

cepted as a formal notice for to-morrow?

Mr. Scaddan : Yes.

Mr. SPEAKER : The hon. member can move now, if he wishes.

Mr. Scaddan : Are we working under the old Standing Orders?

Mr. SPEAKER : The proposed Standing Orders have not yet been approved by the House.

Mr. Scaddan : Then in the circumstances I am prepared to let the matter drop.

Mr. Walker : As precedent can never override our Constitution, we should understand that henceforth we will absolutely follow the course prescribed by our Constitution, and now let the matter drop.

ADJOURNMENT.

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

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 7th August, 1907.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Report of Proceedings before Boards of Conciliation and Court of Arbitration, 1906. 2, Wagin municipal by-laws.

QUESTION—CADET FORCE, INCREASE.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What increase to the Cadet Force at present existing in this State is proposed under the new Cadet Regulations? 2, What will be the estimated cost of such increase, and over how many years will this cost be spread? 3, Have the Government agreed to this increase; or if not, what action have they taken? 4, Will the Minister lay upon the table of the House the whole correspondence dealing with this question?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The proposed increase from 120 to 510 Senior Cadets, being an increase of 390, and from 1,527 School Cadets to 2,036, being an increase of 509. 2, The estimated cost of such increase is £1,181. The full increase will not be reached for, say, three years; but when the proposed establishment is complete the annual increase will be £1,181, as above. 3, The Government have not concurred to this up to the present, *vide* the Hon. the Premier's note of 6/7/07, in which he says:—"We are doing more than any of the States to encourage the cadet movement, by franking the boys over our railways, but I will not approve of any additional expenditure being entailed in connection with the proposal to increase the establishment." 4, Papers are herewith.

QUESTION—SEWAGE FILTER BEDS.

Hon. C. SOMMERS asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, What effect has the submerging of the filter beds on Burswood Island by the present flood in the Swan river had upon the foundations? 2, What effect will similar submergings have on the working of the beds when the sewerage system is in full work?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The foundations for the filters have been in water for the last four weeks, and there has been no appreciable effect. 2, Similar floodings, which will occur almost every year, will not have any prejudicial effect upon the treat-

ment. The Midland Junction Workshops filters are similarly situated, and are partially submerged each winter. It is found that the reduction in filtering capacity is much more than counter-balanced by the presence of the large body of flood water which serves as a dilutant. (The sewage from Perth within the next two years is estimated at two million gallons; and the ultimate quantity six million gallons; while the quantity of flood water passing the treatment works at Claisebrook at the present time is undoubtedly not less than 10,000 million gallons per day.) The filters will return to normal work automatically, as the floods subside, as has already been proved in connection with the filters at the Midland Junction Workshops, where experience has proved that bacterial efficiency is in no way affected by the submergence. This site was concurred in by Mr. Davis (the Consulting Engineer) who was engaged to report and advise, with full knowledge of the probability of the filters being flooded.

MOTION — ABORIGINE PRISON LABOUR AND TROPICAL PLANTATIONS.

Hon. R. W. PENNEFATHER
(North) moved—

"That it is desirable the Government should, at an early date, establish plantations in suitable places in the North-West Province of this State for the cultivation of rubber, cotton, and other tropical products, where the labour of aboriginal prisoners may be utilised."

He said: The object I have in view in moving this motion is to endeavour to remedy the present treatment to which the aborigine prisoners in the northern portions of the State are subjected. The first ground which I would like to place before members in justification of the motion is that the northern portion of our State is eminently adapted for the cultivation of many tropical products, which would undoubtedly bring in a revenue far and away more than necessary to sustain the industry and the expenses necessarily incurred. It appears

