

again on Thursday week. The Act needed amendment; and he pointed out that South Australia, from whose Act the present Act in this colony had been taken, had since passed an amending measure, which showed the need for further amendment in this colony.

On the motion of Mr. Moss, progress was reported, and leave given to sit again on Thursday, 20th August.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at three minutes past 5 o'clock, p.m., until next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 12th August, 1896.

New Member—West Australian Turf Club Bill: Report of Select Committee—Pilbarra Goldfields: Survey and Construction of—Coolgardie Railway: Additional Payments to Contractors—High School: Particulars concerning—Savings Bank Funds: Advances on Agricultural Lands from—Transfer of Land Act Amendment Bill: second reading; committee—Married Women's Property Act Amendment Bill: third reading—Streets Closure Bill: third reading—Municipal Institutions Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Coolgardie Water Supply Loan Bill: first reading—Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

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

PILBARRA GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY— SURVEY AND CONSTRUCTION OF.

THE HON. F. M. STONE asked the Minister of Mines:—

1. When the report on the survey of the proposed railway to Pilbarra Goldfield would be furnished to the House.

2. If it was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill for the construction of the said railway; and, if so, when.

3. If it was not the intention of the Government to introduce such a Bill, for what reasons.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied, as follows:—

1. A report will be furnished in about a month's time.

2 & 3. The question of introducing a Bill is under consideration, but it is not probable that a decision will be arrived at in time to allow of it being dealt with this Session.

COOLGARDIE RAILWAY—ADDITIONAL PAYMENTS TO CONTRACTORS.

THE HON. A. B. KIDSON asked the Minister of Mines, Whether the Government paid, or agreed to pay, to Messrs. Wilkie Brothers any moneys in excess of contract moneys on taking over the Boorabbin section of the Southern Cross-Coolgardie Railway; and, if so, what sum.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied, That the Government had neither paid nor agreed to pay any moneys in excess of contract moneys.

HIGH SCHOOL—PARTICULARS CONCERNING.

THE HON. R. G. BURGESS asked the Minister of Mines:—

1. What amount was paid, by way of subsidy, to the High School annually.

2. What amount was paid in Scholarships annually.

3. If the Government were in possession of School Building, etc.

4. If the Government looked upon the High School as part of the Educational System of the Colony.

5. If it was true that the Government took away the Recreation Ground used by the High School Boys, without providing another suitable site.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied, as follows:—

1. £500, under Act 40 Vic., No. 8.

2. The amount varies; last year £250 was paid.

3. Yes.

4. Yes; but it is not under the Education Department, being controlled by a Board of Governors, under Statute.

5. The Government required the reserve used by the High School for a site for the Observatory, but it is intended to prepare another Recreation Ground for the High School.

SAVINGS BANKS FUNDS—ADVANCES
ON AGRICULTURAL LANDS FROM.

THE HON. R. G. BURGESS asked the Minister of Mines if the Government intended to advance money from Savings Bank Funds on freehold agricultural lands at the same rate of interest as advanced by Agricultural Bank Act, to meet a want not supplied by the said Bank.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. WITTENOOM) replied as follows:—

1. The Government are authorised to lend Savings Bank moneys on freehold property, subject to the law. The present rate charged is 6 per cent.

2. The Agricultural Bank charges 5 per cent. at present.

TRANSFER OF LAND ACT AMEND-
MENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: Hon. members will notice that this is a very short Bill, but its effect will be a good one. Under Section 143 of the Transfer of Land Act, a power of attorney may be given by the proprietor of land, which power authorises the holder of it to deal with the land. The power has to be registered under the Act, but before it can be used a declaration has to be given that it has not been revoked or extinguished. Before the Land Transfer Act of 1893 a power of attorney once given was in force until the revocation of it had been registered. For some reason or other, probably through a slip, this provision was not inserted in the Act of 1893, and the amendment I propose restores it. If this Bill is passed a power of attorney will hold good until notice of this revocation has been registered. As the law now stands it entails considerable expense, because very frequently cables have to be sent to England to ascertain whether the person who gave the power of attorney is still alive. I move that the Bill be now read a second time.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. WITTENOOM): I should like to ask the hon. member whether this matter is not covered by the Bill we have already passed dealing with powers of attorney.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: No, it is quite distinct.

