Legislative Council informs the Legislative Assembly that it is unable to deal with Message No. 39 of the Assembly, asking it to concur in an amendment to a Bill which has passed through all its stages in both Houses of the Legislature.

"The Council, at the same time, apprises the Assembly of the fact that it has received a report from the Clerk of Parliaments stating that an amendment appeared to have been made by the Assembly affecting sub-clause 18 of clause 96 of the Police Bill, which amendment had not been communicated to the Council for its concurrence, the consequence being that he was unable to place the enjoined certificate upon the Bill prior to presenting it to His Excellency the Administrator for Her Majesty's assent.

"The Council desires to know what was the precise action taken by the Assembly in regard to the sub-clause of the clause above mentioned."

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt), without comment, moved that a Conference be requested with the Legislative Council on the subject of the above Message, and that the following members represent this House at such Conference, viz., Mr. Speaker, Mr. Parker, and the Mover.

Question—put and passed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) moved, That a Message be sent to the Legislative Council, requesting a Conference on the subject referred to in their Message, and informing them that the Legislative Assembly has appointed three members to confer with a like number of members of the Legislative Council.

Question—put and passed.

CUSTOMS LAWS CONSOLIDATION BILL.

(LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENT.)

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt), without comment, moved that the amendment made by the Legislative Council in clause 198, of the above bill, by adding at the end of line six the words

"with intent to evade the payment of such duty," be agreed to.

Agreed to.

GASCOYNE AND NORTH-WEST DIVISIONS CROWN RENT REMISSION BILL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest):

Sir, I propose to move that the Order of the Day for the second reading of this bill be discharged, but before doing so I would like to make one or two remarks in order to show how the Government have been actuated in dealing with this matter. Hon. members will recollect that when this matter was brought before the House by motions, both myself and the Attorney General, speaking on behalf of the Government, were not in any way desirous of dealing with it. We felt that there was a great difficulty in dealing with it. We expressed a considerable amount of sympathy, and so did many hon. members, with the suffering lessees—those engaged in pastoral business at the North; but at the same time we pointed out that there was a very great difficulty in doing anything that would really be of practical value to those settlers who were in distressed circumstances. However, there was a very considerable—I might almost say a unanimous—feeling that something should be done. The expressions of sympathy were made by almost every hon. member in the House, and a resolution was carried in which the Government were asked to do what it thought might be best,—“by remission of rents or otherwise,” I think that was the expression used—in order to meet the conditions of the case. The Government did consider the matter; and a resolution was passed in another place, with the same object, to the effect that the Government should take this matter into careful consideration in order to see what could be done to meet the conditions of the situation. Well, for a considerable time the Government did consider the matter, and having regard to the addresses from both Houses, and knowing that the circumstances at the North were quite as bad as, if not worse than, hon. members had stated, we came to the conclusion that, if anything was to be done by way of giving assistance, the only practical way of giving it was by remission of rents. I

think we were supported by hon. members at the time, who agreed with us in the opinion that anything which was to be done should be with the object of giving real practical assistance. But no sooner was it known that the Government intended to bring in a bill in accord, as we considered, with the wishes of Parliament, than the situation seemed to completely change; and it soon became apparent, certainly outside this House if not inside, that the sympathy which had been expressed by so many of us was only sympathy, and was not worth very much when converted into pounds sterling. There is no doubt that a general feeling began to grow that no assistance of a pecuniary nature should be given to the squatters at the North, who were suffering under great losses, and were, in many ways, in a distressed condition. I can say for myself, and I am sure I can say it for all my colleagues, that we never liked the idea; but we did feel that if anything was to be done by way of relief, it was the only thing we could do; that nothing else would be of any use, because in a year or two either the settlers would be all ruined or good seasons would come again; and we were rather looking to the future than dealing with the matter as it was pressing at the moment. There has been a complete revulsion of feeling, in this House, at any rate. We have changed right about, for after expressing great sympathy with the squatters in the North, now I believe the general feeling is that we should do nothing whatever in the way proposed by the Government—that is, giving pecuniary assistance. I therefore move that this Order of the Day be discharged. I may inform the House that it is the intention of the Government to notify in the *Government Gazette* at once that the pastoral rents now due in the Gascoyne and North-West divisions will be received by the Government at any time between this and the end of the year, without any fine.