from inquiries I have been making that in that part of the State the rubber tree is indigenous but it is not the exact variety which obtains such a world-wide repute in the markets of the world, such as the Para. The Para rubber, which takes its name from the port from which it is shipped in America, commands a much higher price than any other description of rubber produced, but there are various descriptions of rubber, some of which no doubt would to a great extent readily be acclimatised in that part of the State and be a big commercial product, and I therefore desire to place before the House and their attention that it is necessary we should endeavour to utilise this labour which is at the service of the State, and this class of labour I think is more adapted for the cultivation of these products than the purpose to which that labour at present is put. The labour at present which the aboriginal prisoners are subjected to is the making and forming of roads and repairing them; that is a class of labour that on the face of it one would say the blackfellow ought to be able to do, and no doubt he can, but we must bear in mind the conditions surrounding the man. I do not wish to urge the question so much on the ground of the humanitarian principle as from the utilitarian aspect. Looking at the men working in the chain gangs, as I have done, trying to do their work on the roads, they to a great extent are inconvenienced from doing their work as freely as they otherwise would by reason of the chains they have to wear. They are, as a rule, chained two and two together; you can see at a glance when looking at one of these gangs the class of man who has been in gaol for many years doing that class of labour and the man who has only just been admitted to the distinction of that work on the roads. The gait undoubtedly is affected by it, the movements are, and although the men may look fat and developed, the spirit nature has placed in them is pretty well subdued. I do not understand that this must be viewed from the aspect that some wish to view it from, that if you do not chain the prisoners and keep them in chains how are you going to control their movements?

The same might be said about our white prisoners ; if we do not keep them in chains how are we to control their movements, and the answer is by keeping them in safe custody. I do not think that is a sufficient answer to subject these prisoners to chains, mark you, night and day ; the chains are never taken off them, and they are subjected to that treatment because the State is unwilling to incur the expense of placing them within efficient gaol walls or efficient custody. It may be said the blackman would prefer to be chained than kept within walls. On that aspect of the case I do not intend to venture an opinion, but I look at it from the eye of a person who feels that a blackfellow is in substance and in form in the scale of nature, our brother, although his colour may be black. And I cannot help remembering that there is a feeling which has grown up of intense dislike to the aboriginal of the State by certain people ; but if those people would only make themselves acquainted with the early travels of the mariners who sailed across the Indian ocean and skirted this coast, they would find out, as I have found out, that the transgressions in the first place were committed by the white men on the black men. Many years ago a book was published giving a record of the journals and log-books kept by Dutch skippers who traded on this coast 200 years ago. This shows that instructions were given by the Governor General of the Netherlands States that specimens of these peculiar people should be obtained and placed on board the ships to be sent home. I have this book in my custody and it is open for the perusal of any hon. member. In it the writer makes a very significant observation of an occurrence which took place on our North-West coast. The captain of a Dutch ship describing the incident said that he was in search of water and came across natives in the North-West of this continent and, being anxious to obtain supplies, asked where water could be obtained. The sailors got within parleying distance of the natives, and the latter led them to places where they obtained plenty of fresh water. After having obtained the water the sail-

ors from the ship supplied the natives with drink called arrack which was sweetened with sugar. I believe this is an intoxicating drink, although I have never tasted it. The result was that some of the natives became under the influence of the drink, and, while in that condition, were tied hand and foot by the sailors and taken on board. The unfortunate natives seeing how their generosity and fair treatment resulted, immediately seized their weapons and attacked the sailors. [*Hon. R. F. Sholl* : With their hands and feet tied ?] No. It was the friends of the unfortunate natives who had been taken away who took up their weapons and attacked the sailors. They were naturally much disturbed at the sight of their friends and relatives being taken away in this manner.

Hon. R. F. Sholl : You are preaching now.

Hon. R. W. PENNEFATHER : I am not.

Hon. R. F. Sholl : Well, they are fairy tales.

Hon. R. W. PENNEFATHER : They are on record in the Dutch archives, and the writer of the book puts this significant foot-note to the story : "A very peculiar reward for the generosity with which these people were treated." That no doubt began the bad feeling between the blacks and the whites, which has been perpetuated probably to this day. I can understand that some people think that the natives are only made to be kicked, to be booted out of their road. So much has this subject seized the public attention that it has passed beyond the confines of this State, and has been brought under the notice of the Imperial authorities. I fail to see how any white man with a spark of humanity in his breast can justify the treatment of keeping these prisoners in chains night and day. What I would suggest is this, that the Government should take steps to ascertain which are the most favourable localities for the cultivation of those tropical products to which the aboriginal prison labour can be directed. The plantations if established would be self-supporting, and if the Government have to undergo

