

Mr. Crowder (introduced by Hon. R. S. Haynes) having taken the oath and subscribed the members' roll, took his seat.

ADJOURNMENT—THE NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. C. Sommers): Seeing that the no-confidence debate (in another place) is still proceeding, I move that the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 4:40 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th November, 1901.

Papers Presented—Question: Morgue, Hannans-Boulder Districts—Question: Coolgardie Water Scheme, Joint Rings—Question: Tramline Concession, Coolgardie South—Question: Londonderry Dam, Particulars—Coal Mines Regulation Bill, Select Committee's Report—Leave of Absence—No-Confidence Debate, Time for Closing—Debate Incidents: Personal Explanations, (1) Kurrawang Syndicate, its Members; (2) Drainage in South-West, the Commissioner of Lands; (3) Hotel at Kalgoorlie, Commissioner of Railways and Mr. Teesdale Smith—Motion: No Confidence in the Government, Fourth Day of Debate—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: 1, Regulations relating to grants-in-aid for construction of and additions to Mechanics' Institutes and other kindred buildings; 2, Lease of Londonderry Dam, correspondence and departmental reports.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—MORGUE, HANNANS-BOULDER DISTRICTS.

MR. WALLACE, for Mr. Hopkins, asked the Colonial Secretary: What steps, if any, had been taken towards the

establishment of a morgue for the Hannans-Boulder Districts.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER replied: The morgue would be built if funds were available.

QUESTION—COOLGARDIE WATER SCHEME, JOINT RINGS.

MR. THOMAS asked the Minister for Works: Whether he had any fresh news in regard to the joint rings now lying in the Fremantle "Farm."

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: There is no fresh news to communicate to the House in regard to the defective joint rings now lying in the "Farm" at Fremantle, but steps are being taken to induce the manufacturers to replace the defective rings at their own cost, and inquiries are being instituted as to who is responsible for having passed them.

QUESTION—TRAMLINE CONCESSION, COOLGARDIE SOUTH.

MR. THOMAS asked the Premier: 1, Whether any concession has been granted to run a tramline south of Coolgardie to Londonderry or its neighbourhood. 2, If so, to whom, and on what conditions. 3, If not, whether the Government will abstain from granting any concession until Parliament has had an opportunity of expressing its opinion.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, The matter will be considered, but I cannot say by whom. (Laughter.)

QUESTION—LONDONDERRY DAM, PARTICULARS.

MR. THOMAS asked the Minister for Works: 1, What were the original conditions under which the Londonderry Dam was advertised for tender. 2, Whether they were complied with. 3, Whether they stated that a deposit should be paid. 4, Whether such deposit was made. 5, If the conditions were not complied with, why fresh tenders were not called. 6, Whether a Supreme Court injunction was obtained before the pumping of the water was discontinued. 7, Prior to this, what quantity of water had been sold to the Government from this dam. 8, What price was paid for it. 9, Whether it was supplied as condensed water. 10, What was the price of con

densed water at that time. 11, Whether the lease was cancelled or forfeited. 12, If so, whether the dam has been relet, and to whom. 13, If relet, why fresh tenders were not called for. 14, Why the Railway Department did not take advantage of the opportunity to use the dam water. 15, What were the altered conditions of the new lease. 16, Whether the water is being sold at the present time to the Government Railways. 17, How much water has been supplied, and in what time. 18, What has been the cost of the water so far supplied. 19, How many gallons remain in the dam at present. 20, What price does the Government receive for the water from the lessee per 1,000 gallons over the quantity allowed per day. 21, What price does the Government pay for it. 22, Whether there are any reports on this matter from Government officials, and if so, whose. 23, What is the purport of these reports?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: As to reply *seriatim* to the 23 questions asked by the hon. member for Dundas might be somewhat misleading, unless the replies were very lengthy, I have placed the whole of the correspondence, together with the lease and also departmental reports, on the table of the House; hoping the papers will afford much of the information required, and assist the hon. member in framing farther questions (if any) he may wish to ask.

COAL MINES REGULATION BILL.

SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

MR. J. EWING brought up the report of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Bill.

Report received, read, and ordered to be printed; to be considered on 21st November.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by MR. JACOBY (for Hon. F. H. Piesse), farther leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty), on the ground of urgent private business.

NO-CONFIDENCE DEBATE—TIME FOR CLOSING.

THE PREMIER (rising before the debate was resumed): Is the leader of the Opposition about?

MR. JACOBY: Yes.

THE PREMIER: Would the House bear with me? I wish to say something when the leader is in his place.

[HON. F. H. PIESSE entered the Chamber.]

THE PREMIER: Before the debate is proceeded with, I wish to say I had an intimation indirectly from the hon. member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), to the effect that he thought the debate would not conclude to-day. I think he considers therefore it may be necessary to sit to-morrow. I assent.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I intended to see you about it later in the evening.

THE PREMIER: I assent to that proposal, if it be the wish of the hon. member and the House; but I think it should be on the understanding that the debate shall be concluded to-morrow; and therefore, with the permission of the House, I intend to move, at the close of to-day's sitting, "That the House at its rising do adjourn until to-morrow"—say to half-past two or half-past four, which is a detail we can arrange later in the evening; and, if necessary, we can suspend the Standing Orders for that purpose, if it meet with the approval of the House. Would that meet with the approval of the leader of the Opposition?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Yes. I intended seeing the leader of the Government with regard to this matter; but unfortunately I have been detained in the city; otherwise I would have discussed it with him. I have mentioned it to the whip of the party, and I understood he would discuss it with either the Premier or the whip of the Government party.

THE PREMIER: Yes; I had the message.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: There is no possibility of completing the debate to-day, and I should like the House to sit to-morrow in preference to sitting on the ordinary day in next week.

THE PREMIER: Neither party wants to snatch a division on an important matter. May we come to the conclusion that you at any rate will reply to-morrow?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Yes.

THE PREMIER: I would like to close the debate as early as possible.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Yes.

[On this understanding, the matter dropped.]

DEBATE INCIDENTS—PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS.

KURRAWANG SYNDICATE, ITS MEMBERS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. G. Leake) : I wish now to refer to another matter, one which was mentioned by the member for the Williams yesterday when he read certain correspondence. I wish to say that I admit my remarks might possibly bear the construction put on them by the member for the Williams. That construction, however, is a forced one ; because names other than that of the member for the Williams have been mentioned. Though I still wish to know who were the members of the Kurrawang syndicate, there is no need for me to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to make any inquiries, as I readily accept the assurance of the member for the Williams that he has no interest in the Kurrawang syndicate.

SEVERAL MEMBERS : Hear, hear.

MR. JACOBY : Do you apologise ?

DRAINAGE IN SOUTH-WEST—MINISTER FOR LANDS.

THE PREMIER : With the permission of the House, I desire to give an explanation on behalf of the Minister for Lands (Hon. C. Sommers, M.L.C.). The member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan), in the course of his speech yesterday, is reported to have said the following :—

The Minister for Lands had a block of 2,500 acres in the South-West District. He was informed that the first officer who was sent to survey for the drainage scheme made a report that, it being through hilly land, he could not make the survey in the direction desired by the Minister, a direction that would have served the Minister's land. The officer was thereupon replaced by another.

Am I at liberty, sir, to offer an explanation on behalf of the Minister for Lands ?

THE SPEAKER : I think so.

THE PREMIER : I have here a written memorandum by the Minister for Lands, dated this day, and addressed to me in these terms :—

I heard with considerable surprise, last night, Mr. Quinlan's remarks respecting drainage in the South-West District, and particularly my connection therewith ; and I would like to point out briefly the following facts :—

- (a.) Deviation of drain. I attach herewith minutes by the Surveyor General and Mr. Surveyor Beasley, both of which I shall be glad if you will read to the House.

- (b.) The amount of land which I am interested in on the Harvey totals 1,460 acres, the whole of which was purchased from Messrs. Orr and Waddell some three years ago.
- (c.) There are no drains constructed within a radius of three miles of any portion of my property.
- (d.) Since this Government has been in office, not one single drainage contract has been let, nor has any money been authorised for the construction of new drains : the only work being done is the completion of a contract entered into by the late Minister for Lands.
- (e.) I have always opposed the present system of drainage, initiated by the Hon. G. Throssell, and which has been likened by an officer of the department to "building the roof of a house before the foundations are put in." And for that reason I introduced the amending Drainage Act and made provision on the Estimates for a competent qualified engineer to control the scheme for the drainage of the whole of the South-Western Districts.
- (f.) Since taking office, I have had the whole of the lands likely to be improved by the drainage scheme reserved, as I am of opinion that these lands, when drained, can be sold at a much higher price, and so amply repay the State for any outlay in the way of drainage. Had this course been adopted earlier, and the promises made of the drainage of these lands (which promises were continuously repeated for years) carried out with more promptitude, this magnificent area, instead of being inundated with water, in my opinion would have been covered with homesteads.
- (g.) As I am unable to defend myself in the House, I shall be glad if members will give you an opportunity, in justice to myself, to make this statement. I would suggest that Mr. Quinlan peruse the papers in connection with this drainage business, which I attach herewith, so that you may place same on the table of the House.

The papers referred to are available for any member. The memorandum enclosed by Mr. Sommers is one addressed to the Surveyor General by Mr. Surveyor Beasley. It is dated 7th November, and says :—

The drain surveyed by me will take the water off a very large portion of the Harvey Agricultural Area, and is, I am convinced, in the best position obtainable.

The Surveyor General forwards that

minute to the Minister with the following remarks:—

I presume these remarks refer to the Samson's Brook south drain, concerning which the following are the facts:

- (a.) In the early part of this year a contract was let for the construction of this drain, to follow a reserve for drainage which had been provided some years previously.
 - (b.) On the 5th August a Ministerial party, consisting of the Hon. the Minister for Lands, Messrs. Nanson, George, Teesdale Smith, and Gordon, M's.L.A., and myself, visited the Harvey district, and were met by a number of settlers, several of whom urged that a deviation in the drain was necessary.
 - (c.) The Manager of the Agricultural Bank, Mr. Paterson, in August last suggested that the deviation recommended by the settlers should be given effect to; and Mr. Surveyor Beasley was sent down in September to survey portion of it: he did so, and during the last week returned to the locality to complete the survey of the deviation.
 - (d.) He has just returned, and reports that the deviation for the drain is in the best position obtainable.
 - (e.) The statement that the first officer sent down reported that the drainage scheme could not be carried out in the "direction desired by the Minister," on account of the hilly nature of the land, is not supported by fact: only one surveyor, Mr. Beasley, has surveyed and reported on the deviation.
2. I would draw your attention to the fact that the course of this drain, as surveyed by Mr. Beasley, is almost identical with the route suggested for it by Mr. Surveyor May, in June, 1894.
 3. The deviation selected by Mr. Beasley meets with my approval.

I hope that will satisfy members.

MR. GEORGE: All right!

