

## Legislative Assembly,

Friday, 30th January, 1891.

Standing Rules and Orders—Stock route between North-West Districts and the Irwin—Votes out of current Revenue for Public Works since 1874—Land Grants to religious bodies—Protection of Parliamentary Printers Bill; second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 2:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

## STANDING RULES AND ORDERS.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt) brought up the report of the select committee appointed to consider the Standing Rules and Orders, and moved that it be received.

Carried, and report ordered to be printed.

## STOCK ROUTE BETWEEN N.W. DISTRICTS AND THE IRWIN.

MR. A. FORREST asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, if it was the intention of the Government to expend the money voted some years ago for opening up a Stock Route between the North-West Districts and the Irwin?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) said the money voted (£1200) had not been expended, and was still available. The Government would, as soon as possible, take the matter in hand.

## RETURN OF PUBLIC WORKS OUT OF CURRENT REVENUE.

MR. TRAYLEN, in accordance with notice, moved that there be laid on the table a return showing (1) the amounts voted from current revenue for public works—not being repairs—each year since 1874; and (2) the amounts voted for roads and bridges from the same fund for the same years. It was due, he said, to hon. members that he should give some slight explanation of his reason for moving for these returns. It would, no doubt, be within the knowledge of every member that some years ago large sums were voted from current revenue for the purpose of carrying out public works. Our population had grown considerably since the first date

mentioned here, 1874, and it would be of considerable interest and some importance to see at this stage whether in like manner the amounts voted year by year out of current revenue for public works had also grown; or whether, borrowing as we had been for some years past, we had been going down the hill (so to speak) as regards votes from current revenue for public works, and from the same source for roads and bridges. He had been informed privately that it would be very difficult to get at the amounts asked for in the first part of the motion unless the words "not being repairs" were omitted. He had no objection to withdraw those words, so far as he was concerned, and simply ask to have in tabulated form the gross amounts expended out of current revenue upon public works, including the amounts voted for roads and bridges.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. Forrest) felt quite sure that the House would agree with him when he stated that nothing that was desired by members in the way of information would be withheld from them by the Government. It was the desire of the Government, and it should be their endeavor, to supply every information that the House required, as fully and as quickly as possible. At the same time he must ask members to carefully consider before they asked for returns, because the preparation of these returns generally involved a considerable amount of labor and time on the part of the officers of the department concerned; and unless a return was absolutely necessary he did not think members would desire that it should be undertaken. The return asked for by the hon. member for Greenough could be found by any member who desired the information, by looking at the Estimates and Blue Books published every year, copies of which were lying on the shelves of the House; and, that being the case, the information being already available to any member who chose to look for it, he would ask whether it was desirable that the Government should go to the trouble of preparing these returns, and afterwards, in all probability, go to the expense of having them printed. As he had already said, the information asked for was readily available to any member who liked to look for it in the Blue Book. The Public

Accounts were published year by year, the Director of Public Works' report was published every year, the Estimates were published every year, and the Treasurer's returns showing exactly what amount had been expended from each vote; and why members should require a return of this sort, going back sixteen years, when the information was already available, he did not know. At the same time, he could only assure the House that if this return was desired by the House it would not only be the duty but the pleasure of the Government to supply it.

Mr. R. F. SHOLL said he really did not see why any member should be asked to go to the trouble of wading through Blue Books and through the Estimates for the last sixteen years to try and find out this information, when we had a staff of public officers whose time was not nearly as valuable as that of the hon. member who required this information,—which was not required by that hon. member alone but by other members as well. No member of that House would ask for a return unless he thought it would be of some use and of some public interest, and why should every member who required this information be asked to go and hunt it up for himself, when we had a staff of clerks paid for doing Government work?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) thought there might be some little excuse for the hon. member who had asked for these returns, as he had not as yet had a very large experience as a representative member; but if the hon. member had been in the House for a few years he would have known that all the information he now asked for was to be found on the book shelves of the House, and could be easily obtained by the hon. member himself. As to the hon. member's time being more valuable than the time of clerks in public offices, surely every member who accepted the responsibility of a seat in that House must be prepared to sacrifice some portion of his time to public affairs, and when he required information of this kind that was within his reach it was not much to ask him to look for it. In saying this, he desired at the same time to endorse what had been said by his hon. colleague the Premier, that there

was no desire on the part of the Ministry to withhold any information that members might desire. He had no idea of opposing the present motion, but simply at this stage of their career under the new order of things to express a hope that hon. members would as far as possible consider that the time of public servants was, or at all events ought to be, taken up with their ordinary duties, without being called upon to prepare returns which, in his own experience, he had found were often called for simply to be placed on the table of the House, and no notice taken of them afterwards.