THE HON. S. J. HAYNES: I have much pleasure in supporting this Bill. Only recently I have had a transaction in my office in which considerable expense was caused owing to there being no such provision as is contained in this Bill. At present, transactions which should take but a few hours, often take weeks in order to ascertain whether a person who gave a power of attorney is still alive.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1 agreed to.

Clause 2—"Amendment of Section 143 of Principal Act."

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT: I think the hon. member requires to insert something after the words "Section 143." As the clause stands it is not stated what Act is to be amended.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: I move that the words "of the Transfer of Land Act, 1893," be inserted after the words "Section 143."

Amendment put and passed.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. WITTENOOM): I presume it is clear where the registration is to take place.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: At the Titles Office. This provision was worked from 1874 to 1893, and we are now only going back to the former Act, which is similar to that which is in force in Melbourne today.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

New clause:

THE HON. F. M. STONE: I have been requested by the Commissioner of Titles to propose an amendment to Section 121 of the Act of 1893. In the 18th line of the section, there are the words "or by the same being sent through the post direct," &c. It is obvious the last word should be "directed," and I propose a new clause, to read as follows: Section 121 of the said Act is hereby amended by striking out the word "direct," in the 18th line, and substituting "directed" in lieu thereof.

Amendment put and passed.

New clause:

THE HON. F. M. STONE: In Section 137 of the Act of 1893, there appears in the 23rd line the word "registration." This word clearly should be "requisition." I therefore move a new clause, as fol-

lows: Section 137 of the said Act is hereby amended by striking out the word "registration," in the 23rd line, and substituting the word "requisition" in lieu thereof. I may say that the Registrar is now working the Act as if the word "requisition" were in the section. The word "registration" being there makes it meaningless.

Amendment put and passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Bill reported, and report adopted.

MARRIED WOMEN'S PROPERTY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

STREETS CLOSURE BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY LOAN BILL.

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

AGRICULTURAL LAND PURCHASE BILL.

SECOND READING—ADJOURNED DEBATE.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: This is a Bill, Sir, to make provision for the purchase of lands suitable for immediate settlement, and for facilitating the better settlement of the soil. This, according to the title, is the object of the Bill. As I have always been in favour of supporting any Bill to encourage people to settle on the soil, I have gone into this measure with great care, especially as I believe that in the future the Government will have to look to the land to meet the interest on the large loans which are now being raised. Although I am perfectly in favour of any Bill that will encourage settlement of the land, I have been unable to find anything in the one before us to which I can give my support, and, in as few words as possible, I should like

to make my views known. In the first place I do not conceive it possible or right for the Government to purchase land and sell it again. If it is necessary to purchase, then all future dealings in connection with it should be by way of permanent lease, and not by sale. Again, this Bill opens the door to very great fraud. I am aware that in the present Government, no matter what their faults may be, we have perfectly honourable men, but it may not be that they may always be in power. They will have to die at some time. As long as they live, each of the members of the Government will, no doubt, be Ministers of the Crown, but they must die at some time, and then we may get a bad Government.

THE HON. J. W. HACKETT: Or a better one.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: Yes, or a better one; but probably a bad one. If we look at the Eastern Colonies we shall see that such things as fraud are not unknown, and I point this out because I do not think we should pass Acts under which fraud may be perpetrated. We should be guided by the experience of other colonies, and I may say that we have many lessons to learn from them. I do not think we, with our eyes open, should follow in their footsteps and eventually attain a position in which we shall have to next door to repudiate our debts. I do not intend to deal with any of the clauses of the Bill because my objections are to the principle of it. The Government say that their desire is to see the ground cultivated, but I fail to understand how the expenditure of this £200,000, in the way proposed, will in the least force on the object which is desired. I take it that the land proposed to be purchased is that which lies near Northam and Newcastle. In the early days of this colony these vast estates were accumulated by the payment of 1s. or 1s. 6d. per acre, and carriages, and dogs, and all sorts of things were taken into account. For years and years this land was held, but nothing was done to it, and I believe when I landed in the colony, it was said that if the Government only gave railways to the people there would be no need to import cereals. It was said that the only drawback was the want of cheap carriage to market. At the time this