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

HOTEL AT KALGOORLIE—COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS AND MR. TEESDALE SMITH.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. J. Holmes): With the permission of the House, I desire to supply now the information I promised last night in connection with the statement made by the member for Kalgoorlie (Mr. Johnson). In reply to a telegram I sent to Kalgoorlie this morning, I have received the following message:—

No pipe line from loco. yard to Torbay Arms. Jobson's condenser line passes Torbay Arms, but there is no connection whatever

from condenser pipe line to this hotel. Meter located in Congdon Street, near Torbay Arms. First installed February last year. Meter still in same position. Pipe line laid by Jobson, meter installed by Ways and Works branch during time supplies water obtained from this source. Personally ascertained that no connection this description existed.

In connection with the entrance referred to, the position is this. It was originally intended to make only one entrance to the Hannans Street station, for passengers, namely that opposite the Glen Davon Hotel, Egan Street. As the result of public outcry, it was subsequently arranged that the station should be built—

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: That is no reply to the question I asked.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Built nearer to Hannans Street, and that two additional entrances should be provided. As regards the wire fence in front of the goods-shed, blocking off all the hotels except the Torbay Arms Hotel, the information is as follows. The whole of the frontage of the Kalgoorlie goods-shed is fenced with barbed wire, from Lane Street to Throssell Street, about 60 chains or three-quarters of a mile. The only opening is at the entrance to the Kalgoorlie goods-shed, which is almost opposite the Torbay Arms Hotel.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I also have a telegram with reference to this fence, which I should like to read to the House. The Commissioner of Railways says the entrance is almost opposite the hotel; but the telegram I have received says it is 70 yards to the west of it.

MR. JOHNSON: That's nothing!

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: If I am not taking up too much of the time of the House, I should like to read the telegram.

THE SPEAKER: I think you may read it, since another explanation has been given.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I caused the following telegram to be sent this morning:—

Reply immediately if water is laid on to Torbay Arms from Government loco. tank, or from Jobson's main; also if any authorised opening in railway fence opposite hotel, what distance is nearest authorised public opening from hotel. Inquire of Kelly if railway authorities ever sanctioned opening through fence or barbed wire to be removed opposite hotel.

The reply to that message reads as follows:—

Water pipes from condenser to overhead tank loco. shed have never been tapped at Torbay, nor any other point *en route*, neither was Government ever approached on this matter. Loco. foreman daily inspected pipe line. *Re* wire fence, this was once cut, I believe, at Kelly's instigation. He also applied to Mr. Barry Wood, then Commissioner of Railways, for opening exactly opposite Torbay. Mr. Wood and Mr. Moran, then Minister for Lands, inspected site personally; since then nothing been done. Present gates into goods yard little west Congdon Street, and about 70 yards from Torbay Hotel. Have spoken to Kelly, who confirms this. Present state fence for full length railway yard very dilapidated.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

MR. W. D. JOHNSON rose to speak.

THE SPEAKER: We cannot have any discussion on this, now.

MOTION—NO CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

DEBATE, FOURTH DAY.

Resumed from previous day, on the motion by Hon. F. H. Piesse, "That the Government does not command the confidence of this House."

MR. F. CONNOR (East Kimberley): In rising to support the motion brought before the House by the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), I wish to put my view of how the motion affects the country, how the motion, whether it be won or lost, will affect the affairs of the State as they will be administered later, by whichever party may come to power. I observe that a considerable amount of personality has cropped up in the debate so far. As regards myself, I shall endeavour, if I am allowed—[MR. TAYLOR: Certainly]—I put that qualification into my remarks, if I am allowed by hon. members opposite to keep personalities out of the debate—[MR. TAYLOR: Impossible!]—I will do so to the best of my ability. [Several MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It is necessary, however, that in the course of this debate the political career and political acts of certain members should be referred to, and the effect on the State of those political careers and acts ventilated by every speaker who has taken the trouble to study the question. I admit I have gone to some trouble to read up the political history of this country, and the

political history of certain hon. members now gracing the Treasury bench. If I have to refer to those hon. members in the course of my speech, I hope they will not consider that I do so in a personal spirit, for it will be in a political spirit alone. [Several MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] We have, in this debate, to consider a great many matters. First, we have to face the fact that there is a complete change in the affairs of the country, that to a great extent the control of the financial affairs of this country has been taken out of our hands, one of our greatest revenue-producing departments having, so to speak, lapsed from us. We no longer control that department, which is now under the authority of people living in another place. I hold that everything in connection with the affairs of the country is in a state of uncertainty; and I shall refer later on to some figures put before this House by the Colonial Treasurer (Hon. F. Illingworth), and I think I shall be able to show that when he brought down his Financial Statement he did it without the faintest idea of what would be the possible effect on this State of the new taxation resulting from federation. Now it devolves upon hon. members to give during this debate the closest possible scrutiny to the financial position of the State. I hold that is a question on which the Government up to the present have been silent. We have had two or three days' debate here; and the one great question we want to watch most closely in this country has been absolutely neglected by the members who spoke from the Government benches. It would have been more graceful, more tactful, more statesman-like, if a member of the Ministry had moved the adjournment of the debate last night, and if he had been prepared to come down here to-night to give us some idea of the position of our State finances, and of the position in which they are likely to be under federation. That has not been done. I said I would not be personal, but I cannot help saying, to start with, that I will refer in the course of my few remarks to the speech made by the Premier in the Queen's Hall. But before going to that particular point, I think it is only fair that we should consider in a measure the Premier's political career. The hon. member

who leads the Government of this State, the hon. gentleman who tells us in this House that all the honour, all the honesty, all the integrity and all the ability in the House are centred in himself and in the gentlemen who sit around him—[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear]—I want to bring under the searchlight of public opinion what his career has been—politically, not personally. What was the hon. gentleman's first advent to politics in Western Australia? I believe he was returned as the member for Roebourne, one of those places of which he now has nothing bad enough to say.

THE PREMIER: I have not mentioned Roebourne during the whole of this session.

MR. CONNOR: I promise the Premier that if I stay here until this day week, he will hear everything I have to say; and the less he interjects, the sooner I shall get through.

THE PREMIER: I only said I had not mentioned Roebourne this session.

MR. CONNOR: He was returned as the member for Roebourne, in opposition, if you please, to the then Government of the country; and not two days after his return, I believe he accepted the position of Attorney General or Solicitor General of this colony, or the position of Crown Solicitor.

THE PREMIER: May I be permitted to put the hon. member right? I was not returned in opposition to the then Government. I was returned as a supporter of the Government, with the promise of the office of Attorney General in Sir John Forrest's Ministry. I had then held the office of Crown Solicitor for seven or eight years. I did not, however, take office as Attorney General, but I continued as Crown Solicitor. I was returned for Roebourne in 1890.

MR. CONNOR: The explanation makes things worse.

THE PREMIER: I give you the facts.

MR. CONNOR: The Premier says he was returned with the promise that he would get a paid billet, in order to hold which, it was not necessary that he should be a member of Parliament. I think the explanation makes the matter worse.

THE PREMIER: I was returned as a Minister.

MR. CONNOR: I really did not think the hon. member would give away his political capacity for a price, as he says he did; the price being the appointment as Crown Solicitor.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member is really not fair. I told the hon. member that I had been Crown Solicitor for seven or eight years. Whilst I was Crown Solicitor I was elected for Roebourne, with the promise that I should be Attorney General in Sir John Forrest's Ministry. I retired from that position in order to make room for Mr. Burt, who then became the first Attorney General, and whom I considered a far better man than myself—[OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—and I retained my office as Crown Solicitor, and received a letter of thanks from Sir John Forrest for the assistance I rendered him at that time.

MR. CONNOR: I do not think the explanation is very satisfactory. I am satisfied that my view of the transaction will probably prove to be right. Now what happened when the hon. member was appointed to this position at £600 a year, I think it was?

THE PREMIER: It was £500.

MR. HASTIE: What position?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: I suppose he earned the salary, anyhow.

MR. CONNOR: I am in no hurry. What happened? The hon. member, I will not say neglected his duties; I should be sorry to say that; but evidently the powers that were then were not satisfied that his duties were carried out to their liking; and I think the hon. member was asked to resign his position.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no; I did not take the position as Attorney General; therefore I could not be asked to resign.

MR. CONNOR: The position as Crown Solicitor.

THE PREMIER: I held that position until 1894.

MR. CONNOR: I cannot follow the hon. member in his explanation. When he first interrupted me, he said he was first elected on the promise that he would get that position.

THE PREMIER: I say I was elected with the understanding that I should be the Attorney General. It is no use trying to explain the matter to the hon. member.

MR. CONNOR: Anyhow, whether or not he was in the position, he did not satisfy the then Government; and I believe I am correct in saying they brought pressure to bear on him so that he should resign.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. CONNOR: And all the time since, the position of the hon. member in local politics has been one of undying hatred to anybody connected with the Government which then brought pressure to bear upon him to resign the position he held.

THE PREMIER: That is absolutely a wrong statement.

MR. CONNOR: I have not made a statement. I am now adopting the hon. member's own tactics. I am giving him *Hansard* to read from. The next time the hon. member appeared on the political horizon, he was elected for Albany. I think he gave certain promises, certain political pledges which he afterwards broke. He was elected by the vote of a dying man, who was carried out of his bed to vote for him; and that man went to the poll to give the hon. member his vote, because the hon. member would carry out certain things if returned, which things he did not carry out.

MR. GEORGE: And the man died.

MR. CONNOR: I want to go a little farther back. I should like to refer to a question which was much debated in this House in the early days when I was first elected, nearly nine years ago—the question of the Fremantle Workshops. The hon. member who now visits Fremantle as Premier—and we are pleased to see him there, and to own a son of the soil who attains the high position which he has now attained—went down to Fremantle at the time to which I am referring, and he went as the friend of the people. He forced the then Government to bring before this House a measure for the purpose of taking away from Fremantle the Railway Workshops. He was one of the first who suggested this was necessary. I have *Hansard* marked; and if need be I can turn up the page showing how he advocated that course. And then we find this gentleman, as soon as he comes into the House and gets this thing which he himself first of all tried to bring before the House—when Sir John Forrest gets into

power, we find the hon. gentleman opposing him in the removal of those workshops. And then again, we find the hon. gentleman, now he is in power, carrying out that which he at first objected to.

THE PREMIER: That which I first supported.

MR. CONNOR: First supported and then objected to. I beg your pardon. I am pleased to be corrected: I hope you will correct me as I go along.

THE PREMIER: No doubt I shall have to.