Mr. TRAYLEN said it was not a question of his own activity or diligence in searching for this information; he required it not for his own use alone, but for the use of all the members of the House. Surely if it was such an easy thing to collect this information, it would not take a very long time nor entail a large amount of labor if some public servant were directed to take those Blue Books down, collect the few figures required for each year, put them on a piece of paper, and have it laid on the table of the House for the information of all members, without requiring every member to search through those shelves for the information for himself. As to what had fallen from the Commissioner of Crown Lands, it was rather a funny thing that only that very day he had heard of an instance where that hon. gentleman himself moved for a return which no one ever read but himself; and it was therefore scarcely fair that the hon. gentleman should now throw stones at him.

The House divided on the motion, the result being—

Ayes ... ..	6
Noes ... ..	13

Majority against ... 7

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Canning	Mr. Burt
Mr. Darlot	Mr. Clarkson
Mr. Loton	Mr. Cookworthy
Mr. Randall	Mr. DeHamel
Mr. R. F. Sholl	Mr. Forrest
Mr. Traylen (Teller.)	Mr. A. Forrest
	Mr. Harper
	Mr. Hassell
	Mr. Phillips
	Mr. Quinlan
	Mr. Symon
	Mr. Venn
	Mr. Marmion (Teller.)

Question—that the Returns be laid upon the table—put and negatived.

## LAND GRANTS TO RELIGIOUS BODIES.

MR. R. F. SHOLL, in accordance with notice, moved that there be laid upon the table a Return showing the amount of land granted to the different religious bodies in fee simple, from the 1st of January, 1881, to the 1st of January, 1891; such return to show under different heads:—

1. The amount of land in acres granted to each denomination.
2. The character of the land, as nearly as possible.
3. Whether as sites for erection of Churches, Schoolhouses, or other buildings; for Cemeteries, for Glebe, or Endowments.
4. The District or Municipality within which such grants have been made.
5. The conditions upon which such lands have been granted.
6. All lands reserved for such denominations, and the conditions of such reservations.

The hon. member said that in moving for this return he had no wish, after what they had been told with respect to the previous motion, to ask for anything that would give already heavily-worked public servants any great amount of trouble. If there should be any likelihood of that, he would not mind going down to the public offices himself and getting out the information. He might say that he had been induced to place this notice on the paper from the fact that he noticed in the annual return of the late Commissioner of Crown Lands the amount of land that had been alienated to religious bodies during the year 1889, namely 8,541 acres. He had often noticed in the *Government Gazette* returns showing the quantity of land granted from time to time to religious bodies, and he thought it was time, now that we were entering upon a new epoch of things, that some notice should be taken of this matter, and that they should understand upon what principle these large areas were granted, and whether under the present form of Government they were going to keep up this principle. They could not lose sight of the fact that the various denominations in this colony were largely supported by the State out of the Ecclesiastical Grant, and yet by a sort of side wind they also obtained these reserves of land in addition. He

noticed that in one case, in 1889, no less than 8,400 acres were granted to one religious body for an orphanage; 100 acres to another body for a glebe; and 13 acres 3 roods 24 perches to another for Church purposes. To his mind 8,400 acres was too large to be granted for an orphanage,—though he did not object particularly to that. What he strongly objected to was that these large areas, granted for particular purposes to religious bodies, were not, as a rule, applied at once to the purposes for which they were obtained. He did not know particularly about this grant of 8,400 acres, but he knew that, as a rule, lands obtained for these purposes were not utilised for the particular purpose for which they were granted. It seemed to him that, as these religious bodies were already supported largely from the public revenue, and as we were now starting upon a new order of things, it should be clearly understood upon what conditions these lands were alienated, and that within a reasonable time they should be devoted to the purposes for which they were given, and that in the event of any portion of them being required for public purposes, such as railways, there should be power to the Government to resume the land without paying compensation, should these lands become valuable by reason of the construction of railway and other improvements. He now simply asked for the return. It went a long way back, but if there were not sufficient clerks in the Government service to get out this information, he should be very glad, as he had said, to go down and get the information himself. He did not ask for the return simply out of curiosity or for the mere sake of asking for it—he did not think any member would do so; he thought it would be interesting to get the information, especially as we were now about to start on a new career under another form of Government.