MR. CANNING: I second the motion of the hon. the Premier, but at the same time I may take the opportunity of correcting some slight confusion which appears to be in the hon. gentleman's mind as to what took place. When the direct motion for remission of rents was brought

forward, there was not a general feeling in this House for it. In fact the feeling against it was so general that the hon. member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) withdrew the motion in these terms:—

As it seems to be the wish of many hon. members that I should withdraw the motion, I will do so; and one reason given by the Premier, that most hon. members are interested in the question, is perhaps the best reason I can give for withdrawing it.

Therefore, I say, the general feeling of the House was not in favor of it. On the motion made subsequently by the hon. member for the DeGrey, that some alteration should be made in the Land Regulations with regard to the increase that was to take place in the course of two years in the pastoral rents, a discussion arose, and as the feeling of the House was against that motion also, it was withdrawn, and an amendment was proposed by the hon. member for the Moore to the effect that the Government should, by remission of rents or otherwise, seek to alleviate the distress of the squatters caused by the severe drought. There was no great discussion upon that amendment, and I believe it was simply put to the House and carried.

MR. A. FORREST: Before this order is discharged, I wish to state that I fail to see why the hon. the Premier should say there has been a revulsion of feeling in this House as to the course the Government proceeded to take for relieving the squatters in the North. I don't think that is the fact at all. I moved at first that rents should be remitted, and I received very little support in this House. I then asked the Government that they should put off the day for receiving the rents, and the reply was that rents would be received up to the 1st of July, without fine. My friend, the hon. member for the DeGrey, then moved that the Land Regulations be so altered that no increase of rent should take place till 1894; and that motion, I think in the opinion of most hon. members, would have been carried if it had not been for the hon. member for the Moore moving that the condition of the North required immediate relief in the direction of the remission of rents, as the only possible way. That was passed by this House, and also, I believe, by the Upper House. The Government then brought down a

bill to remit the rents. As far as I am personally concerned, I see nothing wrong in the remission of land rents to squatters who are suffering from the effects of drought. Surely the Government are in the position of landlords of the colony, and if there is a bad season, surely the landlord has a perfect right to remit rents. Their position and duty are the same as in the case of an individual owner who lets a farm to a tenant, and if the tenant gets no crops through bad seasons, surely the owner cannot expect his tenant to go on paying rent as if he were getting crops, when he has nothing but crops to depend on. It has been made out in the newspapers that we are going to give a sum of money to ourselves. Now that is the only consideration which I think will induce this House to agree to this bill being withdrawn—that is, that we are personally interested.

MR. CANNING: Our position is a peculiar one.

MR. A. FORREST: Take, for instance, my own case. Last year we sheared 25,000 sheep and had a large increment on the station. This year we sheared 15,000, and the wool is on the station. In that case we are not in a position to pay to the Government as our landlord, nor is our produce available for enabling us to carry on the station. If I had nothing else, what position should I be in? I should be ruined, and surely I could appeal to the Government as my landlord to remit the rent. That is the position; and yet because members of this House are interested individually in the remission of rents, this bill is to be withdrawn. Then I say it is a most unfair proceeding to challenge our individual votes on this matter. There are 14 members in this House holding leases in the North-West and Gascoyne Divisions, and because they happen to hold these leases and may be practically ruined, they are not allowed to vote for a bill of this kind. Although I am in a position to pay my own rent, still I say that by the action of withdrawing this bill we are doing a great injury to those divisions of the colony which have suffered largely from the drought. I am only one among hundreds who are worse off. The number of sheep that will be shorn next year will be a change that will astonish the people. I make these remarks because the Press has pro-

tested strongly against the remission of rents. As a member of this House, I am not in a position to vote on the question; but I can use my influence outside the House, and I say this relief should be granted. It has been said outside that if members of this House who are interested in the question vote for the remission of rents—although I believe we should vote on this question—our votes would be challenged as those of interested parties, by members who are not interested. I hope that the Government will take into consideration and will introduce into this House next session, as I believe they will, a bill in the direction of not increasing the land rents for the Northern divisions of the colony; because when the present regulations were made, no one thought or believed that those parts of the colony would ever be in the condition they are in now—that is, a condition of utter ruin to the people in them.