MR. CONNOR: Next we have the spectacle in this House of the hon. member who now poses as a great democrat, opposing, in conjunction with the present Colonial Treasurer, the construction by the Government of the trunk lines to the goldfields of this country—[MR. EWING: Hear, hear]—and supporting private enterprise. We find him coming down to this House and using an eloquence which, unfortunately, some of us here (in Opposition) know too well he possesses, to help on that very democratic idea of giving over the great trunk lines of this colony into the hands of private enterprise. That is the second plank in the hon. member's political platform. I am sorry the member for East Perth (Hon. W. H. James) is not here. I wanted to make a slight reference to him, and to make a comparison between the member for East Perth and the member for West Perth (the Premier), inasmuch as the member for East Perth brings down legislation which possibly is not to the best advantage of the public just at present, but which he is honest in bringing down, and which according to his idea should be carried as he thinks for the benefit of the community. On the other hand, what does the Premier do? He brings down no legislation here: he has not introduced here any measures which are worthy of the name of legislation since he has been in the House. And yet he asks us to follow him blindfold into all phases of politics through which he would drag us. The hon. member, I notice, still continues his old habit of acting. The "acting" Premier, may I call him? He is not the Acting-Premier in the literal sense; but I may fairly say he is the actor Premier. He does not like this criticism; but I am

not attacking the hon. member personally.

THE PREMIER: Certainly, do not spare me.

MR. CONNOR: Oh, you are revelling in it! And I tell him, as long as he suffers me to get through my few remarks, I will not attack him. All I advise him is not to go too far. Let me get through my remarks, and then you will get what you say you want—the business of the public finished more quickly. What brought the hon. gentleman first into prominence in this State?

MEMBER: His ability.

MR. CONNOR: I admit his ability as a lawyer, but what was it that brought him into prominence? Was it not his accepting the leadership of the Federal party in the State? That is what first brought him before the public,—the great tribune, the great leader of the democratic party. I am going to read a few extracts from the Federal Convention reports in reference to this particular matter. While this hon. gentleman posed as the leader of federation, did he explain to the people of the State anything as to the principles of federation, or what was likely to accrue under federation, particularly in reference to what we want to know most, how it will affect the finances? The hon. gentleman posed as a great democrat in the debates in the Federal Convention in Sydney, in 1897. We find the hon. member who leads this House, and who has the loyal and undying support of the Labour party, the hon. member who poses as a great democrat, and who is followed by the representatives of the workers, speaking in the Federal Convention, and I want to quote a few of his democratic ideas from his one and only speech worth mentioning made at the Federal Convention. The hon. member said:—

It has been said by several speakers to-day that, although they are federationists, they will not have federation at any price. To them I would rejoin that I would not accept federation with a halter round my neck. That is the position in which I find myself when I am asked to accept federation with the referendum. That was the referendum, the great democratic principle of the referendum, and that is the hon. gentleman's reply to that; "a halter round his neck," that is his reply to this system of democracy.

THE PREMIER: Will you explain which referendum.

MR. CONNOR: I will explain the democratic ideas and tendencies of the hon. member, and I hope he will stop interjecting, because he can reply to what I have said afterwards. I will give him a little more:—

But with the referendum before us we have that very hide-bound element we wish to avoid. That was the hon. member's hide-bound conservatism.

THE PREMIER: The mass referendum.

MR. CONNOR: The right of the people to speak. Let us have some more, and there is not much more of it here:—

This referendum, this new controlling force, is an element in the constitution which, it seems to me, will prove to have been conceived by chance, nurtured in error, and applied at maturity to conditions which from our present standpoint are quite unexpected if not absolutely abnormal.

The great democrat who would not allow the people to speak! I tell those representing the Labour interest, the members of the Labour party, he will not let you speak when he has you tied and bound hand and foot. This is his hide-bound conservatism, the great liberal leader! I want also to quote the finishing words of this one speech made by the hon. member, the great democrat sent from this country to represent us in that Federal Convention:—

Admit of no fresh, new-fangled notion to which no test can possibly be applied for years and years to come. Let us act under our constitution as we know and as we understand it; let us trust to our Parliaments and to the good sense of the people.

There is the hide-bound conservatism again. That was the cry of all the Tories in England as long as I can remember: the hon. member would hide under the Constitution. Members on the Labour bench, remember this! Then the hon. member finished by saying, "I am against the referendum."

THE PREMIER: So I am now, against the mass referendum.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. gentleman came to the House, drifted to this House, on the Federal policy; brought here on the wave of the people wanting federation. Perhaps the people were right. I think they will find out they were wrong; but that is a question which has passed, and we do not want to go into it any more

When the Colonial Treasurer was approached and asked to form a party in the House—I know I am giving a little past history now, but I will come to the present and prospective history later on—but when the Colonial Treasurer was sent for to form a Government, the Premier comes along and says, “No; that won’t suit me, that is not my game: I want to be Premier.” That was the loyalty of that hon. gentleman. All honour to the Colonial Treasurer and the gentlemen who sit there and grace the Treasury benches, of whom I shall have a few words to say a little later on. The Colonial Treasurer accepted the position, manfully and honestly. He said, “You are my colleague: I will bow down to you and let you take the leadership of the party.” That was the compromise of the two leaders: one picked the team and the other said he “didn’t care a hang what the team was like so long as he could drive them”—that was what he wanted, to drive them. (Opposition Laughter.) I think we are drifting into an unfortunate vein in this debate. I wished to make this a serious matter. But let us get along to the great railway reformer, the gentleman who was going to reform and revolutionise the railways; the great railway tribune, the man who was going to do everything for every working man on the railways. The hon. gentleman who graces the position of Commissioner of Railways was in Melbourne, and it appears in the hurry to form the Government and the paucity of men suited for the positions, the now Premier went to the Governor and told him that Mr. Holmes would take the position of Commissioner of Railways, and asked the Governor to appoint him. I am told this is so, although I am not sure about it. However, I think I am correct. Mr. Holmes was communicated with, and he sent a message from Melbourne that he could not accept the position: I think he refused it at first. Is that statesmanlike? Does not this look somewhat childish on the part of the Premier? He could not get a team together without appointing the man who is not consulted, and when the Premier does consult the hon. member he refuses to act at first. The Commissioner was somewhat indiscreet in the first place. He was interviewed by some members of the Press in Melbourne, and

said of course it was a great honour to him, but he could not join the party, they were too weak. That appeared in the Press: I do not know whether it is true or not. Anyhow, for once the judgment of the Commissioner of Railways was good, and for once we on this side can say “Amen.” Then we come to the Romeo and Juliet scene on the boat. We found the Premier going down to meet the boat at Fremantle. Mr. Holmes was on board, and I can just fancy, I can imagine the Premier on bended knee saying, “Oh, Homeo!” to the great Railway Commissioner. I am sorry the Premier has gone out of the House, because I was going to reply to his criticism. The Premier attacked the leader of the Opposition about land dealings with Dalgety & Co. There has been an explanation brought before the House to-night which rather spoils some of my notes; but I must go through with them, and I will ask how about the land dealings and land drainage. That is something like the headings in the *Sunday Times*—Land Dealings and Land Drainage. There are several other little affairs which might be mentioned. There is the purchase of stud stock in the Eastern States, and a few things like that. I have dealt with the hon. gentleman somewhat lengthily, but that is in regard to his past career. In conclusion as far as he is concerned, I ask the House to consider carefully what legislation has the Premier brought before the House personally. What has he done to help on the work of the country in any way since he was sitting here in Opposition? What has he done for the country which has placed him in the proud position he is in to-day? As for the Commissioner of Railways, the member for East Fremantle, I want to touch upon his administration a little later on. I find I have got a little ahead of my notes. The Premier has done two things since he has been here. He has altered the law and the practice in connection with the Supreme Court appointments; he has made a political question—and I am afraid it will remain so for some time—of the appointments to the Supreme Court Bench. He had no right to appoint his brother-in-law and ask the House to support him. I will not labour the question, I will not say what I felt

inclined to say at first, that this was the application of "spoils to the victors." I will pass the matter in silence and let members think what they may of it. I have finished with the past, and I would now like to come to the future. I will ask members, as I have to deal with figures, to excuse my referring to my notes somewhat closely. I ask the Premier and the Colonial Treasurer, what are the forms of administration and what are the economies that this present Government have brought before the House. Two very pertinent questions and very serious ones. They have to be answered before the vote is taken, and I hope they will be answered satisfactorily. If we want economy in the affairs of the State, where do we look for that economy from? I should say we would have to look through the Estimates for it, and the economy suggested to this House by the Treasurer is an increase in expenditure of half a million of money and no more revenue to meet it. The Estimates show that—the Budget I will analyse a little later on. This is the most expensive administration of any State or country in the world. I hold that this is the most expensive State. It costs more to administer the affairs of this country than it should, anyhow; and we have been told by this pure, honest, straightforward Ministry that they will rectify these things. Up to the present, their actions, as brought before this House, have proved to be barren; no results. And whom have we to thank for this Budget, which the hon. member has had the honour of introducing, but the two leaders on that (Government) side, who preach economy all the time? What is their Budget? It is a huge blunder from end to end, as I think I will be able to prove to members, not by mere interjection, but by figures, which I will give to the Treasurer before I sit down. What were the promises of the Ministry and their supporters on the hustings, almost universally supported by the Press? Reform in administration. The reform in administration and the economy up to the present time consist of an undue and unfair interference with the Supreme Court, and that is all we can see. There have been no other reforms passed by anybody else in this House, that I can

point out. At least, I do not know of them. The economy consists of half a million more expenditure. I think that when the hon. gentleman looks into my figures, as I hope he will, although I do not pose as an authority, they will be rather startling to him. The result of all this administration, legislative reform, and economy is, in my opinion, a miserable fiasco up to the present, and yet these people ask us to keep them in power. Members who sit on the Government benches seem afraid to stare facts in the face, when these facts are brought before them. This is my first appearance as a critic of figures, and I am sorry I am not there to get some valuable lessons. The result in reference to reform is, I say, a fiasco, and I repeat in reference to economy that there has been an increase of half a million. They were excellent critics when on this (Opposition) side of the House, most excellent critics; but they are bad builders.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Two hundred thousand pounds of your debts.

MR. CONNOR: We want to know when reform in the administration of the railways is to come. Up to the present there has been no scheme of reform, and there is no indication of any future policy which will alter the policy that has been going on for years, by which the railways have plunged the country into debt and into a position which it will be very hard to get out of. We want the scheme the Minister promised us. What is his scheme? Up to the present time, he has sacked two of the leaders, one of whom was in charge of the railways. In the case of that one, he did not do it in time. If he had done it in time, that official would have proved his innocence and have gone back again; but the Minister used such machinery as I would be sorry to use in my own office, let alone in a big public department. I would have recommended that he should suspend this man at the time the Press attacked him—I refer to John Davies. If that official had been suspended then, he would have been given a chance to prove his innocence, or the Minister would have had a chance to prove his guilt; and then the railways would not have been allowed to get into endless disorder and disorganisation. Let me glance for a moment or two at the career of the tribune of the railways, the man who was going to re-

organise the whole of the railways. Let me just deal with him in a few brief words. The hon. gentleman came into the political affairs of this country under the wing of the Forrest crowd. He was helped by them at the outset of his political career very materially, and he owed a debt of gratitude to them, to the people who put him into a position. If I were in his position, I would acknowledge that. He came out under their wing as a politician; the Forrest party helped to secure his return for the East Fremantle seat, and he was brought into the House by them; his political standing was due to them. What does the hon. gentleman do? This is the gentleman to whom we are to entrust the whole railway system. I am speaking, not personally, but politically; purely from a political point of view. I want to show the instability and utter uselessness of the men who are at present controlling the affairs of the country. I have nothing but the highest to say of the Commissioner of Railways personally; he is an honourable gentleman; I think he is one of the most honourable business men in the country, and one of the most successful, and deservedly so; but I want to deal with him, not as "Joe Holmes," but as the Commissioner of Railways. I am speaking in a political sense, and in no other sense. The hon. gentleman attained to the distinguished position he held, in the seat I now occupy, and which I do not grace half so well or half so ably as he did.