expense in palisading these plantations, then they must do it. To say that they should not be asked to create the plantations because it would be expensive and that it would be cheaper to keep the natives in chains is absurd. [*Hon. R. F. Sholl*: How will you keep the natives in the plantations?] They will be kept within the palisades. It is not right that they should be kept in chains. The punishment of chains for a white man is only inflicted for a short period and for the worst criminal offences, but these unfortunate devils are kept year after year in chains. Some may say that it is only a light chain round the neck, but I have seen it round the loins. It is a chain all the same, and they are not chained by themselves but to another native. Perhaps if I had been inured to seeing these sights frequently and had lived in the locality for a long time—I say, “perhaps,” but I do not think it would be so—I might be like those who are indifferent to the feelings of those unfortunate beings.

Hon. R. F. Sholl: Would you have the plantations at Beagle Bay?

Hon. R. W. PENNEFATHER: There are plenty of places along the coast. If the interjector insinuates that the object of my motion is to get the Government either to farther subsidise that mission or in any way to direct more natives there, he is greatly and grossly mistaken. [*Hon. R. F. Sholl*: That is the best place for plantations.] I am not quite sure that it was with that object that the hon. member threw out the remark. I am making this motion entirely on my own account, and whether I shall receive a seconder or supporter I do not know. When I saw these men in the condition I describe, I determined that the first time I had an opportunity of righting them I would do so. There should be many plantations in places along the coast. At present the Government take the natives from one part of the country and herd them in another part where they are aliens, and the result is that at the first opportunity there is bloodshed. That is well known by every man up there. It would not be necessary or wise to make one place for

the retention of these prisoners. They should, as far as possible, be kept in their own localities, in the places where they were born and bred. I do not hesitate to say that men engaged in the stock and pastoral pursuits in those parts that I have visited, have treated the aborigines well. Information in that respect was supplied to me not by one or two persons but from 14 or 15 different sources, and it was explained to me why this was so. It was because it is in the interests of the pastoralist to make friends with the natives, for the latter not only provide him with labour but also prevent hostile natives from making incursions on his property. I do not wish to worry the House by making any undue exordium on the subject, but simply to draw the attention of members to the fact, which I think they will all admit, that there are nearly a dozen different products that can be cultivated by labour of this kind. If there is road-making to be done it can be done in the ordinary way, as in every other portion of the country; but there are possibilities in those districts for the cultivation of coffee, arrowroot, pea-nuts, pine apples, sweet potatoes, cocoanuts, tobacco, jute, dates, oil palm, and rice. There are numerous products which can be mainly, if not entirely, raised within those latitudes. I submit this motion with great confidence to the House, for I feel sure that the bulk of the hon. members sitting here are actuated by feelings of humanity, and that they will not permit this State longer to be pointed out as the one part of the British dominions where prisoners are kept in chains night and day.

Hon. W. Kingsmill: The other States do not make any prisoners—Queensland for instance?

Hon. R. F. Sholl: In the southern seas the British Government shoot the natives down.

Hon. R. W. PENNEFATHER: They may shoot them down in other parts and they have done that in these parts too if I am not mistaken; but the day when these people can be shot down with impunity is gone, and those who talk about

shooting them down had better be careful. That kind of talk will not be tolerated in the British dominions now. [*Hon. R. F. Sholl*: They are doing it now.] I deny that and will ask the hon. member to point out any part where that occurs. It is no use talking in that strain. Evidently there is a feeling abroad that there is to be no consideration shown to these people and that they are to be treated like dogs. I for one will stand up on the floor of this House and say that I protest against such treatment. I shall do the best I can on all occasions to alleviate the condition of these unfortunate creatures.