MR. RANDELL: I fancied from the tone of the hon. member for the DeGrey that he disapproved very strongly of the action I took on a previous occasion.

MR. RICHARDSON: I did not say I resented the interference. I said that but for the amendment of the hon. member I believed the original substantive motion would have been carried.

MR. RANDELL: It is true the amendment was somewhat hurriedly drawn, but it seemed to be the only way by which the circumstances of the case could be met at the time. There was not the ghost of a chance of the hon. member's motion being carried in this House, and it was because of my earnest desire to express the sympathy I feel for the North-West pastoralists in the most effectual way I could that I moved the amendment, which obtained the almost unanimous concurrence of the House. There was no dissentient voice raised; there was no call for a division. When a question is put and passed in silence, it is generally considered that each hon. member present has voted for that question. Hon. members who wish to dissent ought to take advantage of the forms of the House to do so. We have every desire to show the sympathy of this House with the pastoralists; and feeling that this was the only way to get the votes of hon. members on that occasion, I am not quite sure that I ought not to agree now with

the hon. member for West Kimberley in regretting that the bill is to be withdrawn. I felt that the Government were in a better position to consider the question than this House was, and that after careful consideration they would bring forward such a measure as would best commend itself to their judgment. They have done so, and notwithstanding what has been said in the public press, and by hon. members who are interested in pastoral pursuits in the North, this was the only possible way in which immediate relief could be extended, and the sympathy of this House be shown to them. I do not think there is very much in the words used in the public press and by members in this House about coming here *in forma pauperis*. It is a captivating statement, and some hon. members have been offended by the application of the term, and have thought they might be receiving aid which might lay them open to this charge. But I am quite sure that no one can reasonably impugn their sense of right in voting for a motion in favor of the remission of rents.

MR. RICHARDSON: The reason why this particular method of relief was avoided by myself and many other hon. members was because it was a very extraordinary proceeding on the part of any Government to propose legislation for remitting revenue that is due and has been calculated on, and upon which the year's estimates have been based. It is not ordinary legislation, and when a Government is pressed to bring in such legislation, it is apt to place them in a difficulty, and it is also very likely to be widely misconstrued by the general community, who might not know much about the ins and outs of this question, and are totally ignorant of the severe extremities of settlers in those distressed districts. And perhaps many don't want to know, and won't believe if you tell them. For many reasons I was convinced that the remission of rents was not the best means of dealing with this question, whereas the motion I had the honor of bringing forward was perfectly just and legitimate as a basis of legislation, because it meant that in the light of experience we desired to re-consider the question of land rents, because when we fixed the rents the condition of things in those districts

was different altogether—the price of wool was different, the returns were different, and no one thought it possible that those districts were liable to such an awful catastrophe. It is quite wrong to say that a return of one or two or three good seasons will bring back the former state of prosperity. There is property gone, and losses have accrued that cannot be restored for years and years, in order to build up those estates to what they were before. For these reasons I think the proper course was to repeal those parts of the Land Regulations which provide for an increase of rent. And even now the position is rather peculiar. No revulsion of feeling has taken place among the majority of members in this House. We are entirely of the same opinion as before, and very much more so, because we find that facts have justified our view. As far as our position is concerned, we have had no revulsion of feeling; but now we are put in a peculiar dilemma, because this particular mode of relief is going to be withdrawn, and no other to be substituted in its place. That places us on the horns of a dilemma, and it is hardly fair of the Government to withdraw one boon and to withhold also the other. With reference to the remarks of Mr. Randell, that he believed there was no possible chance of the motion I brought forward being carried, and that his motion met with general assent, I entirely disagree with that. I will ask the hon. member to consider the peculiar position. The Government were rather opposed to my motion. The hon. member brought forward an amendment which the Government said they would accept. Then we had got to run the risk of our votes being challenged and perhaps losing everything; and knowing we might not carry my proposal, we accepted that which we knew would be carried. So we took the amendment as a slight make-up.

MR. RANDELL: The feeling in the minds of hon. members was that the relief proposed by the hon. member was too remote.