MEMBER: Hear, hear.

MR. CONNOR: Thank you. What particular attention did the hon. gentleman draw in the House? He drew to himself attention by introducing in the House a system which was never in it before—that of a member of Parliament going to public servants, or people of that description, probably sometimes in the employment of the Government, very often outside the employment of the Government because they had been sacked to get information from them, and make use of it in the House. That is how the hon. member became a great railway man, the great railway authority we have here.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I am afraid it is a very common plan.

MR. CONNOR: Another interjector?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

MR. CONNOR: We wanted to know from the hon. gentleman where all his ability came from; how he was able to analyse the railway affairs of this country; how he was able to find out the working of the railways. We did not know; we thought he was an extremely clever man, and that he was one of the most able men who ever came here; but I think since then we have found out, and in my opinion it does not take much trouble now to put our fingers on the manner in which the hon. member gained the notoriety which placed him in the position he occupies to-day. Therefore I should give advice to the hon. gentleman, if he would take it—I do not know that he would —

MEMBER: Six and eight.

MR. CONNOR: No; I am not taking any. I should say obscurity would be preferable to notoriety at that price. In reference to Mr. John Davies, from the seat I occupy in this House I recommended the hon. member to suspend him.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: "Sack" was the word; not "suspend."

MR. CONNOR: I beg your pardon. I wish to correct the hon. gentleman. I did not make use of that word in this House. I would like the Commissioner to withdraw that. If he can prove it in *Hansard* I shall be pleased—or, at least, I shall be very sorry. I said "suspend." If he had suspended him at the time, and given the man an opportunity to clear himself, which he has since done, he would have done a good thing to the country, and the position of the Ministry would have been a much stronger one than it is now.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: What did you say last year about it?

MR. CONNOR: You look up *Hansard* and see. The funny man is coming along.

MR. GEORGE: Corner-man, I think it is.

MR. CONNOR: Yes. Now, this occurs to me in reference to this particular thing. The hon. gentleman seemed to possess quite as much knowledge of the position when he sat here, before he had access to the files as a Minister, as he possessed when he became Commissioner; and he could not find out anything more. And now I have touched upon this ques-

tion of the suspension of Mr. Davies, I desire to say the question came before another place in this State, which has something to do with the control of the affairs of the country. What position do we find the Government in on that question? When this question is brought before another place, we have an even vote on it, and we have the casting vote of the hon. gentleman who presides there given for the Government; but with a rider added, showing that the manner in which this affair was conducted by the Government did not at least have his approval. I now tell this House—and it is an important thing, I think, if they will follow me—that practically what has occurred in reference to this railway question is that a no-confidence vote has been passed by another place in regard to it. What has been the result of this inquiry into the railway business? Are we in any better position than we were in when we started? No. We have disruption, dissatisfaction, discontent, and all the men talking about new strikes, all the men dissatisfied with the arrangements made in connection with the rate of payment and the reclassification, which has satisfied nobody, and I question very much whether it has satisfied even the Commissioner himself. As far as the Commissioner is concerned, I cannot say anything more about him than that in his private capacity he has been a most amiable man; but as a politician his reputation has burst; the bubble has burst. He is discredited even by the Press that brought him into power; even by the *Morning Herald*, which I do not always take as my gospel, because sometimes it gives me a tuning up.

MR. TAYLOR: What about the *Sunday Times*?

MR. CONNOR: We will deal with that later on. The hon. member will be better qualified to deal with that than I am.

MR. TAYLOR: That is right.

MR. CONNOR: I am sure it will suit him better. The Commissioner of Railways, when speaking at West Perth, said, "I will give you everything, in conjunction with the Premier." Speaking at North Fremantle the hon. gentleman said to the railway people, "I will be your friend; I will be your tribune."

Perhaps I am making use of the word "tribune" too often. But anyhow it is a compliment to say it was suggested he should be the tribune of the railway people. What was his return? To rob the pick-and-shovel men of 1s. a day which every man in this House and every one in the State said they were entitled to. I refer to my friends on the Labour bench, and I want them to take notice of it, because it will appear in *Hansard* later on. I told them at the time that they would not get their way, that it would be far better for them to take their seats on this (Opposition) side of the House, and that if they did not get such advanced legislation they would at least get more honest legislation.

MR. HASTIE: From you?

MR. CONNOR: Then we shall be told by hon. members sitting on the Labour bench that the Government side of the House gives them advanced social legislation. We shall be told that Bills have been introduced, Bills innumerable, to deal with Labour and the cause of Labour. But that, I submit, is no reason for concluding that if we, the Opposition, change places with the Government, we will not do the same.

MR. TAYLOR: You did not do it, anyhow, when you had the opportunity.

MR. CONNOR: I would be prepared to follow the hon. members who represent Labour, as far as most members of this House; perhaps farther. And now I want to speak very candidly, and I want Labour members to follow me.

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, read that passage to the House!

MR. CONNOR: It may be necessary for me to explain to those hon. members that birth, nationality, and education would, in any circumstances, have compelled me to pursue everything that is liberal and democratic. I must pursue the ideals instilled into my mind during youth.

MR. TAYLOR: You ought to; but you don't!

MR. CONNOR: My birth, nationality, and training impel me to pursue the ideals of freedom and liberalism in every possible direction. Now let us consider this suggested legislation for conciliation and arbitration, on which we had a very fine speech from the member for East Perth (Hon. W. H. James), when he in-

troduced the Conciliation Bill. The hon. gentleman told us the Bill was going to help Labour, and the cause of Labour, and would make the position of the people living in this State better than it has been in the past. I followed the hon. gentleman's speech closely; and I believe he was in earnest. I consider that the Bill, if properly administered, would have the effect he expressed himself as desirous of achieving. But what do we find when we look into the Bill and the speech? We find the member for East Perth telling us that the Bill is introduced for a specific purpose; and that specific purpose for which the Bill is introduced is the concentration of the organisations of labour into a lesser number of unions.

MR. HASTIE: Who said that?

MR. CONNOR: The member for East Perth said it in introducing the Bill.

MR. HASTIE: I never heard him say it.

MR. CONNOR: I did. You must have been deaf, or you were not here. I beg pardon, Mr. Speaker: the hon. member must have been deaf or not here, I should have said. That was the position the member for East Perth took up. [Laughter from Labour members.] I wish a certain member would leave his Kanowna manners in Kanowna, and not bring them along with him into this Assembly. Certain hon. members, I know, are a bit out of their place in this House: they cannot quite keep a grasp of themselves, or hold themselves in altogether. That however is not my fault: I am trying to deal seriously with the great question of who shall rule this country. I do not think it is fair for a certain hon. member to interject continually. But, to proceed. The member for East Perth told us the object of the Bill was to reduce the number of organisations; and yet, when we look into Clause 107 of the Bill, what do we find? That clause says—this is not the exact wording of the clause, but is practically what it says—that because the railway employees have an organisation which is of some power, and which makes itself felt in the administration of the railways unfavourably or disadvantageously in the opinion of the present Government, therefore that power shall be taken away and the organisation shall be broken up. The whole spirit of the Bill is prostituted by

that clause: the whole effect of the Bill is spoiled by that clause. The Bill was introduced for the purpose of doing some good for the workers; but that purpose has not been adhered to, for the effect of Clause 107 if passed would be to break up the greatest, and probably the most useful, organisation of Labour in this State.

MINISTERIAL MEMBER: By Jove! That is a big assertion!

MR. CONNOR: I am only giving my opinion.

MR. TAYLOR: Oh, you are not too bad!

MR. CONNOR: I think I will now give the Commissioner of Railways a spell. In passing from the subject of the railways, I wish to add merely that in my opinion the more Commissioner we have, the more trouble we have, and also the more confusion generally. I turn now to a very important point in the address of the Premier, when delivering himself of the Government policy in his Queen's Hall speech on the 11th June. Here are some of the features of that speech, according to the Press:—"Announcement by the Premier"—"Enthusiastic reception"—"Measures proposed for next session"—"Policy of administration"—and so forth. I have dealt with some of the administration of the present Government. I fail to see where the country has advanced in point of administration. I fail to see where any novelty has been introduced into the administration, except in connection with the Supreme Court, which piece of novelty I have already dealt with. The next heading I come to is, "Straightening out the finances." May I be permitted to discuss the straightening out of the finances as practised by the Ministry up to the present? I think the Colonial Treasurer said, when the Federal question was before the country, that the credit of Western Australia would be better under federation than it had been while the country was under our own control. I think he said that under federation we would be able to borrow money more cheaply. I do not know whether the hon. gentleman is listening to me.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Oh, yes; I am listening.

MR. CONNOR: You are listening? I am very pleased to know it.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: I only wish you would say something worth listening to.

MR. CONNOR: If the hon. gentleman will wait a minute or two he will hear something to which he will listen, I venture to say. He told us that we should be able to borrow money more cheaply under federation. It is a peculiar thing—perhaps I may say, a strange fatality—that the first time this State has to go to the London market to borrow money, it should be under the *régime* of the gentleman who made the statement I have mentioned when the question of federation was before the country. We have that gentleman as our first Colonial Treasurer under the new conditions; and what is the result? I know what the hon. member will try to do. I know he will try to put the blame on the Agent General.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: There is no blame to be put anywhere.

MR. CONNOR: I know he will try to put the blame on the Agent General. I know he will try to shuffle out of the responsibility. But the responsibility rests on the Treasurer, and also on the Premier; and I say, in floating the last loan at the price they did, they perpetrated a huge blunder, resulting in an utter fiasco and a horrible failure. I maintain that the present Treasurer—and probably I may also include the present Premier—I maintain that the two hon. gentlemen have dragged the credit of this country into the mire by their action in regard to the last loan. They have dragged the credit of the country through the mire. I have no hesitation whatever in saying so. Eighty-nine pounds for one hundred pounds stock! Eleven pounds per hundred loss to the country on a 3 per cent. loan! A million and a half has been floated, and by the time the money is here, deductions for exchange and so forth will probably increase the loss to £165,000. Why, it is absurd! Are the affairs of the country to continue to be administered in this fashion? We (Opposition) when sitting on the other side of the House had a good deal of criticism from the gentleman who is now Colonial Treasurer. We were told that he intended to look into things and straighten out the finances when his turn came. Why, the finances

of the country are now getting deeper into the mire every minute, or every day anyhow! And in my opinion, so long as the present occupants grace the Treasury bench, our credit will depreciate more and more every day.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Come over and take charge.