Hon. R. F. SHOLL (North): The hon. member, after his very great experience, proposes to commit this House to a resolution that the Government should at an early date establish plantations in suitable places in the North-West for the cultivation of rubber, etcetera. If the hon. member, in bringing forward his resolution, had suggested to the Government that they should make inquiries as to whether there were suitable places in the northern parts of this territory for the cultivation of these products, I should not object particularly to his motion. He has had great experience in the North-West. He travelled up the coast on a canvassing expedition, and he had hardly time to make speeches. He went ashore when the boats stopped at the ports long enough to enable him to do so, and now he comes back seized with an enormous knowledge of what is desirable for the natives in the North-West. If the hon. member knew a little more about the subject of which he is preaching, it would be a great deal better. If he knew anything about the question he would know that it is quite impossible to utilise the native labour, perhaps some 100 miles inland, for the purpose of cultivating the areas. Even assuming that the country was suitable for cotton, rubber, and for tropical products, it would not be practical for any Government to take the native labour there and utilise it in the way suggested. Any one who knows anything at all about the natives knows perfectly well that they

must be kept under control, or it will be found that the white expert, on arriving at the particular place where cultivation is desired to be undertaken, will wake up in the morning and find all the labour gone and only tools left behind. There has been a great deal said by this expert when travelling up the coast about the natives being kept in chains. No one cares to see any person in chains but if it is desirable to punish crime and to keep the natives under control, it is absolutely necessary that they should be chained. They must be chained to control them. The chain may be light, and I maintain, from my knowledge of natives travelling long distances under arrest, it is absolutely necessary that they should have a light chain around the neck instead of on any other part of the body. It is very well for the hon. member, who mentioned this subject in his speech on the Address-in-Reply, to come here with high-falutin' nonsense about the aborigines of the North-West.

Hon. R. W. Pennefather: Is the hon. member in order in accusing me of talking high-falutin' nonsense?

The President: I think the hon. member is not in order, if you feel the word to be offensive; and so he will withdraw that.

Hon. R. F. SHOLL: Certainly: I shall withdraw anything. Still, I think I should be allowed to retain my own opinion, though I withdraw in accordance with the ruling of the Chair. On the Address-in-Reply the hon. member did a little high falutin' regarding the natives in the North. Anyone would think he had been through the whole district, had studied the native character, knew all the abuses, and was prepared to suggest something which would remedy those abuses. He has never done anything of the kind. I can read between the lines the object of this motion. Some people wish to get a few more concessions at Beagle Bay; and I would suggest to the Government that while they should protect the natives in the North and make their imprisonment less irksome, they should also be more careful not to allow any institution or any party—public, religious, or whatever it may

be—to start stations in those parts, the Government providing them with free native labour, and the Government paying for that free labour. It is as well that the Government should be on their guard in this matter. As for the hon. member's speaking with authority of what the Government should do, and the chaining of the natives, he has had no experience in the North at all. He puffs out his chest and speaks with authority; yet he hardly got off the boat during the whole of his experience in the North. He went ashore occasionally, and made a few speeches. The hon. member, speaking on the treatment of natives, speaks, I think, without any authority or any experience whatever. He has said that reports of the treatment of the natives have gone outside the State. I do not think he mentioned the House of Commons, though I know the subject was brought up there by an Irish member. But we read only this morning that owing to some natives being killed in one of the Fiji Islands, a British gunboat landed a punitive expedition which surrounded the natives at night. The natives took up their firearms, killed one marine, and wounded a guide. But there was no escape for them. The landing party fired a Maxim into a camp containing, I think, men, women and children. And yet people complain because natives in this State have to be kept under control on a light chain while being brought from many miles inland. The hon. member never said anything about that punitive expedition under the authority of the British Government. Possibly he never read the telegram. The British Government, before speaking about the ill-treatment of natives in Western Australia, had better turn their attention to something nearer home. I hope members will not commit themselves to this suggestion by a gentleman who has had no experience whatever. It is very well for him to tell us some tale that may or may not be true, but our own people are too fond of decriing the inhumanity of settlers in the northern parts of this country. It is very well for the hon. member to say he believes what he has been told, and that the squatters treat