MR. RICHARDSON: And they would not give us credit for knowing what was best. I had letters and private information from the best class of settlers in that district, saying they were entirely averse to that kind of relief, and desired the

other form which I proposed. There is a very wide and intense and strong feeling in all the Northern districts to make a stand against this increase of rent. They are firmly of opinion that the country is not good enough to bear it; and they do not think it shows any justice on the part of the Government to insist on the increase. They do not think their runs, after this drought, will bear any increase of rent at all; but they do not ask for this remission—this soup-kitchen business. I would ask the Government to appoint some Commission—a certain number of settlers and business men—and inquire into the case thoroughly; to take evidence as to whether the condition of things is so altered as to justify the increase; or let the Government bring in a measure boldly, saying they will repeal the Land Regulations. No measure will be more popular in the whole of those Northern districts than that same little bill; and after all it will not be remitting anything, because the Government have never handled this additional revenue or enjoyed it, and it is a bare act of justice that might freely be extended to those settlers who have suffered immense loss.

MR. CLARKSON: I think the Government have acted wisely in withdrawing this bill, and I believe their action will meet with the general approval of the members of this House. I in common with the other members and the whole community sympathise with the unfortunate position in which the Northern settlers are placed; but still if that sympathy is of no use to them—

MR. RICHARDSON: How much is it worth, if panned out?

MR. CLARKSON: We must remember that although we express that sympathy, very few of us—I think the hon. member for the DeGrey is the only one—have come forward with any reasonable proposition to alleviate that distress. We left that action to the Government, who had a very difficult problem to deal with. In the first place it can hardly be said that the two districts in which the rents were to be remitted were the only districts in the colony that were suffering from this severe drought. The whole of the settlers from Kimberley to Champion Bay were affected by this drought. But some of the agricultural districts also have

suffered considerably. I can give an instance in my own case of severe loss through the bad season, for I have only about a quarter of a crop from agricultural land as compared with last year. I should like to have seen the motion of the hon. member for the DeGrey (Mr. Richardson) carried, and I still believe that some relief in that direction should be given. I have had converse with many settlers, who all say that something of that sort would be a real benefit to them. They say that the land in that part, instead of improving by carrying stock, has rapidly deteriorated, and they cannot afford to pay higher rents. I am sorry it is too late in this session to do anything with regard to that, but I have no doubt that some action of that kind will have to be taken at an early date.

MR. LOTON: It must be a sort of satisfaction to some hon. members of this Assembly to be told now by a representative of one of the Northern districts that the settlers never wanted any assistance of the nature proposed to be given under this bill. They are not in need of it.

MR. RICHARDSON: I take exception to those words.

MR. LOTON: It is a pity we did not hear more to that effect a month ago, when this matter was brought forward.

MR. RICHARDSON: I expressed it repeatedly when I brought forward that motion.

MR. LOTON: It was simply an expression of the opinion of the hon. member. This calamity, this severe loss, that the settlers of the North-West and Gascoyne Districts have experienced, and are still experiencing, has been before this Assembly since the middle of December. It was first brought forward by the hon. member for West Kimberley, and at that time I don't think the feeling of the Assembly was in favor of going to the extent that was proposed,—but this drought has continued, and when it was proposed that there should be no increase of rents two years hence, I felt at once that if any relief was to be given to the settlers, now was the time to give it. I pointed out, in a very few words the direction in which it could be given, and the Premier, representing the Government, acknowledged that the way indi-

cated was the proper one for giving material aid, to be of use.

MR. RICHARDSON: Carry it out.

MR. LOTON: I say now that I do not withdraw from the opinion I then expressed. If there is anything beyond sympathy that the settlers in the North-West are to receive from this House, now is the time to show it; and if this bill were carried through the Assembly, the revenue would suffer to the extent of £25,000 or thereabout. I say the colony at present would not feel that remission, but the people suffering there would feel a very great aid, whereas in two years' time they might not feel it, and the help would then be of very little use to them. We are told there has been a revulsion of feeling in this Assembly. I say there has not been any such revulsion of feeling. The hon. member for the DeGrey possibly holds the same opinion now; but the majority of those members who are entirely free to vote on the question are of the same opinion now as they were a month ago, and that is in favor of remitting the rent for the present year to these settlers, and if I were a member of the Government I would not withdraw the bill. What is the reason for withdrawing the bill? Because the writers of leading articles in the newspapers say the bill is unpopular, and have brought this pressure to bear; but what do these writers know about the people who live in the North-West? If they had resided there ten years, and had to earn their living under those conditions, they would know it then. It is said not to be in the interest of the working men; but these people in the North-West, the pioneers of the district, going there as they have done, for the last twenty years, and working hard under great disabilities, ought to be considered as well as working men; and having risen to a moderate position after ten, fifteen, or twenty years of hard work, if these men are all at once ruined through a dire calamity—nothing less than a dire calamity—and are reduced to a position almost worse than that from which they began, what then will be the position of the working men in those districts, when these ruined settlers can no longer employ them? The exports of those districts will be reduced next year by at least one-half; the losses of stock