MR. CONNOR: We are going to do that, anyhow: we are coming. The Colonial Treasurer has brought down to this House his Estimates; and I ask him now on what he based those Estimates? On what scale did he make his Estimates of revenue? The hon. gentleman has placed before the House certain Estimates; and what are they but a copy of the Estimates of 1900? [OPPOSITION MEMBER: That's it.] Those Estimates were brought down to the House on the day the Federal Tariff was disclosed in Melbourne; and how can the hon. gentleman maintain, then, that his Estimates are sound and trustworthy, or that he knows anything about them? But for the no-confidence motion these Estimates would have been passed; and the country would in consequence have been half-ruined. I ask the hon. gentleman on what calculations he has based his Estimates? I maintain they are simply a copy of Sir John Forrest's Estimates. The Colonial Treasurer has brought down a mere copy of former Estimates, and asked the House to swallow them. Before I have done, I shall give facts and figures in justification of what I have said. We have the Estimates brought down, and the Budget speech delivered by the Colonial Treasurer; but both Estimates and the Budget speech are mere copies of those of 1900. The hon. gentleman in framing his Estimates has not even taken into consideration the fact that there will be a considerable increase, not only on some of the items which were not before dutiable, but on other items which were dutiable before. Take, for instance, machinery. On that there is a 25 per cent. duty in place of the 5 per cent. duty which obtained in the past. The Colonial Treasurer has never explained to the House, nor has any member of the Ministry explained to the House, how the finances of the country stand. That is an aspect in which this debate has been totally wanting. No member, no Minister, has taken the trouble to show us the exact financial

position in which the country now is. No hon. member, no Minister, has so far endeavoured to show the basis of the Estimates which have been placed before the House, and which we have been asked to swallow. A million and a half the Colonial Treasurer floated: and he sold his credit bonds practically at 89! The figures are 91, but only 89 will be netted; thus, as I say, leaving a shortage of £165,000. The Colonial Treasurer wants to complete public works: he wants to carry through the works already in hand. He wants to continue the public works policy of the country, and he must find the money to do it. What is the prospect ahead of the country, then? When the present Government took office, not very long ago, some six months ago, four million pounds was required to be raised in order to carry out the public works policy as suggested and laid down by them. I do not know whether that is correct. I ask, is it correct?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: I cannot tell. Your figures are utterly new to me.

MR. CONNOR: Oh, are they? Four million pounds to be raised to carry out the public works policy of the Government! That amount included drainage and water supply for Perth and metropolitan areas. The latter item has probably been under-estimated. I certainly think it has been under-estimated, and that it will cost considerably more than is allowed, to carry out the works. Besides this, we have to find another million pounds to carry out a certain promise of the Treasurer. To carry out a certain promise of the hon. gentleman we have to find yet another million pounds! That promise is, to redeem the Treasury bonds due at the end of the financial year. Did the hon. gentleman promise to do that? I ask him, did he promise to do that? Five millions of money he has to find in order to carry out the public works policy and the financial policy held out before the country by the present stupendously clever Government! The Government are indeed stupendously clever! If they remain in power—I think they will not; indeed, I think I know they will not—[OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—and they finance according to the policy outlined, and borrow that amount of money, what will be the finish? Where

shall we be at the finish? In addition to the five million pounds required to carry out public works and redeem Treasury bills, we shall have to borrow another £550,000. Because we are getting only £89 for every £100 we at present borrow.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: There is an allowance for that in the Loan Bill.

MR. CONNOR: We have not yet had it explained here. I want to know why it is; because I have taken considerable trouble in this matter, in connection with which I have worked very hard last week. And that is why I blame the Government at present, because they ask for the confidence of the country, and they will not put up any man to speak on the country's finances, to tell us what state they are in, or in what state they are likely to be. Now we want to borrow £550,000 more, after we have borrowed five millions to carry out the public works policy of the Government. I shall not dwell on that any longer. [LABOUR MEMBERS: Go on.] Oh, I will go on. I will ask the Treasurer to think of this, and not to take the credit to himself, as the Premier does, of being the only man fit to carry on the affairs of the State. I say this before the vote is taken on the present motion; because if the Treasurer satisfies me as regards the financial statement, I am not sure on which side of the House my vote will be cast. But I want some satisfaction, as a business man, as a man who has for a long time been connected with pretty large commercial concerns, as to how the finances of this State will be carried on.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: If you are satisfied, will you come over?

MR. JACOBY: Can you satisfy him?

MR. CONNOR: If we continue this system of floating our loans, we could float them for 2 per cent. or even 1 per cent.; but what should we be doing? Simply burdening posterity for a fad of the Treasurer. I bow to the Treasurer as a financial authority; but he has recently made awful blunders in connection with the State finances. The Treasurer told us during the federal campaign that federation would strengthen the colony's credit. I think he told us that, and that I can refer him to his speech. But if, as he said, federation must improve our finances, there is only one answer: that it must be the indifferent, I

will say the bad political *personnel* of the present Ministry, which has been the means of bringing about the present financial position. That must be so, according to the Treasurer's own logic. It is the same with the administration of the revenue. There is no attempt to economise. We have this enormous half-million increase in last year's budget. There is no attempt to foreshadow any policy of financial soundness in the railway administration: all we have is sensational "sacking," as I think one Minister called it—I am not the first to use the word. No doubt we have had sensational occurrences in connection with the people who ought to be in control of the railways, and we have had strikes. Such were the results of the railway administration of the present Government. They have attempted to improve on the policy of the people who have gone before them in the past, and have altogether failed. When we come to the Customs Estimates, I want to give the Treasurer some figures which I am sure will be of interest. Of course, under the new Federal Tariff, we have a complete change in the incidence of taxation.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Do you yet know what the Federal Tariff is?

MR. CONNOR: Oh, we know what the Minister's Estimates are. He brought them down to this House, and asked us to swallow them, though they are based on no tariff. Now, in order to give some figures to the Minister, I will try to do, in my humble way, what the Treasurer of a State like this should have done before, and what has not been done by our Treasurer. I shall try to make comparisons between what was, what is, and what might be. Before I go into these figures, I want the gentlemen who grace the Treasury benches to remember that they have pledged themselves to the country, for better or for worse, to carry out the sliding scale. Each of them has promised that.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: That is so.

MR. CONNOR: I am pleased indeed to hear the hon. member say so. That is to say, they are pledged to the sliding scale, let the country suffer or not. Well, I want to show the Treasurer that under the suggested tariff there is no necessity to carry out the sliding scale in this country in connection with a great many

items. I want him to understand that. Comparing his own Estimates, as he brought them down, with the Estimates of the Federal Customs Minister brought down in the Federal Parliament, our Colonial Treasurer will be in a position to waive a great many of the duties at present so heavily pressing on the people under the sliding scale. I should like to ask him to take notice of these figures. We will take the tariff on narcotics and stimulants. Under the 1900 tariff of this colony, we imported of beer £78,000 worth.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You are wrong.

MR. CONNOR: Anyhow, that is from the 1900 Customs report. If I am wrong you can correct me later. I am making the statement.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You say £78,000?

MR. CONNOR: I say £78,000. The duty collected on that was £39,400. Cigars and cigarettes: import value, £45,700; duty, £40,000. This may be approximate. I am not giving the shillings.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: The duty is only £139,000.

MR. CONNOR: You may have my notes afterwards, and correct them if they are wrong. Essences: import value, £1,400; duty collected, £600. Snuff: import value, £74; duty collected, £116. Spirits: import value, £126,394; duty collected, £22,380.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: It is £220,380. Read your figures correctly.

MR. CONNOR: It is £220,380. The light is not good; but I shall not misread any more. Tobacco: import value, £65,000; duty, £101,200. Wines: import value, £33,500; duty collected, £19,200. Opium: import value, £2,863; duty collected, £3,247. That means that of narcotics and stimulants we imported, in 1900, £353,000 worth, and we collected thereon £424,000.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You did not do anything of the kind. You collected £139,000.

MR. CONNOR: That means a proportion of duty on the import value of 120 per cent.; and that is the basis on which the Colonial Treasurer has brought down the Estimates now before us—that the revenue collected through the customs

will be at the rate of 120 per cent. Now we shall deal with the Federal Tariff, as brought in by Mr. Kingston. Mr. Kingston, on those lines, estimates to raise a revenue of approximately three million pounds on two millions of imports. I will give the exact figures, if the Colonial Treasurer wishes them; but those totals are about right. I may explain that Mr. Kingston divides this item under two heads—stimulants and narcotics. At present we have the item under one head, or, as far as that is concerned, in an awful jumble; because the whole of the lines which were quoted in our Estimates under five heads we have in the Federal Tariff under 16 heads.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: And you are lost.

MR. CONNOR: All right. You will find I am not lost. You show in your estimate that you will receive 120 per cent. on the import value of stimulants and narcotics. What does Mr. Kingston find? He finds that he will collect 145 per cent. on stimulants under the Federal Tariff. And yet, even then, we have on the same items 2s. per gallon more than he has. I want the Treasurer to show me where these figures are wrong; because he does not know where he is, and he will not be able to find out unless he starts to work, and it is time he did. On narcotics Mr. Kingston expects to raise 181 per cent.; and adding the two together and striking an average, we get 155 per cent. In other words, Mr. Kingston expects to raise 33 per cent. more in duties than our Treasurer expects. And yet our tariff is the higher; and we are asked to swallow our Treasurer's Estimates! Why does Mr. Kingston expect to get 33 per cent. extra?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: He has a bigger revenue.

MR. CONNOR: These are the figures I am giving you, quoted by Mr. Kingston, Federal Minister for Customs. Of course I know he is not half so good an authority as our Treasurer; but there is the result. He expects 33 per cent., and you are getting 2s. a gallon more than he is getting on some of the items. Probably there is a mistake, which may be explained by our Colonial Treasurer. I will analyse the imports. We will take them under the heading of stimulants and

narcotics. In 1900 our figures were, for stimulants: import value, £239,294; duty realised, £279,580. That is a percentage of 118. And yet Mr. Kingston says he will raise under this head 145 per cent. I only want to show hon. members the absurdity of our being asked to swallow the Colonial Treasurer's Budget, when the Treasurer knew absolutely nothing about it when he brought it before this House. On what could he properly base any of his Estimates when he did not know what the duties were to be? I say, if the hon. member had studied this Budget as I have studied it, and had produced figures such as I am giving him now, and which he does not seem inclined to take, he could have come down to this House with a policy which would have suited this country, and his party could have reduced taxation on the necessities of life. And these figures show that he can do so still, and that when we on this (Opposition) side of the House—not myself as a Minister, but as one of the party—go over to the Government benches, we will give the people of the country that to which they have a right, and that which the Budget, properly analysed, shows can be given, without doing any harm to the State. I told the Treasurer that the import value of stimulants was £239,294, and the duty realised £279,580; and that is a percentage of 118, as against the Federal Treasurer's estimate of 145 per cent.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You are wrong.