their natives well. Why does he exclude the squatters from his denunciation? [*Hon. R. W. Pennefather* : Is not the pastoralist a squatter ?] You say the pastoralists treat the natives well. But who treats them ill if not the squatter who employs them ? Therefore what is the use of making a song about the ill-treatment of the natives, who are employed by the squatters ? The hon. member knows that the squatters have the votes, and he must go up next year for re-election ; and he brings this high falutin' motion asking the House to commit themselves to his proposal on the authority of an inexperienced person such as he. If the hon. member had tabled a modest motion to the effect that the House desires the Government to make inquiries as to the suitability of certain portions of the North for the cultivation of certain tropical products, with a view to utilising prison labour, no one would have taken any exception. [*Hon. R. W. Pennefather* : My very motion.] Nothing of the sort. You do not ask the Government to inquire ; you wish the House to commit itself to a bald motion that the Government should act. [*Hon. M. L. Moss* : Move an amendment.] I shall not move any amendment. I shall vote against the motion, because I think it is absolutely ridiculous.

Hon C. SOMMERS (Metropolitan) : I think, if the hon. member will slightly amend the motion, it will meet with approval. Instead of asking the Government to establish plantations, he might, as Mr. Sholl suggests, let the motion read that it is desirable for the Government at an early date to inquire if plantations in the North-West are suitable for the cultivation of rubber, cotton, and other products in respect of which the labour of aboriginal prisoners can be utilised. To such a motion the majority of members will readily agree. To ask the Government to establish such plantations without knowing anything about the matter, is I think asking too much. If the hon. member will make that amendment he will certainly have my support, and I think the motion will probably result in much good.

Hon. W. KINGSMILL (Metropolitan-Suburban) : I cannot see anything wrong with the motion as it stands ; that is, the motion *per se* ; but I strongly object to the motion being made a peg on which to hang the remarks the hon. member has appended thereto. I remember inquiries being made ; and the establishment of experimental plantations has always been a favourite project of my own which on one or two occasions I have tried to put into execution. The only difficulty was that of employing native labour, to which the hon. member has referred. I should like to assure him dispassionately, looking at the project with as fair a mind as I can, that this question of the humane treatment of the aboriginal natives of the North-Western and other parts of the State has received great consideration. I think the hon. member will acquit the present or any preceding Government of a desire to be inhumane. I think he will credit them with a wish to treat those aborigines as well as they can be treated compatibly with meeting the ends of justice ; and I can assure him that the means which we at present adopt have stood the test of every inquiry, and are those means which after much consideration are considered the best for the purposes to be effected. There is one thing to which I seriously object—to the State of Western Australia being held up as a State which has systematically ill-treated its aborigines ; and I venture to say this after an experience of most of the States of Australia, not only of the towns but of the backblocks in those States, an experience which I suppose has now extended over twenty-five years amongst aborigines. I can assure members that the aborigines of no State in Australia are better treated than ours. Why, if the hon. member had travelled through the backblocks of Queensland, or had visited the north of South Australia some years ago, he would have found that the comparatively trifling inconveniences to which our natives are put are nothing to the things that happen and have happened in those States. And yet we find members representing those States in the Federal Parliament holding up this State to obloquy, where-

as as I have said the methods which are now and have been employed in this State compare more than favourably with those in vogue in other States. This has always been a subject on which I have felt inclined to be rather heated, to think that this State should be blamed to-day for actions in comparison with which the behaviour of the other States has been simply execrable. A great deal of nonsense has been talked on this subject ; and with regard to the agitation some little time ago in England, which had a sort of recrudescence not very long ago, I happened to be acquainted, when I was living in the North-West, where I have had much experience, with the principal instigator of that agitation—a gentleman who at that time was employed as an engine-driver on a mine at Bamboo Creek, and whose principal reason for objecting to the treatment of the natives was that the squatters and pastoralists by whom those natives were employed were guilty of the shocking cruelty of sending them barefoot on errands. We here realise how absurd that is. But it is otherwise with British audiences. They think the squatter is a most inhumane person to send away a native without boots into a land filled with rocks and prickles. That was one of the charges laid against this State, and the gentleman who, during five or six months I think, gathered so much information about the ill-treatment of our natives, was able to some extent to horrify the British public when he got to England with statements of this and a similar nature. To return to the subject of the motion, the difficulty which has hitherto been found—and I think the Colonial Secretary will find mention of this on one of the files, the number of which I cannot now remember—is the method of controlling the natives. The mover says we should keep them within a palisade around the plantation. I do not think that would be altogether feasible. The spectacle of an infuriated warder running down his prisoners every morning to get them to go to work would be undignified for the warder, and the chase would waste much valuable time. Again, I think it would be quite impossible to

