

will be able to come upon us for anything they want. I am glad to be able to support the second reading of this bill; and I do hope that the voting will be unanimous. The acting leader of the Opposition, my friend the member for Nannine, must see that he has no chance whatever of defeating this Bill; and therefore I say, let them throw in their lot with us and carry it unanimously. The member for Geraldton, if he goes for a goldfields constituency, which I hear he intends doing, will find it difficult to face the electors as an opponent of this Bill. I hope these members will come round like sensible men, and allow a unanimous vote to be taken on this measure. I consider it is one of the most progressive measures ever brought into the Parliament of this country.

Question—that the Bill be now read a second time—put and passed, on the voices, by a large majority.

#### MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### IN COMMITTEE:

The House went into Committee for the consideration of this Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of 59 Vic., sec. 99:

Mr. RANDELL moved that the words "For the preservation of public decency and public health," be inserted after the words "Licensing of weighbridges in public places." He said that, by a previous oversight, the clause dealing with public decency had been dropped out of the old Act. The intention of this amendment was to give the municipal councils power to provide for the screening of water closets in the city. Anybody who walked through the city would observe that the water closets were not properly sheltered from the public, and that they were, in that respect, nuisances.

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

Clause 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Vehicles to have name of owner, &c., painted on conspicuous part:

Mr. MOSS said the marginal note was not accurate, as the intention of the clause was not to provide for the painting of the owner's name on a vehicle, but the weight of the vehicle. He therefore

moved that the marginal note be amended so as to read: "Vehicles to have their weight painted on conspicuous part."

Amendment agreed to.

Mr. RANDELL said he did not see how owners of vehicles were going to paint the weight on their vehicles, until the municipal councils had provided weighbridges. Some provision, therefore, should be made so that the Act would not be enforced until weighbridges had been provided.

Mr. MOSS said the objection was a reasonable one; and, to meet it, he moved that the words "immediately after a weighbridge be erected in a municipality" be inserted after the word "shall," in the third line.

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

Clauses 5 and 6—agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported, with amendments.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10 o'clock, p.m., until next day.

## Legislative Council,

Thursday, 6th August, 1896.

Duty chargeable on outside packages—Receipts to Lighters on Fremantle Jetty—Perth Mint: cost of—Transfer of Lands Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Companies Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Summary Jurisdiction (Married Women's) Bill: third reading—Married Women's Property Act Amendment Bill: second reading; committee—Streets Closure Bill: second reading; committee—Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill: second reading—Meat Supply: appointment of Joint Select Committee—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

#### DUTY CHARGEABLE ON OUTSIDE PACKAGES.

THE HON. W. ALEXANDER asked the Minister for Mines:—(1.) If it was with the sanction and by direction of the

Government that the Collector of Customs was instructed to levy duty upon outside packages of merchandise of no commercial value, in direct contravention of Schedule 6 of Tariff Act, 1893. (2.) That when invoices are presented at Customs, and when no evidence of evasion or fraud can be adduced, if the Collector of Customs was empowered to demand duty. (3.) If the Government was aware that duty at various rates, from 5 to 15 per cent., was being charged upon outside packages of groceries and food supplies, such packages being invoiced at from 1s. 6d. to 3s. 6d., but were of no commercial value, and unsaleable when emptied of contents. (4.) If it was the intention of the Government to continue this practice of charging duty in opposition to the Tariff Act, or would it be discontinued.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied as follows:— (1.) Duty is not charged on outside packages, but some importers, to avoid payment of duty, have cases invoiced far above their value; and it is necessary occasionally to deduct a certain amount from the value of the cases and add it to the value of the goods which are dutiable. For instance, milk cases are frequently invoiced at 2s. per case, 1s. being the true value, consequently the Collector of Customs has made it a rule to allow 1s. only on all cases of preserved milk. (2.) The Chamber of Commerce, Geraldton, who brought the matter under notice, has been requested to state some specific cases of hardship through the levying of duty on the value of outside packages, so that the Collector of Customs may be able to investigate the matter; but, up to the present time, no communication has been received on the subject.

#### RECEIPTS TO LIGHTERS ON FREMANTLE JETTY.

THE HON. A. B. KIDSON asked the Minister for Mines the reason why detailed receipts were not given by the Government authorities to lighters at the sea end of the Fremantle jetties, on taking delivery of goods from lighters into trucks.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied that the Government was unable, just at present, to give the information.

#### COST OF PERTH MINT.

THE HON. F. M. STONE, on behalf of the Hon. S. H. Parker, asked the Minister for Mines if he was still of opinion that the whole cost of establishing the Royal Mint, including the land, building, and machinery, would not exceed £15,000; and, if not, would he kindly give an amended estimate.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied, as follows:— (1.) The estimate of the Government did not include purchase of land, but it was found that the Government had not a suitable site, so one had to be purchased for £4,000. (2.) The requirements of the Royal Mint authorities necessitated larger accommodation being provided, and the total cost will probably amount to about £32,000. (3.) The improved position of the colony justifies better and more commodious buildings being erected.

#### TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

This Bill was introduced by the Hon. MR. STONE, and was read a first time.

#### COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, and *passed*.

#### AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): I move that this Bill be now read a third time.

THE HON. C. A. PIESSE: I move, as an amendment, that the Bill be re-committed for the purpose of striking out the words "three-fourths," in the second clause, and inserting "three-fifths" in lieu thereof. This is a very important matter, and the amendment I propose will enable the Government to advance 12s. in the pound, instead of 15s. in the pound.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): I feel sorry to oppose the amendment of the hon. member, but, as the Government feel certain they are right in the matter, I must do so. Without going into all the details, the Government wish to liberalise the present Act, and they feel they can extend the

advance with safety to three-fourths of the value. I may also say that the Government are acting on the advice of the Manager, who has now had 12 months' experience of the working of the Act.