land could have been purchased at from 5s. to 10s. per acre, but now that the Government have built railways connecting these estates with the towns, the owners are refusing £4 and £5 an acre for their holdings. At the same time they have done nothing whatever to alter the value of the land. There is now an unearned increment, and by this Bill we are asked to purchase it at the full price, while everyone in the colony has been taxed to make it for the benefit of the present owners. There is an easier method of securing the settlement and cultivation of the soil than by purchasing these large estates, and it is by putting a tax on uncultivated agricultural land which is within, say, 20 miles of a railway. This tax can be made so small that it would not press very much on the *bonâ fide* settlers, while it would force the large holders either to sell or cultivate. It would also be better, in preference to purchasing land in this way, to build light lines of railway to open up fresh agricultural districts. I listened carefully to what the hon. the Minister for Mines said when introducing this Bill, but we may draw our own conclusions from his remarks. Perhaps he thought that the Bill would so commend itself to hon. members that there was no necessity for him to say very much in support of it, but on the other hand it may be that he was not very much in love with it. He contended that there could be no fraud under this Bill, because a Board would be appointed which would have to report to the Government before any purchase could be made. I fail to see, however, what could be done if the land were once purchased. Parliament could not undo what had been done. Another reason given why he should support this Bill was that another place had passed it without a division. I hope no hon. member will support it on a ground like this. In another place half the members are away enjoying themselves, and those who are sitting know it is only waste of time to argue against any Bill on account of the power of the Government, and they leave it to us to act as we think fit. I am not at all well and should not have been here had I not moved the adjournment of the debate at the previous sitting, but being here I beg to move, as an amendment, that all the

words after "that" be struck out, and the words "the Bill be read a second time this day six months," be inserted in lieu thereof.

THE HON. W. ALEXANDER: This Bill seems to me to be following somewhat on the lines of the Agricultural Bank Bill. By that Bill we propose to assist those who wish to settle on the soil by advancing them, up to the sum of £800, three-fourths of the value of the improvements they may make, and now we are asked to go further and pass a Bill which will allow the Government to purchase land to the extent of £200,000. I do not think there is sufficient warrant for this. There is, in the first place, no great demand for land and, therefore, the Bill is premature. Under these circumstances I shall second the amendment, which has been proposed by the Hon. Mr. Crowder.

THE HON. S. H. PARKER: I had not the opportunity of reading this Bill through before it came to the House, but I must say that the short time I have had to peruse it shows me that I ought not to support the amendment, which has been moved by the Hon. Mr. Crowder. Persons who travel along our line of railways must be struck with the fact that large quantities of agricultural lands are lying idle, and when inquiry is made we are told that they belong to private persons. It has been said that if railways were carried into the agricultural districts there would be no need to import cereals, as we could then produce all we required, but we must remember that the needs of this colony have largely increased during the past few years owing to the influx of population.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: We did not grow sufficient before.

THE HON. S. H. PARKER: I believe that what was contemplated when our railway system was first instituted would have been realised by this time had not the population increased as it has done during recent years. If it had not been for the goldfields we should now be producing more cereals than we require, and, in addition to this, the mere fact of the goldfields having been opened up has induced a number of persons, who otherwise would have gone in for farming, to follow the more lucrative employments which have opened up. We can hardly

expect a man who can earn a £1 a day with his team on the goldfields to work it on a farm where he can only earn 10s. a day, and it is obviously in the interests of the State, as well as in his own interest, that he should engage in the employment which is the most lucrative. It is true political economy that a man's labour should be employed in that direction which produces the most money to himself and the State. My hon. friend asks why persons should be paid an increased value for their land which they have done nothing to make.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: Why should the Government buy the land?

THE HON. S. H. PARKER: I daresay my hon. friend is possessed of a good deal of land in many towns, and especially in Perth, and I do not think he would sell it at a small price because someone said to him he should not take advantage of the increased value which has been brought about by the goldfields, seeing that he has done nothing in particular to aid or assist it. If the Government possessed certain agricultural lands they would throw them open to those we are all desirous of seeing on the soil, although myself I believe that, as long as the goldfields prosper and offer far better inducements, it will be a long time before we shall get even the lands which are close to the railways settled. To induce settlement as much as possible it is obvious that the Government must be in a position to offer lands at a reasonable price, and which is adjacent to railways. In the Avon district there are thousands of acres ready for the plough, but which cannot be made available because they are in private hands.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER: Tax them.