devise any sort of palisading which those natives could not scale. That being so, I honestly do not see, speaking earnestly, any other way of treating the natives than as they are treated at present; and it is a peculiar thing that we find that those who have had experience with natives are those who do not object to it, while those who have not had much experience with the natives do object to it. It is impossible that acquaintance with these natives can bring about instincts of cruelty. I do not think any hon. member will argue that for a moment. I am perfectly certain that those who go into the waste places of Australia are rather more apt to keep their humane instincts than those who live in the rush and turmoil of a town. As I have already said, I am perfectly at one with the main object the hon. member has in view. I think it would be a very admirable thing indeed if it were possible for the Government to carry out this motion. It is true that there are not many places on the coast suitable for it, and as I have already said the place mentioned in an interjection by Mr. Sholl, Beagle Bay, is undoubtedly one of the very best, that is, so far as some of the products proposed to be cultivated are concerned; but no doubt with every research possible it may be found that other places would recommend themselves. There is always this difficulty, the method of control of the natives on these plantations, and that difficulty has hitherto been found. Governments have always been willing—I know as a member of several Governments I have been—to initiate something of this sort, but that has always been the insuperable difficulty. It is just the same with white prisoners. I do not know about members of this House, but we hear members of another place and a section of the public continually suggesting what a good scheme it would be to send white prisoners out on the land to clear it and carry out agricultural operations. We have tried that and the result has been extremely disappointing. If the Government can devise some means of safely controlling the natives and giving them good work to do in this particular direction, then I

say the motion of the hon. gentleman is one that deserves every support. So far as I am concerned I am perfectly prepared to support the motion, and while I do not think that the suggested amendment is much needed, still perhaps if members think the matter should be proceeded with with greater caution, there should be no difficulty in accepting the motion with that amendment.

Hon. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): I will move an amendment which I think should meet the views of hon. members, and should satisfy the hon. member who has moved in the matter. I move an amendment—

"That the word 'establish' be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu: 'take into consideration the advisability of establishing.'"

While I am to a certain extent in sympathy with the hon. member I do not think we should commit the Government by such a motion to an expenditure of this kind. Mr. Kingsmill has told us that a great deal of information has been furnished to Governments; so it would be desirable to have that information if we possibly could before we adopt a motion such as the hon. member has proposed. I have a good deal of sympathy with Mr. Pennefather's aim and desire to see the natives used in the best possible way, but there are a great many questions that come up in one's mind to be settled before we can adopt a motion such as this—whether the aborigines are suitable for that part of the country, whether the rainfall and climate are suitable, and whether the labour would really be suitable for the cultivation of these products of the soil. There may be some doubts upon that; and I presume that the number of prisoners available would not be sufficient to carry on more than one plantation, at any rate with any possibility of success, and I do not suppose prison labour is quite the most satisfactory in the world. It might become an utter failure, but it is desirable that we should as soon as possible adopt any measure that can give promise of success for the development of our great North-West country. No

doubt as time goes on development in this direction will take place. Perhaps it is premature at present, but it is not premature to take the first steps towards securing a knowledge of the productiveness of that part of our great State, and to that extent I am entirely with the hon. member and would like to see anything giving promise of being a successful venture undertaken either by the Government or by anybody else, or in the direction of giving assistance to those willing to embark on an enterprise of this kind in that portion of the State. There is no doubt the railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar will have a considerable influence in the development not only of the immediate neighbourhood of the line but of the country adjacent, more or less near to it. Therefore it is desirable that we should ascertain whether these great articles of commerce which have been enumerated can be produced satisfactorily in that country and thus help to develop latent possibilities of the State in any direction. I move the amendment. I hope it will receive the acceptance of the hon. member.