MR. RANDELL seconded the motion. He thought the information asked for would be useful at the present stage. We had entered upon a new order of things now, and it was desirable we should understand upon what principle we were going to act in regard to these grants of land in the future. Hitherto, under the previous form of Government, that House had no control over these

grants, but he should suppose that under the new order of things Parliament would be consulted, and that its opinions would be held by the Government of the day in some esteem. He thought it was high time that they knew upon what principle these grants were made, and he would go further than that: unless we were very careful over the matter we should be liable to cause a serious injury, not only to the religious bodies who accepted these grants, but to the country generally. He was afraid that these free grants of land would operate in an opposite direction from that which most people imagined. He was sorry that information sought for by any member of that House had been withheld by the present Government,—he was alluding to the information just asked for by the hon. member for Greenough. It seemed to him an omen of evil as regards the future conduct of our public affairs. He thought it was the duty of the Ministry to render all information within their power to that House, especially when it did not entail any large amount of clerical labor; and, even supposing it did, and the information was likely to be of great use and value to members in the consideration of other objects connected therewith, he thought it was the duty of the Government at once to acquiesce in the request of members, and grant that information. It had been very freely given in the past, under the old system of Government; and he was very sorry to see a tendency on the part of the new Government to be less liberal in this respect than the old. He was very sorry that the information sought by the hon. member for Greenough had not been obtained. He thought members would yet regret having voted in the way they did.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. Forrest) did not think the hon. member was quite right in accusing the Government of withholding information; in fact, they had distinctly stated that if the House desired it, the return should be prepared. But the House, apparently, did not want the information. As for the return now asked for, it would be supplied; at the same time he did not retract one jot from what he had said,—that information already available to hon. members by merely looking for it should not be asked

for. As for what the hon. member for the Moore (Mr. Randell) had said, as to the principle that was likely to guide the Government in the future in the matter of these grants to religious bodies, he could assure the hon. member that the same principles would govern their conduct in the future as had done in the past with reference to these grants. He might inform the hon. member that these grants of land to religious bodies were made under the law of the land. Every application was most closely scrutinised and reported upon; and, so long as the present Land Regulations existed, the present Government would deal with the matter on the same principle as the former Government did. When it came to pass that the House and the country desired to have the existing Regulations discontinued, they could be repealed; but, so long as they remained in operation, the Government were bound by them. As to this return asked for by the hon. member for the Gascoyne, he might say the same as he said with reference to the other return, asked for by the hon. member for the Greenough—that the information was already available to members without any trouble whatever, beyond taking down from their shelves the reports of the Crown Lands Department. Those reports furnished all the information asked for, except, perhaps, that referred to under the second head—the character of the land. He did not think that information was easily obtainable in all cases, without reference to those in the vicinity of the land, or an examination were made of the character of the land. The information required under the fifth head, as to the conditions upon which these lands had been granted, could be answered in one or two words: they were granted under the Land Regulations in force at the time they were made. They were granted in trust for the use of the religious bodies to whom they were given, and they could not be diverted from that trust except, he believed, under some special Act. In the event of any of this land being required for roads or railways or other public purposes, the Government had power to resume one-twentieth without any compensation whatever, just the same as with any other Crown grant. As to the grants for glebe purposes, every parish in the colony,

where a church was built, had a right to 100 acres as a glebe, for a parsonage.

MR. RANDELL: The hon. gentleman uses the word "parish;" does that apply to all churches?

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. Forrest): Yes, to all denominations.

MR. RANDELL: 100 acres each, for each church?

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. Forrest): Yes. The hon. member for the Gascoyne had said that the religious bodies of the colony were supported largely from public funds. He did not agree with the hon. member. He did not think that a paltry grant of about £3,000, divided between all the various denominations in a large colony like this, could be looked upon as very liberal support. As to the grant of 8,400 acres to an orphanage, that was made some time ago, a year or two ago, by Sir Frederick Broome, upon his (Mr. Forrest's) recommendation. It was given to the Roman Catholic Church as a site for an orphanage on the Avon. A similar grant—somewhat similar, he thought, as regards the acreage—had been made years ago to the Church of England at the Swan, and it was felt that the Roman Catholic Church, which seemed desirous of doing its utmost in dealing with this orphanage question, was deserving of the same consideration. The Government looked upon it as being really a saving to the public, to grant these lands to the churches who, with the most praiseworthy self-devotion, undertook the cares and responsibilities of guardians to these poor children, and who thus relieved the State of a large amount of responsibility, and he might say expense. He did not think there would be any difficulty in supplying the Return asked for, except as regards paragraph 5, as to the character of the land, which could only be given roughly, without an examination of the land. The other information could be obtained from the annual reports of the Crown Lands Department, and would be furnished if the House wished it. He was sorry that the hon. member for the Moore had deemed it necessary to lecture the Government. The Government, as he had already said, were quite willing and anxious to supply members with every information they required.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) said, as he had the honor of being the present head of the department that would have to supply these returns, he might say that they would be prepared and laid on the table as soon as possible; he was informed they would entail no great amount of trouble, because a special book had been kept in the department dealing with these lands.