THE HON. S. H. PARKER: Then it is said, why do not the owners make use of them? We all know that to fence, clear, and cultivate land entails a large expense, and those persons who have owned the land for so long, and who have been so patriotic as to live among us when others have gone away, have not been in a position to expend the necessary funds to fit the land for agricultural purposes. It seems to me, in the circumstances, true economy for the State to purchase these lands, and to endeavour to settle them with an agricultural population, especially as it can offer much better inducements than any

private individual could do. It can, for instance, sell the land at moderate prices, with the purchase money payable by instalments extending over 20 years, and no private person can do this. I regret to find that the hon. gentleman does not recognise what a great deal is due to the early settlers. If we look back, as I almost can, at these people who for many years struggled with very little prospects before them—struggled perhaps with 10,000 acres of land in almost a state of poverty, and with no opportunity of carrying on a successful business—it does seem to me somewhat unfair that they should now be branded as persons who are taking an unfair advantage of the rise in the market. As far as I know, these people are not trying to sell. They do not, I believe, want to sell; but many of them are patriotic enough to come forward and offer their lands at a moderate price if the Government desire it, so that they may be cut up and turned to profitable account. I think this Bill is a fitting complement to the Agricultural Bank Bill, and if the Government does buy the land I hope those desirous of settling will take advantage of it, and thus bring about what we all so much desire—that real wealth and prosperity which alone can come from the land.

THE HON. H. J. SAUNDERS: I must say that I do not agree with the hon. gentleman who has just spoken, and I am therefore going to vote for the amendment. Last session we were told that if we voted for the Bridgetown railway, an immense quantity of land would be opened up and which would be availed of immediately; but as far as I have been able to learn, very little in that direction has been done, notwithstanding that the land there is supposed to be the most suitable for agriculture we have in the colony. It seems to me that at the present time there is a good deal of land open for selection. We have it on the Great Southern and Midland Railways in large quantities, and I do not think, therefore, that the Government should go into the market to purchase more land at the present time. If they do it is tantamount to saying there is very little agricultural land in the hands of the Government. It is said we should get rid of these large estates by purchasing the land, but I think that is rather a

matter for private enterprise than for the Government. Altogether I think the Bill premature, and I shall vote against it.

THE HON. C. A. PIESSE: I may say at once that I am strongly in favour of this Bill, for it is the only course open to us to break up the large estates. It is all very well to talk about the taxation of unimproved lands. In the early days we were glad to get the people to take up land on any terms. These people went through a number of troubles and trials, and they had to prove that which we now know, what the land is fit for. In these circumstances, I think the early settlers are entitled to fair play and consideration. Some of the estates consist of 30,000 acres, and they are beyond the means of ordinary people to purchase. Even if private individuals could purchase them, they could not sell again on the same conditions and terms the Government can. I do not think, however, that we should use force in taking these estates from the present holders, because we must remember the many trials they have gone through during the time they have held the land. Many forget the troubles there were with the natives. There was a time when natives came and threw spears into the houses of the people—dangers which we do not encounter at the present day—and, as I have said, we should take these matters into consideration now. I have often heard it said when travelling along the railway—Why does not the Government deal with these large unimproved estates? Probably the very men who have said that are the descendants of those who ran away from us in the early days. As regards the taxation of unimproved lands that is a matter which is surrounded with many difficulties. In the first place it would involve the classification of land, and the cost of this would be many thousands of pounds more than the amount provided in this Bill. The right of the Government to purchase is limited by this Bill to £200,000, and if we look at the schedule it is evident that when the land is re-sold it will be productive of much good to the colony, and will considerably help the revenue.

THE HON. A. B. KIDSON: I rise, sir, to support the amendment of the Hon. Mr. Crowder. I have listened carefully to the arguments of the Hon. Mr. Parker

and the Hon. Mr. Piesse, and I can only say that they confirm me in the opinion I held before. One argument used is that because the present holders have been patriotic enough to hold their lands for a number of years, and that, through force of circumstances, they have been unable to improve them, therefore we should afford a means of relief to them by buying them out. The Hon. Mr. Piesse's argument was that because we in the early days encouraged persons to take up this land, we should now buy them out at a large increased price.

THE HON. C. A. PIESSE: I did not say at a large increased price.