MR. CONNOR: Under the heading of narcotics our figures are: import value, £113,637; duty, £144,563, or a percentage of about 128. And on the same lines the Federal Treasurer tells us he will raise 181 per cent. on the import value. There is the published statement in the *Australasian*. Of course, if the Colonial Treasurer says that paper is not an authority, well, that is his lookout. Mr. Kingston expects to raise 181 per cent. on the import value, or an increase of over 50 per cent. on narcotics, and 27 per cent. on stimulants. And in conjunction with stimulants or spirits, the Colonial Treasurer has not yet informed us whether or not he can collect the 2s. per gallon extra, say, on whisky.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: I did inform you, and we are collecting it.

MR. CONNOR: But you did not inform us whether you have any right to collect it.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Yes.

MR. CONNOR: And I inform the Colonial Treasurer now that there is likely to be a Supreme Court case on the point; and I think the Government will go down. I do not think they have any right whatever to collect that extra amount of 2s., because the duty is on "goods of a similar kind." There is no gin, schnapps, or whisky manufactured in Australia; consequently I ask the Treasurer to consider whether the Government are not doing something which is illegal, in collecting that extra 2s. on those three particular lines. I do not believe the Government have the right to do it; in fact, I am sure they have no such right. That is against my argument because what I want to say is that the revenue is better than the Treasurer's estimate. It is necessary that we should try and take off some of the sliding scale for the benefit of the people who are living on money which is not sufficient to keep them in a comfortable position in this country. I am willing to abolish the duty on meat; I say, abolish it and make the living of the people cheaper, always retaining for ourselves sufficient capital to keep the credit of the State good. It is clear that the basis of the estimate of the State Treasurer must be misleading, in fact he had no basis at all to go on, he brought down his Estimates in the dark. He did not know what the Commonwealth tariff was to be, and he says he does not know now.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Nor does anybody else.

MR. CONNOR: What were your Estimates based on then?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Not on the Federal Tariff.

MR. CONNOR: Were the Estimates based on chance? A very poor chance it is.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: The best of it is that I am getting the money.

MR. CONNOR: In addition to that phase of the question we come to another rather important one. Under the Federal Tariff and the sliding scale we increase our revenue very materially by levying duties on goods which previously were under the free list. May I read a few

lines—tea, sugar, rice, kerosene and various other items of merchandise; there are dozens of items of this sort on which there is an absolute increase of Customs revenue, yet what do we find? The Treasurer comes down and says he may have a deficit of £70,000; that is what he suggests as his deficit. Unless the Federal Treasurer does not know what he is talking about, the Treasurer ought to be able to put by a big nest-egg for the lean years we are coming to. If we take the Treasurer's statement that the prosperity of the country is going to increase, that increase of prosperity must give an increase of revenue, therefore we shall have the Treasurer with a revenue which he will not know what to do with. In reference to the bringing down of a financial statement, there was a Budget Speech made the other day in Sydney by the Hon. Mr. Waddell. The New South Wales Treasurer did not rush into the breach like our Treasurer; Mr. Waddell was not coming down with his Estimates without knowing something of the Commonwealth tariff. What did Mr. Waddell say:—

I have already alluded to the peculiar difficulties which are experienced in forming any correct estimates of the revenues to be returned by the Commonwealth Government to the State owing to the complete lack of information as to the tariff which will be brought into force.

This gentleman takes the proper position and says "I am not to be caught in a trap: I will wait till I see what the Federal Tariff is to be."

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Did he not introduce his Estimates?

MR. CONNOR: He did, but he did not base his calculations as the Treasurer has done, he did not rush into the breach and tell them "This is all right." If the Treasurer had waited a week longer and studied the Federal Tariff a little, it would have been better for his party and he would have known what he was talking about. I gave the hon. gentleman a week, though that would perhaps be too short a time to have enabled him to compile his Estimates, and to show us what revenue would be received from this great earning department. The Treasurer in his statement said that he would lose 2s. a gallon on spirits, which is the difference between the Federal Tariff and the State Tariff,

therefore we would lose £50,000 a year. If the hon. gentleman will look it up, he will find he has only made a mistake of 100 per cent.; another evidence of the ability of this Ministry which it is not possible to supplant, in their estimation. If we allow the Treasurer, say, £27,000 a year—£127,000 is the difference between the revenue as the State Treasurer gives it and the Federal Treasurer gives it—if we allow £27,000 a year for the 2s. a gallon, the difference between the State and the Federal duties, we shall find that the Treasurer would have been in a position to come to the House and state that he could reduce the taxation by £100,000 a year. But the hon. gentleman does not do that. May I refer this financial genius to the particular items I have given. This gentleman was going to straighten out the finances; instead of straightening them out he is likely to lengthen them out. I suppose other departments can be taken in the same way as I have taken the one with which I have dealt. When we find glaring errors, such as I have tried to show the hon. member has made in these two departments, then it is only right to say that we shall find errors right through the Estimates. I hope the Treasurer will be able to show us that it is not so. Referring to the professions of economy which the Government gave us when they came into office, when they were supposed to fix up the affairs of the country, I think it would be well for them if they had studied what will probably occur before many years are over. We will not be in as good a position as we are to borrow money, and the requirements for our revenue will be greater than they are at present. The Treasurer, instead of taking up a statesman-like position, what does he do? Instead of putting by something for times to come, he plunges into greater extravagance than ever before, and he spends more money without showing us where it is coming from.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You said I was going to have a lot more revenue, just now.

MR. CONNOR: I am talking about the Estimates as he has brought them down, and I am giving him my idea. The hon. gentleman says that we are going to end the year with a deficit of £70,000 odd.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: No, I did not; with a credit.

MR. CONNOR: How much?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Thirteen hundred pounds.

MR. CONNOR: I am glad the Treasurer corrects me.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: It is a credit, anyhow.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. gentleman ought to have £120,000, or he ought to reduce taxation by £120,000.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: If we had done that you would have moved a motion of want-of-confidence on it.

MR. CONNOR: On what?

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: If we had done that; you know you would.

MR. CONNOR: I would not have supported anything of the sort. Ever since I have been in the House I have been a free-trader. I am still one, and shall remain so, but I recognise the necessity for collecting revenue for our needs, and as long as that revenue can be got in any fair way in excess of our means, the Treasurer should reduce the whole taxation through the customs, if it can be done. That position I took up long before the Treasurer had the honour to be here. Any Government in sympathy with the people would have taken the sliding scale in hand at once and abolished it altogether. Still where protection is given under the sliding scale the duty might be allowed to remain. Take the wheat-grower for instance, if the sliding scale will give him protection he should have it. On the other hand, if the Treasurer had brought down his Estimates on a proper basis, after considering the Federal Tariff, he could have shown to the House that it was possible to reduce the taxation by £80,000 or £100,000, and have taken this amount off the necessities of life. I will give some items on which he could have made a reduction, and it is worth the Treasurer's while to listen. There is butter—I do not know how this affects the Labour benches, but it ought to—the importation of butter was 4,820,000 lbs., valued at £204,000; the duty on that amounted to £40,175. What protection is that? No butter is made here; it is no protection at all. Take eggs, 1,365,000 doz. were imported, valued at £60,465, the duty collected being £11,290. Bacon

2,817,000 lbs., valued at £78,500, and the duty collected was £23,500. Hams, very few are grown here, 502,000 lbs. were imported, valued at £18,500, and the duty was £4,182. Preserved meats: the ears of members on the Labour benches prick up when they hear anything about meat. We imported 3,304,000 lbs.

THE TREASURER: Why there is not £3,000,000 of revenue.

MR. CONNOR: Pounds weight of meat, I said. The hon. member will not be instructed: I said 3,304,000 lbs. weight, valued at £71,500, and the duty collected was £6,880. Cheese, 967,282 lbs. were imported, valued at £23,275, and the duty collected was £8,060. I need not go on giving figures; there is bran, onions, and potatoes and numbers of other articles. The total value of these articles amounts to £523,000, and the total duty to £113,000: if this duty were remitted, it would not do any great hurt to the finances of the country. The duty, amounting to £113,000, could be well remitted. That should have been the policy of the Government, and the Government should have come before the House and brought down their Estimates on a basis they knew something about, and not have given us a mad wild statement. If the Treasurer had taken the trouble to wait for a few days after the Federal Tariff had been made known, he could have brought down his revenue made up on a proper basis, and could have come down to the House with a proposal to remit the duty on numbers of articles to benefit the consumers of those goods.

At 6:30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MR. CONNOR (continuing): I was trying to prove to hon. members that if the statement brought down by the Treasurer in his Budget speech and his Estimates had been one which he could have made popular, perhaps it would have been better for his party. If he had taken the figures which I have given to the House, he would have found out there will be a surplus larger than he anticipated in the Budget, and it would have been possible for him to recommend that certain duties which are imposed

and which bear heavily on the great mass of the people of this State, should be struck off what is known as the sliding scale. I will not weary the House any more, but I will give the headings of those items I refer to. They are butter, eggs, bacon, hams, preserved meats, cheese, bran, onions, and potatoes, the total for which is over half a million. If he had brought down his Estimates properly, and had properly thought out the question, the Treasurer would have found out that, without worrying himself as Treasurer financially, he would be able to let the people of this State have those things free of duty. I hold that even if my suggestion should not prove correct, and if the Treasurer had to come down to this House at the close of the financial year and tell us he had a deficiency of £100,000, he would have been justified in bringing down his Estimates so based that the people might not have had to pay "through the nose" for those things. I hold and I have tried to prove to members and the Treasurer that this deficiency would not exist under the two tariffs; but I hold that even if it would exist, he would have been perfectly justified in the face of the heavy tariff imposed by the Commonwealth, in saying: "Even if I have a deficit of £100,000 at the end of my financial year, I was justified in doing that, in order to give relief to the wage-earning population of this State." I forgot to mention to the Treasurer that he was in error in bringing down his estimate of receipts from the customs revenue. He brought down his Estimates here under five headings: 1, specific, including stimulants, narcotics, and a big list of general merchandise; 2, five per cent. *ad valorem*; 3, 10 per cent. *ad valorem*; 4, 15 per cent. *ad valorem*; 5, 20 per cent. *ad valorem*; and a schedule which is the free list. He forgot—he did not know as a matter of fact—that under the new tariff this is all altered; that all these items are brought down under different headings; that the Federal Treasurer brings down the Estimates of revenue from customs under 16 headings; and how can the Treasurer ask us to swallow his Estimates under five headings when really the tariff is being levied under 16 headings? I ask the Treasurer to explain how he got at his figures, and how this House is to

take them seriously in connection with this matter. I have been accused of taking up too much of the time of the House. Perhaps I am guilty. However, I tell members that I came here with no object of hurting any individual. My object—and I have taken some considerable time to work up to what I have said to-night—was to benefit the country, and to make members who sit in this House, and I particularly refer to members who are Independents and who sit upon these (Opposition) benches, to take all these figures and find out whether we are placing the affairs of the country in the hands of a man capable of carrying them out. I hold when the time comes we can judge this by results, if he is there. I hope I shall have been wrong, but I am afraid I shall have been right. There is one item I want to refer to before I sit down, and I am sorry the Minister for Works (Hon. W. Kingsmill) is not in his seat to hear me. It is in reference to one of the most important items to which the legislators of this country can give attention, that being the great Coolgardie Water Scheme. If the Minister for Works had been in his place—probably he will reply to me later on—I would have appealed to him to tell us what evidence the Government have brought forward of preparing any scheme which will show us where we are going to get interest and sinking fund for this great work.