Hon. E. McLARTY (South-West): I second the amendment. I am sure that the hon. member who moved the motion had the best intentions in doing so, but I would not like it to go abroad that there was any want of feeling of humanity among members of this House towards the aborigines. I think we are all desirous, as the hon. member is, of seeing that justice is done to them, of seeing that they are treated in the most humane manner possible, but my contention is, as Mr. Kingsmill has already stated, that it is an utter impossibility to utilise native labour on the mainland unless the natives are in some way hampered or restricted from running away or absconding. Mr. Pennefather says, "Why do not the white prisoners abscond?" But surely the cases are not analogous. We know that white men have common-sense; they know if they do abscond they would be certainly apprehended; whereas the aborigine if he can once get clear of his captor thinks he can evade capture for all time. I have

had no experience of natives of the north, but I have had experience of natives in this part of the country when they were very numerous, and I am certain that no man with experience can claim that their services can be utilised or that they can be kept in custody unless they are in some way prevented from absconding. The hon. member talks of palisading these plantations. How far reaching would that be in its effect? I would like to know to what extent the hon. member would go. If we are going to cultivate a thousand acres, what kind of a fence are we going to put round to hold the natives in? They can scale a fence 20 feet high. I am not sure what plan could be adopted to detain them, but I know that if one took out a hundred natives into a plantation he would not have ten left in a week's time. They would escape; they would go in spite of those who might be in charge of them, and it is an utter impossibility for a white man, if he sees a native running away, to catch him. The catching of the proverbial greasy pig is nothing to it. If one gets hold of a native he must be a very strong man to retain him in his grasp. It would be a good thing for the State if this native labour could be utilised and if the natives could do something to pay for their keep and for the expense the country has been put to, but it is too serious a matter to have these desperate characters about. They are not the innocent lambs that some hon. members think they are. Many of them are known as desperate characters. Take the native known as Pigeon in the Kimberley country some time ago. A number of lives was sacrificed by that native without any provocation at all. He got possession of a rifle and when he came across a white man he would shoot him. I think four lost their lives while another, a worthy settler, was shot through the hand and disabled. Pigeon was not the only native of that class. After these natives have been in prison they are far more desperate, more cunning and more determined than they are in their native state in the bush, and they defy the white man. They go back to their tribes after having served a term of imprisonment and be-

come the ringleaders; they are intent on doing desperate acts. I have some knowledge of what was done in the North, and perhaps I have been a considerable sufferer, but I am not in any way prejudiced against the natives, because I recognise as a squatter that we owe a good deal to them; in some instances they have been good and faithful servants and have done considerable work for their employers, but it is a fact that they must be ruled with a strong hand if the white man is to live in the country at all. The hon. member gives a meed of praise to the squatters. We have heard that over and over, and I think it is quite justified, but I do not believe the natives are ill-treated except in very rare cases which might happen in anything. I am sure the natives are treated in this State as well as, if not better than, they have been in other parts of Australia. I shall support the amendment. I can go that far, because probably the time will come when the northern part of this country will be very productive and we will be getting from that part of our own State what now we are importing from other countries in large quantities; but I protest that no man who understands anything of the native question is going to put natives to work on plantations and think that he is going to retain them. Of course I quite understand how repulsive it is to see natives chained together. No one wishes to see it, but it is absolutely necessary. I do not know of any other plan of keeping them. I was hoping to hear the hon. member suggest something, but he failed to do that; he left it to someone else to suggest. It is a question that has been occupying the minds of members of Parliament and of Governments for years and years, and no one has been able to solve the difficulty. I think it will be many years before it is solved. If the natives are not to have the upper hand and dominate the settler, kill his cattle and commit desperate acts, they will have to be kept under restraint and given to understand that they are to submit. I have nothing farther to say than that I go so far as to support the amendment, but I cannot support the original motion.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. D. Connolly): I cannot agree, and I ask the House not to agree, to the motion, because I feel that it is asking the Government to take certain action before inquiry of any kind has been made into the subject. I do not, however, see any objection to carrying the motion in the amended form moved by Mr. Randell, and I hope the House will accept it in that form. As was pointed out by Mr. Kingsmill, this is not a new question, this and former Governments having gone into this matter at considerable length. I suppose there is no member of this Chamber who has a larger experience in this regard than Mr. Kingsmill, who spent many years in the backblocks of the State, has also had a lengthy experience of this (southern) part of the country, and has filled the position of Minister controlling the Aborigines Department. He has pointed out—and I have also have found it to be the case—that it is a difficult problem indeed to find suitable employment for prisoners—not only aborigines but white prisoners, though the remark applies with more force to the aborigine prisoners in the Far North, where the providing of suitable occupation for native prisoners is almost out of the question. I feel that the mover's suggestion to enclose the proposed plantations by palisading is impracticable, in view of the nature of the palisade that would be required to retain the natives and the extent of the area to be enclosed. I regret that Western Australia has apparently—and without any cause I maintain—obtained a bad name in the treatment of aborigines. I have had experience of one other State, Queensland, where the conditions approximate to those of this State, and I claim that Western Australia, in her treatment of aborigines, compares favourably with the treatment meted out to aborigines in that or any Australian State. It may at first sound particularly dreadful to hear that aborigine prisoners are chained by the neck; but it must be borne in mind that the natives prefer chaining by the neck to being chained by the leg or hands. Indeed it would be impracticable