THE HON. A. B. KIDSON: You did not say that, but that is what your argument came to. I do not happen to be one of the lucky individuals who hold land along our railways, and therefore I can speak without bias on the subject. It seems to me that when we passed the Agricultural Bank Bill we went as far as we should do in experimental legislation. I look upon this Bill as nothing more than an experiment. Not long ago Parliament passed an Act to relieve the squatters. That was right enough, because there was necessity for it, but there is no necessity for the relief of the holders of these large estates. It is said that the holders have not been able, through want of means, to improve their lands, but I would remind hon. members that we now have an Agricultural Bank, from which advances may be obtained for improvements. Thus I cannot see why the Government should buy more land and place it in competition with land they already possess.

THE HON. C. A. PIESSE: This Bill only applies where there is no Government land.

THE HON. A. B. KIDSON: I say there is plenty of land within 20 miles of our railways, and if that is so why should we buy back the large holdings because the owners are not willing to split them up. It would be much better if we taxed them, and then, no doubt, the owners would commence to improve and get a return. It seems to me quite time enough to bring in such a Bill as this when there is a large demand for land. There is very little demand at the present time; all the people are going to the goldfields, and therefore this Act can only

benefit large land holders. The Minister for Mines when moving the second reading of this Bill did not seem to speak with his usual power and vigour, and he did not bring forward any sound arguments why it should be passed. I do not think I need trouble the House further, but as the Bill appears to me not to be wanted at the present time I shall vote for the amendment.

THE HON. H. BRIGGS: I rise to support this Bill. I quite agree with everything the Hon. Mr. Parker has said, and his arguments were so plausible that everyone must agree with them. This Bill is a proper complement to the Agricultural Land Bill, and it will lead to the development of the land. I know an instance of a settler who sent his grandson to the other colonies to get a thorough agricultural education, and his father, after he had returned, found the greatest difficulty in obtaining for him a suitable farm. At last he took up one in the neighbourhood of Mandurah. He worked the land with energy, and he had plenty of capital at his back, but his farm was not a success, because it was nine miles from a railway, and the carting cost too much. If, therefore, we can open up our lands in the neighbourhood of railways we shall be doing good. I shall not stop to consider the question of the relief it will afford to the present large land holders, for I do not think that comes in. The point is whether it is to the advantage of the colony to have these lands worked. I think it is, and now is an opportune time to acquire them. We have the funds, and we should not allow the unearned increment to go on increasing, otherwise a few years hence, when we shall be compelled to purchase them, we shall have to pay a much higher price for them. I do not think, however, that any words I can say will add to the cogency or power of the argument of the Hon. Mr. Parker, and I shall, therefore, content myself with saying that I shall support the Bill.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenaar): I may take this opportunity of saying a few words before any other member pledges himself without properly understanding the position. The Hon. Mr. Kidson said that I had advanced no arguments in favour of the Bill. I must return the compliment,

and say that he has urged nothing against it; in fact, I might almost say he does not understand it. When I introduced the Bill I said it was entirely permissive, and that is shown by Clause 3, which empowers the Government, if they find it necessary to acquire land from private individuals, to do so. If an opportunity arises to acquire suitable lands the Government may obtain them, but they are limited to lands which are within 20 miles of a railway. The Government cannot purchase any lands; they must purchase lands which are suitable for agriculture. If hon. members will look at Clause 6 they will see that before the Government can acquire any land it must be reported upon by the Board. The Hon. Mr. Crowder said that this Bill was open to fraud, but I cannot see how that can be unless the Government and the Board act together with a fraudulent intent. When the Board has sent in a report to the Government, then the Minister, with the permission of the Governor in Council, may purchase at the price, or for a lesser sum, which the Board has reported to be the value. The Board has no power to purchase; it can only recommend, and the Government cannot buy unless the Board does recommend. The Hon. Mr. Crowder also said that £4 or £5 an acre would be paid for the land. I do not know of much land that would fetch that. I know of one instance where 5,000 acres were sold at £1 an acre, and another instance of a sale at £1 2s. 6d. an acre, and a further one of 6,000 acres being sold for £8,000. Probably the Government would be able to buy at £1 an acre. If any man had land which was worth £4 or £5 an acre I do not think he would be inclined to sell it, but would farm it himself at the present high price of produce. If a man held land, say, in the Avon valley worth £4 or £5 an acre, he would be a fool not to cultivate it at the present time. Then as to the re-sale by the Government the terms on which it will be offered will be reasonable, and no more than 1,000 acres can be sold to any individual. Another thing stated was that we should be guided by the experience of the other colonies. I do not know that any of the other colonies have tried this experiment except one (Queensland), and there the results have been most satisfactory. I