Amendment put and negatived.

Bill read a third time, and *passed*.

#### SUMMARY JURISDICTION (MARRIED WOMEN) BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

This Bill was read a third time, and *passed*.

#### MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom):** I have now much pleasure, after this lapse of time, of bringing this Bill before the House, but it deals only with a very small question. There seems to be a little doubt—not, perhaps, a legal doubt, because that would be impossible—as to whether a husband is an admissible witness against his wife in the case of criminal proceedings. Clause 1 provides that in any criminal proceeding against a husband or a wife as is authorised by the Married Women's Property Act, 1892, the husband and wife respectively shall be competent and admissible witnesses, and, except when defendant, compellable to give evidence. This is the whole gist of the Bill, and I now move that it be read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

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

#### STREETS AND ROADS CLOSURE BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom):** This is a small Bill to enable the railway authorities to close certain streets and roads in a proper and legal manner. It will be seen, on looking at the Schedule of this Bill, that the majority of the streets and roads named in it have already been closed. Two of them are in Perth, and the City Council, which has been consulted, has made no objection.

**THE HON. D. K. CONGDON:** I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill. Three of the streets mentioned are in North Fremantle, and the Municipal Council has signified its willingness to the closure of them in the interests of the safety of the public.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

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

#### AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom):** In following out the policy of the Government, which has been so generally approved throughout the country, for developing the agricultural interest, this Bill has been brought forward to enable certain lands to be acquired. It has been stated in public and in the Press that there are large numbers of estates near railway lines which are suitable for agricultural purposes, and which the owners make no use of. It has been considered that something should be done to enable the people to get hold of these lands and settle upon them. Many of the blocks are in proximity to towns, and it is obvious that if they were thrown open to settlers a large amount of good might be done. The Bill enables the Treasurer, with the approval of the Governor in Council, to spend certain sums of money, not exceeding £200,000, for the purchase of such lands as I have referred to. The method to be adopted in purchasing is that a Board, consisting of five members, shall be appointed to report upon all properties which may be submitted, and to inform the Government whether it is advisable to purchase. This places a thorough check on the transaction, because the Government cannot act without the Board nor the Board without the Government. If, therefore, there was any desire to do anything that was unreasonable or unfair, the Government and the Board would have to be parties to it, and would have to conspire together as one man. The conditions upon which land may be purchased are fully set out. Under no circumstances

can land be bought which is at a greater distance from a railway than 20 miles, and it must be suitable for agriculture. In Clause 9 there is a little divergence from the main object of the Bill, and it is provided that the Minister may, if he thinks fit, clear land and prepare it ready for tenants to take over. The Bill limits the amount to be expended to £200,000, and it states where the money is to come from, the rate of interest, and provides that the holders may be paid for it by debentures at 4 per cent. interest or in cash. Clause 6 sets out the duties of the Board when any offer is referred to; and Clause 7 states that, if it appears from the report of the Board that the land offered is suitable, and is likely to be immediately selected for settlement, and that there is no sufficient quantity of Crown lands in the neighbourhood for settlement, the Minister, with the approval of the Governor, and subject to this Bill, may acquire the land at the price fixed by the Board as the fair value thereof. It will thus be seen that the Bill is purely permissive. The Government may purchase it, but in no case is it to be taken unless it is fit for agriculture. By Clause 11 the selling price is fixed by adding a sum equal to one-tenth part of the price actually paid in cash for debentures for it, and for any improvements made upon it, and the total so arrived at shall be the least aggregate price to be paid by the selectors of the land. Then, supposing there is some good land and some bad, it is provided that the aggregate price for all the allotments into which the land is divided shall not be less than the price actually paid, with one-tenth added, and the purchase money shall be repaid to the Government in 20 years, on the terms which are set out in the Schedule. Clause 12 is an important one, and it provides that, where there is more than one applicant for any particular block, the person who gives satisfactory proof of his intention to reside on the land shall have the preference. By Clause 15 a separate account is to be kept by the Treasurer showing the dealings under this Bill, and any profit is to be paid into the Consolidated Revenue, and any loss is to be a charge upon the Consolidated Revenue. Clause 17 sets out what are to be deemed improvements. The other clauses are similar to those which are inserted in most Bills to make them workable. I trust

that hon. members will carefully consider the measure and accord it their support. I now move that the Bill be read a second time.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: I move that the debate be adjourned until the next sitting of the House.

Motion put and passed.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

#### THE MEAT SUPPLY—APPOINTMENT OF JOINT COMMITTEE.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): I beg to move that, in accordance with the request of the Legislative Assembly, a select committee of five members be appointed to inquire into the causes of the present high price of meat, and to suggest such means as may appear most desirable for the purpose of effecting a reduction in the price of good wholesome meat to the consumer, without too seriously endangering the future of the pastoral interests, with power—(1.) To call for persons and papers; (2.) to confer with the similar committee chosen by the Legislative Assembly; (3.) to meet on days on which the Council does not sit; and (4.) to report on Wednesday, 19th August; and, further, that the first meeting of the committee be held in the committee room of the Legislative Assembly, on Tuesday, 11th instant, at noon.

Question put and passed.

A ballot having been taken, the Hons. R. G. Burges, C. E. Dempster, E. McLarty, and J. E. Richardson were elected, in addition to the Mover, to serve on such committee.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House, at 5-10 o'clock, p.m., adjourned until Wednesday, 12th August, 1896, at 4-30 o'clock, p.m.