to chain native prisoners by the hands when bringing them some distance, because a native could easily slip the ordinary handcuffs. But apart from that, the native prisoners when being travelled prefer the neck-chaining, as that method leaves them the free use of their limbs. These chains are as light as it is possible to make them with any degree of safety, the average weight being $\frac{3}{4}$ lb. to each man. They are not now heavy chains such as were used in past years. As Mr. Kingsmill has said, there are a number of papers in the Aborigines Department dealing with this subject, and these can at any time be made available to the hon. member, and will no doubt afford him considerable information on the subject. I think that on reconsideration the mover will see it is impossible for the Government, as suggested by the motion, to establish plantations without first making inquiries into the question. Some inquiry has already been made into the matter; and farther inquiry can be made, not only into the question whether it is possible to in this way utilise prison labour in the North, but also into the resources in the direction of tropical products of the great North-West. The Government have no objection to making inquiry as to whether native prisoners can be employed at that particular occupation; but personally I am doubtful if the scheme suggested is a practical one. I think a better way of achieving the object aimed at would be to permit the different missions established in the North-West to extend their operations in the direction of experimenting in the class of tropical products that can be successfully grown there, thus providing the natives with employment of a description that will prevent their becoming criminals. While not agreeing to the motion, I see no objection to the amendment.

Hon. R. W. PENNEFATHER :
Speaking to the amendment, I confess at once that the observations made by some hon. members, and the amendment moved by Mr. Randell, to a certain extent facilitate, if they do not actually

achieve, the object I have in view. At the same time I am in the difficulty that before tabling this motion I made inquiries at the Agricultural Department as to the possibility of establishing plantations. I got information from the experts of the department that the feasibility of the proposal was beyond doubt. I took the farther precaution of reading some literature dealing with the subject which the departmental officers were good enough to lend me. From this I learned, as has already been pointed out to-day by Mr. Kingsmill, that so far as the experimental stage is concerned, the question of the class of products that can be grown in that part of the State has been determined long ago. It seems to me, if I may be permitted to say so, that this subject has been a recurring one for inquiry; but nothing farther than inquiry has ever been attempted. Immediately the subject is raised it is suggested that inquiry should be made as to something about which everybody knows everything that is likely to be learned by that inquiry; and then the thing goes by the board—whether the Government does inquire or not is another matter. At any rate the evil is put off for the day; and that, to my mind, is a reason why I reluctantly regret that I am unable to accept the amendment moved on this motion by Mr. Randell. If the amendment be carried, its only effect will be to have one more inquiry held in respect of which no action will be taken, and the matter will be once more shelved. That is my only reason for not accepting the amendment; otherwise I should gladly have done so.

Amendment put and passed; the motion as amended agreed to.

BILLS—FIRST READING.

1, Permanent Reserve Revestment;
2, Bankers' Cheques; received from the Legislative Assembly.

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the Colonial Secretary, the House adjourned at 5.43 o'clock, until Tuesday next.