have here information as to the working of a similar Act passed by the Queensland Parliament in 1894, and the results are as follows:—Glengallan: purchased 6,301 acres at 55s. an acre; sold 4,387 acres. North Toolburra: purchased 10,983 acres at 40s. an acre; sold 3,959 acres. Westbrook: purchased 9,886 acres at 48s. an acre; sold 5,338 acres. Rosewood: purchased 6,160 acres at 72s. 6d. an acre; sold 610 acres. Clifton: purchased 9,226 acres at 55s. 5d. an acre; not yet open to selection. Cryna: purchased 3,973 acres at 50s. an acre; not yet open to selection. In all 46,529 acres purchased in two years. It will be seen that in Queensland the Government, instead of spending the money all at once, purchased small lots as they offered themselves from time to time, and in two years have only acquired about 46,000 acres which have been re-sold to a great extent to the public in small lots. Then another hon. member objected to this Bill because he said there was plenty of land within 20 miles of the railways, but the object of this Bill is to acquire lands which are near the centres of population and the goldfields. We know everyone tries as far as possible to get a farm as near the different centres of business as he can. It is to obtain lands which are near these centres that this Bill is introduced, and I feel sure the good sense of hon. members will induce them to help the Government with it.

THE HON. S. J. HAYNES: I do not agree with hon. members who think that this Bill has been brought in for the relief of land holders, but at the same time it seems to me there is no demand for it. Along the Great Southern, Midland, Bunbury, and Blackwood Railways there is plenty of land open for selection.

THE HON. C. A. PIESSE: The freight kills the farmers on the Great Southern Railway.

THE HON. S. J. HAYNES: We know that the price that will be asked of the Government by the vendors will be much higher than those which would be asked of business men, and notwithstanding what has been said about this being a permissive Bill I am afraid, when the Government come to buy, they will not make very good bargains. Reference has been made to the struggles of the early colonists. I am sure we all sympathise

with them, but it must be remembered that they have nearly all passed away and their descendants, who have done nothing whatever to the land, are now the owners of it. If there were any demand for this land, the people who own it would not be such fools as to refuse good offers for it. I notice by Clause 9 of the Bill that the Government may clear, fence, and drain land. I am decidedly against that. If agriculturists cannot put on a few improvements without the aid of a paternal Government we are better off without them.

THE HON. C. A. PIESSE: But purchasers would have to pay more for the land with the improvements.

THE HON. S. J. HAYNES: I think improvements are a matter for private enterprise and the wider the birth we give such a proposal as this the better for the State. Seeing that there is no present necessity for the Bill, I shall support the amendment. If there were any demand for agricultural land, perhaps the Bill might be necessary; but in any circumstances I think it would be wiser if every transaction were placed before Parliament for decision as to whether the land should be purchased or not. For these reasons I shall support the amendment.

THE HON. D. K. CONGDON: I do not intend to support the amendment. It appears to me that the great object of this Bill is to burst up the large estates, so that they may be cultivated and the colony benefited. It occurs to me that two courses are open to us, either to put a tax upon the unimproved lands or to acquire them by purchase. To me the latter course seems preferable. I do not agree that this is a bad Bill, or that it is brought in to serve certain people who hold large interests in land, but I know that it has been recognised for years past that the sooner these large estates are broken up the sooner will they become of benefit to the colony. I shall, therefore, support the passage of the Bill.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: I have listened with attention to what has been said in support of this Bill. It is contended, in the first place, that its object is to help the old settlers who have borne the burden of the day, and secondly that it is for the purpose of splitting up large estates. With regard to the old settlers

I am afraid they will not get much assistance. It may interest the young settlers who now possess the land. There are not many poor old settlers; the estates are in the hands of their descendants. Even if it were to assist the old settlers I do not think that should influence us because such is not a matter we should consider. I shall, therefore, pass by that aspect of the question.