are considerably more than half, taking the average of the stations. These are extraordinary losses, and can be met only by extraordinary means; therefore the Government of the day, despite the abuse of newspaper writers, who are quite justified in writing in this way if they believe it is right, should have the courage of their opinions, and not be led by newspaper writers who profess to lead public opinion but very often know nothing about it. I say the Government should have the courage of their opinions, and they would have the support of the representatives of the country—not the representatives of the Press merely—to back them up. Now we are told by the hon. member for the DeGrey, who ought to know, that these settlers don't require, won't have, and object to this assistance.

MR. RICHARDSON: I never said they don't require it.

MR. LOTON: They want this assistance in another way. We have been told by writers in the Press that foregoing this rent would be very much to the detriment of the people of the colony, and we are told by the member for the DeGrey that assistance in this form is not wanted, but that it is wanted in another form; but I have pointed out that now is the time to help these people, and that this is the means of doing it. With regard to the position I stand in as a member of this Assembly, I have been connected with the North-West for a quarter of a century, and have had as great risk in connection with it as any man in the colony, but up to a very recent date I have never had any particular interest in the lands of the North-West; and the rents I and my partner have had to pay have always been paid for other people; we have had no direct interest. But for the last couple of months I have had a direct interest, unfortunately, and if I have to vote on this question, I may feel possibly that I cannot vote on it, on account of having that direct interest. After being connected with the North-West for 25 years in helping to start others at considerable risk, and I may say with very little loss, I have no hesitation in saying that the direction in which we moved in the Assembly, and the direction which the bill indicated, was and is the proper way to help the distressed settlers at the present time,

and this mode is also in the interest of the working people of the colony. The way it is proposed to help the settlers by not increasing the rents two years hence will not be so much in the interest of the working people nor in the interest of the finances of the colony. The increase in rents, if it does take place, will amount to £10,000 a year, roughly. Now those increased rentals, if continued under the present regulations, taking the increase for seven years, would amount to £70,000 additional from settlers in those districts. We propose to remit £25,000, being about one-third of the amount, and to give it now when it is wanted. But, on the other hand, taking these leases at 21 years, it has not been demonstrated in any way that these rents were fixed too high in the regulations. The hon. the leader of the Government told us he did not think they were too high in ordinary seasons.

MR. A. FORREST: He knows nothing about it.

MR. LOTON: He ought to know something about it, as he has had as much experience in the payment of rents as anybody else. I do not say that it would not be good sound policy to bring in a bill for keeping the rents as they are for a few years. But I maintain that, apart from the question of a future increase, now is the time to assist the settlers, and personally I am prepared to support the bill that is now before the House, and I am very sorry indeed to find that the Government are not prepared to stand by it.

MR. PARKER: When this matter first came before this House, I was one of those who opposed the motion, because I thought it was wrong in principle to ask the Government to remit these rents for any particular class, and I thought it would be unwise for this House, situated as it is, to pass a measure which would virtually relieve the great majority of the members of the House itself. When the matter came subsequently before the House, and the amendment of the hon. member for the Moore was carried, I made no opposition to it, and I determined to make no further opposition to the measure. I felt such a sympathy with the settlers in the North that, although I could not support a remission of rents, yet if the Government felt it

right and proper to bring in a bill to afford relief to those unfortunate colonists, I would not object to such a measure. The Government, after due consideration, did bring in that bill; and we are now told by the Premier that it is proposed to withdraw the bill, because there has been a revulsion of feeling in the House and out of it. As far as I know the feeling in this House, there has been no revulsion.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): You told me out of the House—