MR. A. FORREST said that before the question was put he should like to say he should be happy to assist the Government in getting out these returns, if they wanted any assistance. For his own part he was very pleased that the Government in the past had made large grants of land for Church purposes, as an endowment for these religious bodies; for he believed it was the intention of some members to move that the present Ecclesiastical Grant shall be discontinued very shortly, and it was a good thing that the Churches had these lands to make up for the revenue they would lose when the present grant-in-aid ceased. These lands, which had been given years ago, were very useful to these religious bodies, for they were now a source of considerable income to them. In the city of Perth, he believed, several of the Churches now had large buildings on these lands, which largely increased their value. He was speaking more particularly of the Church to which the hon. member for the Moore (Mr. Randell) belonged, and which had a very valuable site in the main street of the city, sufficient to keep several Churches he should think. He did not object; he thought it was a very good thing indeed that the Churches had received these grants, so as to prepare them for the time when the money grant from the Government would cease. He believed the Independent Church, to which the hon. member belonged, did not accept any money grant from the State; therefore he thought it was a good thing that the Church possessed this very valuable site right in the heart of the city.

MR. RANDELL: Is he aware that the denomination bought that land and paid for it?

MR. A. FORREST: Even then, I believe they have other valuable lands in central portions of the city. The same with the Church of England, and the

Roman Catholics, and the Presbyterians, and other Churches; all of them owned valuable land which had been given to them by the Government in the past, and which ought to bring them a large amount of revenue; and he congratulated the Government of the past for having given them these lands, so as to make them independent of the money grant, when that grant disappeared.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said he had had no wish whatever to refer to any particular denomination when he moved for this return; he had purposely abstained from mentioning any particular Church, and he was sorry that the Premier had thought fit to bring up that question at all. He did not object so much to the principle of granting land to religious bodies, as he did to the fact that the land given to them was very often not applied to the purposes for which it was granted. He thought that if these grants were going to be continued in the future, it should be a condition that when grants of land were made to a religious body they should, within a reasonable time, be utilised for the particular purpose for which they were given. He was certainly amused with the consistency of the hon. member for Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) in speaking to this motion. The hon. member said he was glad the Government made these large grants. It certainly was amusing to hear an hon. member who was one of the strongest advocates for abolishing the Ecclesiastical Grant, now congratulating the Government upon their liberality in giving grants of land to religious bodies. He thought the hon. member's consistency was worthy of him. As for the hon. member congratulating the present Government, no doubt the hon. member would continue to congratulate them, whatever they did, so long as they remained in office.

Motion put and passed.

PROTECTION TO PARLIAMENTARY  
PRINTERS BILL.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. S. Burt), in moving the second reading of this bill, said if members would read the preamble of the bill they would see its object, and know as much about it as he did. It was necessary to protect those

who had the duty cast upon them of publishing the reports and other proceedings of Parliament, so that in the event of any libels appearing they would not be liable to be hauled up before the Supreme Court. Provision was also made in the bill for facilitating the proofs of Acts of Parliament and other matters, whether printed and published by the Government Printer or other printer authorised by the Government.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

The House adjourned at half-past 3 o'clock, p.m.

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Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 2nd February, 1891.

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Sand Drift on Fremantle Road—Railway Siding at North Fremantle—Unlicensed Sale of Liquors at the Midland Junction—Ballast used by Contractor, Midland Railway—Return of Public Works constructed out of Current Revenue—General Loan and Inscribed Stock Act, 1884, Amendment Bill: first reading—Audit Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Improvements to Lunatic Asylum, Fremantle—Standing Rules and Orders: adoption of—Return of Expenditure and Revenue of Government Railways and Tramways—Protection of Parliamentary Printers Bill: in Committee—Adjournment.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

SAND DRIFT ON FREMANTLE ROAD.

MR. PEARSE asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, what steps he proposed to take in assisting the Fremantle Municipal Council in connection with the sand drift on the Fremantle Road?