THE HON. S. H. PARKER: If the hon. gentleman refers to me, I may say that I never used that argument. I only referred to the old settlers because an hon. gentleman had cast a slur upon them, as I thought, and I stood up for them, but I did not use the argument that the old settlers should be helped.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: I took it from what the hon. gentleman said, and from what the Hon. Mr. Piesse said, that that was one of the arguments in favour of the Bill. But I pass that by because I think it has nothing whatever to do with the question. Then we come to the second point, that it is for the purpose of bursting up the large areas. I say it will do nothing of the sort, and I defy any hon. gentleman to put a finger on any clause of the Bill which will be the means of cutting up the large estates. Is there any means of forcing the large owners to sell? There is not. There is only power to buy, and I say that directly this Bill is passed the Government will enter into competition with private persons. If any private person offers a price for one of these large areas the owners will immediately take advantage of it and go to the Government and offer it to them. They will say they have been offered so much an acre privately. But the land is worth more, and the Board, in considering the price, will no doubt give some effect to the private offer. Again, I think the Government will make more mistakes than private individuals, and they will always pay higher prices. At the present time we find when it is proposed to take a railway through any district, the people always express a willingness to give their land, but as soon as the line is decided upon, then comes in the question of compensation at once. If there is any demand for land of this sort, why do not the owners subdivide it themselves and sell it? I was astonished to hear the Hon. Mr. Briggs say that he knew of the

grandson of a settler who had a farm only nine miles from a railway and could not make it pay. This Bill provides for the purchase of land within 20 miles of a railway, and it follows, therefore, that if land which is only nine miles away will not pay, land which is 12 or 15 miles away will be in a still worse position. Last session when certain railways were proposed to this House, it was said they would open up considerable quantities of agricultural land. I heard the Hon. Mr. Hackett speak in glowing terms of the nature of the country in the vicinity of the Bridgetown Railway; but I do not believe an acre of land has been taken up there since the railway has been passed.

THE HON. R. G. BURGESS: Thousands of acres.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: The hon. gentleman says thousands. If that is so all this land will have to be cleared and cultivated, and it will require a number of men to do it. Assuming that to be so, I ask where are the men to come from who will be prepared to take up land under this Bill. I think this Bill is the worst advertisement we could have for the colony. On the one hand we are saying to people to come and settle among us, we have plenty of land to offer you, and yet on the other hand by this Bill we are holding out that we have so little land that we are obliged to purchase it to provide blocks for people to settle upon.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (HON. E. H. WITTENOOM): Land near railways.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: Are we not building railways in all directions to open up agricultural land. Have we, not the Great Southern Railway, with plenty of land along it, not more than one-third of which has been taken up? Have we not a similar state of things along the Midland Railway? Then there is the Bunbury Railway and the Bridgetown Railway, with thousands of acres of land. Again, we are told by an hon. gentleman that to farm nine miles from a railway does not pay, and yet we are bringing in a Bill to buy land which is within 20 miles. There is any quantity of land already available, and it seems to me unnecessary for the Government to buy more. Then, under this Bill, the Government may clear land. Suppose, for instance, they clear 5,000 or 6,000

acres and people do not settle on it, they will have to keep it cleared, and will then be entering upon the business of farming which should be left to private persons. I would ask hon. members whether, if the Government clear the land, they will be able to do it as cheaply as private individuals. We all know that everything costs the Government more than it does anyone else. I would ask hon. members whether they think anyone is going to buy land for which a high price has been paid, and for which an exorbitant price for clearing has been spent, with 10 per cent. added to the total. Those who take up small holdings like to clear the land for themselves. Labour is too dear to employ to work land profitably in these days. The high wages on the goldfields induce most of the labour in that direction, and the farmers cannot afford to compete. The men we want to settle on the soil are those who will do the clearing themselves with, perhaps, the aid of their sons, and thus save the exorbitant wages they would otherwise have to pay. In these circumstances I think this scheme will be a total failure. When, perhaps, more of our land has been taken up and there is a demand for further blocks by people who are willing to settle and able to work it, such a Bill as this may be a good thing, although I am inclined to think it would be far better if the Government spent the money in the construction of further agricultural railways. It has been pointed out that this Bill may lead to fraud and jobbery. We have every confidence, of course, in the present Government, but the day may come when things will be much the same here as they have been in the other colonies. Under this Bill, if the Government were not satisfied with any particular Board, they could dismiss it and appoint their relations to fill the vacancies, and these might then report in the way the Government desired.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (HON. E. H. WITTENOOM): They would have to be a bad lot then.

THE HON. F. M. STONE: We know such things have been done, and the day may come here when we may experience some thing of the kind. I would point out, too, that although the Government are limited to £200,000 for the purchase of land, there is no limit whatever to the number of

men they may put on to clear, fence, and drain. They may put on thousands if they choose, and use them for political purposes. I am sorry the Hon. Mr. Parker did not have time to look into this Bill before he came to the House, for I feel sure if he had he would have voted, as it is my intention to do, in favour of the amendment.