MR. PARKER: I don't think it is right and proper to bring into this House conversations out of it. Anything that takes place out of the House ought to be treated as private. A member is to be judged only by what he does and says in the House, and not out of it. I was sitting in the library this evening, and I was astonished to hear that this measure was about to be withdrawn. I had seen an intimation in one of the newspapers, a day or two ago, but it seemed to me that it could not be true, because I imagined that such an intimation would be made first to the House and not to the Press of the colony. This withdrawal of the measure shows the power of the Press in the colony. One or two anonymous writers have more weight with the Government than the opinion of a majority of the members of this House. I don't think I can accuse my hon. and learned friend (the Attorney General) of deferring to the opinions of writers in the Press; and in coming to this conclusion, I cannot think the Government have been guided by the opinion of my hon. and learned friend. If the Government had taken into consideration the remarks he made the other evening with regard to this particular newspaper article—the most stringent article on the measure that has been written—the conclusion they would have arrived at would be to urge on this measure rather than withdraw it. That would be the effect on my mind, after reading the extraordinary remarks made and the slanders thrown on the Northern settlers, through the Press.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We are not influenced by that at all.

MR. PARKER: The hon. gentleman told us there had been a revulsion of feeling in the House and out of it. The only way you can judge of the feeling out of

the House is through the Press, and I take it he was guided by the opinions of the Press. It is well for us always to bear in mind that these articles are written by men with like passions as ourselves; probably with no more intelligence, and in all probability also with not as much knowledge of the subject as we ourselves possess. I regret extremely that, having raised the hopes of those Northern settlers, as has been done, the Government should come forward now and withdraw this measure; and I cannot but think their action will have a very bad effect with regard to the confidence those settlers will feel in the legislation of the future.

MR. QUINLAN: I shall take the liberty of giving my opinion on the matter, notwithstanding the opinions of the Press or of any member. I am pleased that the Government have thought proper to withdraw this bill, because I had made up my mind and was prepared to propose an amendment in lieu of the word "remit," namely that the payment of rent be suspended; and I think the Government have now certainly adopted the right course. To have remitted the rents, as was originally proposed, would have been a very bad precedent indeed. I am aware of cases of considerable loss. One pastoralist on the Gascoyne, who last year had 12,000 sheep, has now only 1,700; and men of this kind have shown proof that they are really worthy of more than sympathy. But the other portions of the colony would have equally as good a right, in a bad season, to demand the assistance of this honorable House. The Eastern districts might come forward next year with their claim, and the Southern districts might come the year after. Therefore I cannot see that it would be wise to remit the rents of the Northern squatters to the extent of £25,000. The State as a land owner is entirely different from individual landlords; for the Government would be remitting, not their own money, as the landlord would be, but the money of the public. If the hon. member for the De Grey had pressed his motion, I should certainly have supported it, because it is the proper course to adopt; and I think he should not have withdrawn his motion, because by so doing he has delayed the whole matter till next session. I con-

sider that the rents of the North, as now fixed, do not enable the lessees to bear such a calamity as the present. It can never be thrown in their teeth that we in this portion of the colony had to maintain them in their trials and troubles. If the Government, when dealing with the Land Regulations, as I suppose they will do, would consider the classification of lands, then those leaseholders occupying runs near a port and having greater facilities than others farther back might pay in proportion. I know that sympathy is not worth anything when the wants are pressing. One gentleman I know in Perth says he feels sympathy with every subject on which he receives a subscription list, but he always makes it a point not to give anything. I think the Government have acted wisely in withdrawing the bill.

MR. RICHARDSON: If this motion is carried, will the Premier give any assurance—

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot speak again.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I regret that the hon. the Premier, in speaking on this question, spoke in such an apologetic strain for withdrawing this bill. I was in hopes the hon. gentleman would have given us some reasons why the Government changed their minds. The reason he really gave was that there was a revulsion of feeling inside and outside this House. As far as the revulsion of feeling inside this House is concerned, I don't think there is any such revulsion. We all feel that something should be done. As to the revulsion of feeling outside the House, I have seen no demonstration or opposition. We read an article in a newspaper and perhaps a few anonymous letters—possibly written by the same person, for anything we know. These should not be taken as an expression of public opinion. If the Government are influenced by anything they see in the papers, especially the papers in this colony, I think very often they will find they are not in accordance with public opinion. In this case relief is asked for our own people, the settlers of this colony, who do not require monetary relief, and, I must say, I am not fond of it.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): What do they want, then?