MEMBER: Not the way they are carrying it out.

MR. CONNOR: Irrespective of the way they are carrying it out, I want to know how the country is going to provide for those things. It is a liability which we have accepted and one which we cannot shirk, and I repeat I want to know how the country is going to provide for this. Those are the facts hon. members desirous of controlling the affairs of the country should have put us in possession of. That is the sort of statesmanship we want here, practical statesmanship, statesmanship such as will tell us where we are going to get the money we need. There has not been a word said by members on the Government side of the House on what is undoubtedly the greatest public work of our country, and possibly its bugbear, possibly a work which will drag the country into the mire and mud.

We have no statement as to that work from any member on the Government side. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It is all very well for them to "hear, hear" and sneer; but I repeat, we have not had a single word from the members who form and support the Government, to inform us approximately or to indicate to us in any way what the financial position of the country is; and with this particular work in mind I maintain it is absolutely necessary we should be told. We ought to know how the Government are going to finance, if they wish to stay in power. It is a difficult question: it will be a very difficult question for any Government which may be in power, to deal with.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: That is true.

MR. CONNOR: It was due to the House, and to the country, that some statement should emanate from the other side, showing us the financial position. Farther, even if we can finance our works, we have no statement from Ministers to show us how the Coolgardie Water Scheme is to be operated when the construction scheme is completed, if it ever attain completion. We have nothing told us as to what the cost will be. We have had surmises from the Colonial Treasurer; but we have had no definite statement as to how the water will be distributed, if it ever come to be distributed, and what will be the cost of it to the consumer, if it ever come to be consumed. We have had no information as to the cost of reticulation when the water is at Coolgardie, or as to how the work of reticulation and of laying of the pipes to carry the water to other centres is to be effected. Those are matters which require to be brought before the House, which require to be discussed and debated. We want definite statements; not suggestions or surmises. We want from some member of the Ministry statements such as will satisfy the House—[OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—before we vote on the present question, and decide who are the best people to be in power in this State. That fact, coupled with the fact that we have had a loan put on the market at 89—which financial operation will have the effect of forcing us on the market for a farther sum of £550,000—those two facts put together satisfy me,

as an ordinary business man, with probably fairly good commercial instincts, that this country—

MR. TAYLOR: Hear, hear. You have commercial instincts, certainly!

MR. CONNOR: I thank the hon. member for his interjection, which is just about on a par with his ordinary level of interjection. He is talking now, as he usually does, about something he does not understand.

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear! And something he never will understand.

MR. CONNOR: Those two facts, that we have had no definite statement on the great question of the finances, and that our loan was put on the market at a ruinous price, and farther I may add the fact that we shall have to go on borrowing and borrowing and borrowing, again and again and again, before the system will ever work itself out, prove to me that the financial genius known as the Colonial Treasurer has been, up to the present at any rate, a howling failure. In conclusion, I may remark that I have a lot more to say, but have been asked to curtail my observations.

Several MEMBERS: Go on!

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Oh, go on, for goodness sake!

MR. CONNOR: If hon. members want me to go on, I will.

Several MEMBERS: Yes; go on!

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Go on! You are doing very well.

MR. CONNOR: I have done enough, I think. Taking the statements made by the Premier in his Queen's Hall speech, taking the policy which he outlined then, I hold, and I now proclaim here to hon. members of this House, that the policy of the Premier, like the Premier himself, has been a failure. We are not likely, if we follow out the policy—though up to the present there has been no policy, and that is perhaps the whole trouble. If we follow the suggested policy, the policy which has been put before the country, we shall get into more trouble; and I shall, therefore, have no hesitation in casting my vote in favour of the proposal to ask the hon. gentlemen now in occupation of the Treasury benches to resume those seats which they so gracefully and so ably filled in the earlier history of this Parliament, to invite them over to this (Opposition) side, from which they may

criticise better work than they themselves can possibly perform. It has been said that if the Opposition form a Ministry, if a Ministry be formed from members on the Opposition side, and that Ministry take office, the country will not be capably administered. There is one thing I am certain of, however: if a Ministry from this side should take office, there will be in it no man who will misuse departmental files, who will carry departmental files away under his jacket and go down the street in the dark to the gutter Press, to the people connected with the gutter Press, and get those people to make use of the files. I proclaim, and hon. members can take my word for it, that a Ministry consisting of members of this Opposition will not contain a man of that description. The members of this Opposition would not tolerate the presence of such a man in the Cabinet, when the time comes for the Opposition to cross to the other side. I shall have much pleasure, therefore, in recording my vote in favour of the motion, although some of the gentlemen opposite are particular friends of mine. I shall record my vote, however, in a manner not personal. I want that to be distinctly understood. I shall cast my vote from a political point of view; and it is only from a political view that I have criticised the present Ministry. From a political point of view, I say Ministers have failed, and failed ignominiously; and it is time that better men, politically, took their places.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. J. Holmes): It is my intention—[applause from members]—to confine my remarks mainly to the criticisms which have been levelled at the railway administration, which I have had the honour to control for some few months past. I cannot, however, refrain from pointing out that the member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) has been accusing us, in the latter part of his speech, principally in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme. It must be apparent to anyone who has followed the political career of hon. members sitting on this side of the House that they, at all events, on every occasion when there was the slightest hope of preventing the commencement of that Coolgardie Water Scheme, have done their best to prevent

it. Strange to say, the member for East Kimberley was one of the principal advocates of the scheme, and one of the principal supporters of Sir John Forrest, who introduced this particular scheme. We have been charged with not fulfilling the promises of our predecessors; but we contend, and I say we contend justly, that this Coolgardie Water Scheme is one of the works which it is our duty to carry out. We did our best to stop the undertaking, but a certain amount of money having been spent, and the country being embarked on the scheme, it is the duty of the Government and of everyone who has the welfare of the State at heart, to press the scheme on, and to do the best possible to make it a financial success; or if a financial success cannot be made of it, to make the best of it otherwise. I could follow the hon. member right through his speech and make him appear perhaps ridiculous in the eyes of the House. [MR. TAYLOR: Oh, don't do that!] It is not my intention to do so—[MR. TAYLOR: Hear, hear]—for I understand there are several members anxious to undertake the task. My remarks, as I said before, will be confined chiefly to the question of railway administration. I regret to say that in the course of my observations I shall have occasion to be somewhat personal. The motion itself, in effect, being nothing more or less than a personal attack on me—

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Personal, from a political standpoint.

THE PREMIER: Answer him in the same fashion!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Personal from a political standpoint. Very well. My reply, then, will be personal, from a political standpoint.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: We have had experience of that kind of thing from you before.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The mover of the motion claims that he refrained from tabling it pending the completion of the labours of the board of inquiry sitting in connection with the suspension of Mr. John Davies, the General Manager of Railways. The leader of the Opposition claimed that he delayed tabling the motion until the completion of that inquiry. I maintain, however, that the hon. member made a distinct effort to get the present

motion through the House before the facts disclosed by the evidence taken at the inquiry could be known to the House and to the public. It was suggested, I think, that a no-confidence motion should be carried without debate. Thanks, however, to the leader of the Government, the members of the House and also the community have been put in possession of the facts disclosed at the inquiry. I think that those who have taken the trouble to analyse the evidence adduced will, at all events, come to the conclusion that if Mr. John Davies came out of the inquiry fairly satisfactorily, the present leader of the Opposition did not. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It is not my intention to criticise Mr. John Davies to any great extent in the House to-night. I propose to criticise those who are present, and to let alone those who, being absent, cannot defend themselves. I say an opportunity has been given by the inquiry to the House and to the public to appreciate the manner in which the present leader of the Opposition, who occupied the position of Commissioner of Railways for five years, administered his department. An opportunity has been afforded all of us to judge the way in which the railways were worked under the hon. gentleman's administration. He blames me for the strike which occurred immediately after I came into office: indeed, I was hardly in office when the strike began. He knows very well, however, that it was one of his colleagues, the late Premier, Mr. Throssell, who was practically the man at fault in connection with the strike. That hon. gentleman, when going out of office, had informed the men concerned that they had "proved their case up to the hilt," and that they were entitled to the pay they asked for. With that assurance, the men thought they had nothing else to do but make the demand, and make it at an unreasonable time—indeed, to make any unreasonable demand—in order to get what they desired. Now we find the leader of the Opposition, though he, too, has been responsible, and directly responsible, for the strike—I being, as a matter of fact, not concerned in it at all—we find the hon. gentleman posing, in view of the probability that he will have to face the country at an early date, as a democrat.

We find him posing as to what he will do in connection with the Arbitration and Conciliation Bill, so far as the Railway Association is concerned. He poses thus, while we know very well that while he was in office, while he was in power, he refused to recognise that association, and in fact left the Cabinet because his fellow-Ministers proposed to recognise the association. All that is proposed by the Bill is to divide the association up in such a manner that representatives of each trade shall be in direct communication with the Minister, and that grievances of men engaged in any particular trade shall be settled between the men of that trade and the Minister for the time being.

MR. GEORGE: You mean branch, not trade.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Well, branch! Branch or trade.

MR. GEORGE: No; it is a different thing altogether.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is surprising to note the democratic proposals, the democratic statements of hon. members opposite—men who have hitherto been opposed to democratic legislation of every description. It is indeed surprising to find these men making a sudden turn-round at this juncture; and I think the present Labour members are able to judge what is the reason for the precipitate change. I am sure the public, and the electors in particular, will be able to form and express a conclusion when the opportunity offers.

[MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The leader of the Opposition blamed me, and blamed me somewhat severely, for the appointment of G. W. Davies as my secretary. I am prepared to admit the appointment in question was not a satisfactory appointment. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I will go farther, and say that it is an appointment which should never have been made. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] And I will go farther still, and say that it would not have been made if the hon. member who was Commissioner of Railways for five years had done his duty. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.]