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

The House divided, with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	8
Noes	...	...	...	7
				—
Majority for				1

AYES.		NOES.	
The Hon. H. Briggs		The Hon. W. Alexander	
The Hon. R. G. Burgess		The Hon. F. T. Crowder	
The Hon. D. K. Congdon		The Hon. S. J. Haynes	
The Hon. C. A. Piesse		The Hon. A. B. Kidson	
The Hon. W. Spencer		The Hon. J. E. Richardson	
The Hon. J. H. Taylor		The Hon. F. M. Stone	
The Hon. E. H. Wittenoom		The Hon. H. J. Saunders	
The Hon. S. H. Parker			
	(Teller)		(Teller)

Question, that the Bill be now read a second time, put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3—"Sources of funds not more than £200,000 for purposes of the Act."

THE HON. F. M. STONE: I move that progress be reported.

The Committee divided with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	8
Noes	...	...	...	7
				—
Majority for				1

AYES.		NOES.	
The Hon. W. Alexander		The Hon. H. Briggs	
The Hon. F. T. Crowder		The Hon. D. K. Congdon	
The Hon. A. B. Kidson		The Hon. S. H. Parker	
The Hon. J. E. Richardson		The Hon. C. A. Piesse	
The Hon. H. J. Saunders		The Hon. W. Spencer	
The Hon. F. M. Stone		The Hon. E. H. Wittenoom	
The Hon. J. H. Taylor		The Hon. R. G. Burgess	
The Hon. S. J. Haynes			
	(Teller)		(Teller)

Motion put and passed.
Progress reported.

ADOPTION OF CHILDREN BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (HON. E. H. WITTENOOM): In introducing this Bill I desire to say that it is not a Government measure, but the work of a private

member of another place on whose behalf I bring it under the notice of hon. members. The object of it is to provide for the adoption of children, and to see that when they are adopted they cannot be taken away from those who have adopted them when, perhaps, they are becoming useful. Clause 2 defines what a child is. Clauses 3 and 4 state by whom children may be adopted and what the ages of the persons adopting them must be. Clause 5 states that evidence must be given before a judge as to a child being under the age of 15, and that the person proposing to adopt it is a fit and proper person to have the custody of it. When a child is adopted it takes the legal status of a child born in wedlock, but there is a provision by which such a child shall not acquire any interests which would legally devolve on the child of the adopting parent. Clause 8 gives the adopting parent the legal status over a child such as the natural parent would have. The remaining clauses are purely formal and enable orders which have been made to be reversed or varied, and gives power to the Governor to make rules for carrying out the Act. I now move that the Bill be read a second time.

THE HON. S. J. HAYNES: I think this is a useful Bill. It gives to those who are charitable enough to adopt a child some security and control over it. There are instances where children have been adopted and cared for and then when they have become useful they have been taken away. I shall have pleasure in supporting this Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House at 6:30 o'clock, p.m., adjourned until Thursday, 13th August, 1896, at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 12th August, 1896.

Question: Reported Engagement of Mr. Speight—Judges' Pension Bill: first reading—Public Works Bill: first reading—Coolgardie Goldfields Water Supply Loan Bill: third reading—Motion: To recognise Female Suffrage—Purchase of Perth Waterworks: the Governor's Message; in committee—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—REPORTED ENGAGEMENT OF MR. SPEIGHT.

MR. SOLOMON, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, Whether any negotiations have taken place with Mr. Speight, the ex-Commissioner of Railways in Victoria, with reference to his holding a position in the public railways of this colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—None whatever.

JUDGES' PENSION BILL.

Introduced by the **ATTORNEY GENERAL**, and read a first time.

PUBLIC WORKS BILL.

Introduced by the **ATTORNEY GENERAL**, and read a first time.

COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY LOAN BILL.

THIRD READING.

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

MOTION—TO RECOGNISE FEMALE SUFFRAGE.

MR. COOKWORTHY, in accordance with notice, moved "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable, in the best interests of the country, that the principle of female suffrage should be recognised in the Constitution." He said: On a previous occasion, in this House, I had the pleasure of moving a motion something similar to this one, and I was rather surprised at the support I then got—[**THE PREMIER:** Hear, hear]—but it was thought by many that to adopt