MR. R. F. SHOLL: They want time to recover from the great losses they have sustained; time to pay the money. When asked to give a little assistance to our own people we find the writer of a leading article, or the writers of those anonymous letters, opposing it; yet, on the very next day, when a foreign company asks for assistance, the same paper strongly advocates it. That seems to me a most extraordinary course. If we had a high Press that would take a sensible view of things, and would have a policy really not biased in any way, but acting in the interest of the country, I do not think we would have such articles as we have read in a certain section of the Press lately.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): You have got "Press" on the brain.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: No, I have not got "Press" on the brain. I regret that the Government have not brought forward some proposal in the manner indicated by the hon. member for the DeGrey, or given some assurance to this House that something would be done in this direction. I don't think that the fact of remitting one year's rent would do any substantial good. What I would suggest is that the Government should allow this rent to stand over for two years, and allow the arrear to be repaid on the deferred payment system. This would allow the settlers who have suffered severely from this drought to recover their losses, and the time allowed would be a substantial assistance. The country would then lose only the interest on the money, and would not lose the rent; and the payment of this rent could be secured as a first charge on the properties.

MR. THROSSELL: I believe the bill in its present form is not what the Northern squatters require. The bill provides that all shall receive alike; but there must be three classes—those whom this remission of rent would not assist at all, another class to whom this assistance would be of real value, and another class, a few it may be, who do not want this assistance at all. I received a letter to-day saying one squatter is hopelessly bankrupt, and another does not require the assistance at all. The Government might give, to those who may require it, credit for two years' rent. I support the motion for the withdrawal of the bill.

MR. H. W. SHOLL : The settlers will have to depend on re-stocking their runs and getting back to their old position by the increase, and they cannot do this if the rents are to be increased 50 per cent. in the North-West and 25 per cent. in the North. By doing away with that increase, you will be assisting the distressed settlers to recover; and that is the course I recommend.

MR. SIMPSON : I move the adjournment of the debate until the next sitting.

Question—put and passed.

Debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:45 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Friday, 11th March, 1892.

Appropriation Bill: first reading—Midland Railway: length of—Leave of Absence to Hon. M. Grant—South-Western Railway Act Amendment Bill: third reading—King George's Sound Garrison Discipline Bill: second reading—Police Bill: error in: conference with Legislative Assembly—Geraldton Harbor Improvements—Cossack Harbor Improvements—Game Bill: Legislative Council's Amendments—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Sir T. Cockburn-Campbell, Bart.) took the chair at 3 o'clock.

PRAYERS.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

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

MIDLAND RAILWAY: LENGTH OF.

THE HON. J. A. WRIGHT, in accordance with notice, asked the Colonial Secretary, — (1.) What is the exact length of the Midland Railway as now set out? (2.) What is the exact length now certified as opened for traffic?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Shenton) replied:—(1.) 277 miles 58 chains; (2.) 154 miles.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE TO HON. M. GRANT.

On the motion of the Hon. T. BURGESS leave of absence for a fortnight was granted to the Hon. M. Grant.

SOUTH-WESTERN RAILWAY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

This Bill was read a third time and passed.

KING GEORGE'S SOUND GARRISON DISCIPLINE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Shenton): I have now to move a second reading of this bill. I may state that the bill is brought in at the request of the other colonies. Under the arrangement made with the other colonies the battery at Albany is to consist of a portion of a South Australian force. Therefore, we are requested to pass a bill providing that the men should be under the same discipline and regulations as they would be if they were in their own colony.

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT: The tenor of the remarks which I have to make on this bill will largely take the form of questions to the hon. the Colonial Secretary. I trust the House has given its full attention to the only effective clause in the bill, the first, which reads:—"That the troops raised in South Australia, while serving in Western Australia, shall be subject to all the provisions of the South Australian 'Military Force Act, 1878,' and the regulations made thereunder, to the same extent and in the same manner as if such Act was a law of Western Australia." I should have liked to have been informed, in the first instance, whether the Colonial Secretary believes this law will not be *ultra vires*, that is, whether it is within the competency of the Parliament of Western Australia to declare that any number of men who come from another colony can be made subject, not to our laws, but to the laws of the colony they have just left. Take, for example, the case of the Merchant Shipping Act, which is an