The present leader of the Opposition knew, or says now that he did know, that Mr. G. W. Davies had been guilty of unsatisfactory conduct; and we have it

in evidence, and the files disclose the fact, that the ex-Commissioner of Railways, now leader of the Opposition, gave Mr. G. W. Davies three months' salary.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: In lieu of notice.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I say he gave it to him because G. W. Davies knew too much about the ex-Commissioner's administration, and in order that it might close his mouth. I say it was the duty of the ex-Commissioner, when he found there was something against G. W. Davies, to do as I did, to suspend him, and if necessary to hold an inquiry. My action in connection with G. W. Davies, and I think in connection with any matter pertaining to the railways, has been, in my opinion at all events—and I believe I am supported by a good many—fair and honest. Mr. G. W. Davies would have never been appointed if I had known he had been guilty of the conduct proved against him at the inquiry.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Why did you not ask the General Manager?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have already explained to the House that I do not want to drag in the General Manager.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: But why did you not ask him, the chief executive officer?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have already explained why I did not inquire from the General Manager. As a fact, if it had been an appointment in the office of the General Manager or of any of his subordinates, I might have inquired; but this was an appointment to my own office of a secretary to me as Commissioner, and it had nothing to do with the General Manager. In the past, the trouble has been that the General Manager has been Commissioner—[MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.]—and the Commissioner in the past has been as it were a bubble of water; and all the General Manager had to do was to touch his ambition button, and the Minister would do whatever was wanted.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That is not put so neatly as it was put by an hon. member last night.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Perhaps not; but it has the same effect. What was the result? The charge against G. W. Davies was proved.

I am not here to screen Mr. G. W. Davies; I would screen no man who had done wrong; and the leader of the Opposition will, I think, admit that. It was proved that G. W. Davies had been guilty of manipulating the cash of the department. It was also proved that others in the department had been cashing their own cheques in like manner. Inquiries made since the G. W. Davies inquiry have disclosed that officers of the department, including the auditors of the department, were dishonouring their cheques at the time G. W. Davies was doing so, and long after that date. I and other principal members of the late Opposition have contended that the audit of the railway accounts by Railway Department auditors instead of by the Auditor General's Department was a blot on the railway administration. And what do we find now on inquiry? That the auditors of the department were cashing cheques and inducing the cashier to cash cheques which were subsequently dishonoured, and then they came along and audited the cash book of that particular cashier. Now under an administration of that kind, what can we expect? I will admit that this particular allegation was not proved at the inquiry; but the records of the department investigated since show—the bank book and other books show—that it is true. The particular cash-book used at that time by the department could not be found, could not be produced at the inquiry when it was suggested that this charge should be sheeted home to other officers. Now I ask hon. members, is that a proper condition of affairs, that the principal books of the department should be missing when they are required for a particular purpose?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Who was responsible for that? It is not right.

MR. MOORHEAD: It was not the General Manager.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am keeping the General Manager altogether out of it. I should like to explain, and the leader of the Opposition can differ from me if he chooses, that the files of the department are the permanent records of the department; and the files of the department should be kept in a satisfactory condition—[MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear!]

Minister who goes out to-day may leave everything satisfactory for his successor who may come in to-morrow. Now we are told by the ex-Commissioner of Railways (Hon. F. H. Piesse) that it is necessary that some of the departmental files be treated as confidential. Hence, under his administration, files of importance, and certain documents of importance that ought to be on the files, were stowed away in some officer's private drawer, and produced on a subsequent occasion. Now if there be anything that should go into a file for or against a man's character, it should be put in at the time, and left there as a record either for or against him. [GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The system I have introduced is that any officer who is suspended, and who wants an inquiry, has a right to see his file and to see what his superior officers have put in writing against him.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That was always the case.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It was not always the case. There is evidence it was not. The superior officers of the department were in a position to write anything they chose against a subordinate, and the subordinate never knew the charges made against him.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: If he asked for the file, he got it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I can prove my statement. I have been told I made the serious statement that certain files were manufactured, when the files I asked for could not be produced. It was said to be a serious charge, in fact almost a criminal charge. I am here to repeat the statement that files were manufactured, and that we were able to produce at all events one manufactured file at the inquiry, which file, if it were analysed by hon. members, would be evidence to them of the manner in which figures and so-called facts were manufactured to suit certain purposes at a certain period.

MR. MOORHEAD: Which file is that?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: A "G. W. Davies" file.

MR. MOORHEAD: That is the first allegation I heard to that effect.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Then I have been criticised for

my attendance at that board. I contend I was practically on my trial.

MR. GEORGE: Crown Prosecutor.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Not Crown Prosecutor at all.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I do not know who took exception to your presence.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Very strong exception was taken to my presence.

MR. MOORHEAD: Not by me.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Nor by me.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No; by other members of this House. I was there in order that I might get in touch with the workings of the department, might see for myself how things had been administered in the past, and might form a correct conclusion, if I could, in regard to the hon. member's (Mr. Piesse's) administration; and that conclusion is, to my mind, anything but satisfactory. The member for Guildford (Mr. Rason) has been misquoted by the Press, and I think it is due to the hon. member to explain that he, the other night, said that if I had called for the files of, say, Holmes Bros. & Co., probably some startling announcement might have been made in that connection.

MR. RASON: The same with any other firm.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member, as he says, mentioned that firm as an example only; but as the report of his speech was published in the Press, it appeared that he meant there was something unsatisfactory in transactions of Holmes Bros. and Co. with the Railway Department, which could have been brought to light if necessary.

MR. RASON: I did not wish to convey that impression.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I give the hon. member credit for not having conveyed that impression to the House; but that impression was conveyed through the Press. Let me say that if there is anything wrong in connection with Holmes Bros. and Co. and the Railway Department, let us have it. I will lay the files on the table to-morrow, if necessary, so that hon. members may see them; and I think I can say, if there had been anything in the files of the department against Holmes Bros. and Co., it would have been brought out against

me long ere this. It has been suggested than when I took office I went out, as it were, for the blood of Mr. John Davies. Now I deny that accusation. I went out to see if I could get at the bottom of the unsatisfactory condition of affairs, not of to-day, but of years past; and the best evidence I could get was the files of the department, which I have already said should be correct records, or should not be there at all; and the files of the department distinctly showed that the charges which we subsequently laid against Mr. John Davies were of an unsatisfactory character and should be inquired into.

MR. GEORGE: They were unsatisfactory. No doubt about that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I was supported in my action at the time by hon. members who now sit in Opposition; in fact, the member for East Kimberley (Mr. F. Connor), who spoke this evening, was not at all satisfied with suspension; he wanted me to "sack" Mr. John Davies without inquiry. Now I told him at the time, and I tell this House, that I had no particular desire to get home upon John Davies or any other officer; but affairs were so unsatisfactory that it was a question of getting home on somebody; and the files of the department proved conclusively that the management of the department under Mr. John Davies was not satisfactory; and we proved that charge against Mr. John Davies until the ex-Commissioner came into the box, came in prepared to say anything —

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I ask the hon. member to withdraw that statement.

THE SPEAKER: I think it an improper statement.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have not finished: came prepared to say anything in connection with the department that would exonerate Mr. Davies; and we proved the charge against Mr. John Davies till Mr. Piesse came in and accepted the responsibility.

MR. GEORGE: That is not fair.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is fair. Mr. Piesse came into the box and accepted the responsibility; and as he accepted that responsibility I say I have a perfect right now to sheet home against the ex-Commissioner

the charges laid against the General Manager.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I accept the responsibility wherever I am responsible.

MR. GEORGE: The Minister should not play with loaded dice.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: A perusal of the evidence of the ex-Commissioner distinctly proves that where Mr. John Davies was not guilty, Mr. Piesse, the ex-Commissioner, was. The evidence discloses the fact that the ex-Commissioner was in league with prominent business people of this State; was connected with them in a manner unbecoming him as Commissioner. I think it proves that he was their guide, their counsellor, their friend, and perhaps the partner of one of them at all events, as I will prove, or will call upon the ex-Commissioner to deny, before I have finished. I will prove he was their guide, counsellor, and friend, and the partner of one of them, in a manner unbecoming to him as Commissioner of Railways.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I wish to rise in explanation. The Commissioner never guided me and never befriended me; and whatever I got out of the Commissioner I had to work for and battle for.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member was referred to.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Perhaps I intended to refer to the hon. member; but seeing he has accepted the responsibility, there is no necessity for me to mention his name. There was a combination existing between the Commissioner and certain firms that had much to do with the General Manager being drawn in to make certain concessions.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I say it is a deliberate untruth.

MR. JACOBY: That's the way to talk to you!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Will the hon. member produce in the House, as he produced yesterday the letter from the bank, a partnership agreement between himself and Mr. Timms on the one part, and Messrs. Bateman and Guthrie on the other part, in connection with the dealings in sandalwood on the Eastern goldfields? Will the hon. member tell the House that he and his partner Mr. Timms sold Messrs.

Bateman and Guthrie, at Fremantle, 1,000 tons of sandalwood—[MEMBER: What rot!]
—the market value of which was £6 per ton; and the hon. member and his partner Mr. Timms received £9,000 in cash for it, £3,000 above the market value; and Messrs. Bateman and Guthrie retained the sum of £1,000, to be paid to the hon. member and his partner Mr. Timms, at the rate of £200 a year for five years, as a guarantee that Messrs. Piesse and Timms would not operate in the sandalwood business on the Eastern goldfields east of Northam, for the next five years. I will ask the hon. member will he produce that agreement to-morrow, as he produced the letter from the bank yesterday?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I will deal with it to-morrow.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will ask Mr. Teesdale Smith, the member for Wellington, if he will produce an agreement made at the same time between Messrs. Bateman and Guthrie on the one part, and the Kurrawang Firewood Syndicate on the other part.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: What time do you say?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Made about the same time.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I was not here: I was in England.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will ask him if the Kurrawang Company will produce an agreement made at the same time, by which the Kurrawang Company undertook to carry sandalwood over the Kurrawang line for Guthrie only—Messrs. Piesse and Timms having given up the business—at the rate of 10s. a ton: that sandalwood to be carried in Government trucks, because the company had none of their own, and the company to get 10s. a ton for the carriage of the sandalwood, and the Government, who owned the trucks, to get nothing. I ask if the Kurrawang syndicate will produce that agreement?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: It is news to me.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The action of the Commissioner, which should have been above suspicion, had the effect of drawing subordinate officers into transactions of the same kind. The combination that existed was this: Mr. Piesse as Commissioner of

Railways, Mr. Timms as partner of Messrs. Smith & Timms, railway contractors, timber merchants, and sundry other things, backed by Millar Bros., and subsequently, I regret to say, the principal officers of the Railway Department were drawn into that combination.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I rise to a point of order. Millar Bros. had absolutely nothing to do with this thing. I object to the name of an old firm which I have had to do with for years, being brought into this discussion.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Railway concessions were at all events made to Millar Bros.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I again rise to a point of order. No railway concessions, as far as the Kurrawang syndicate were concerned, were made to Millar Bros. I will not allow this discussion, as far as C. and E. Millar, Victorian railway contractors, are concerned, because their name stands above this low, scurrilous stuff.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I was trying to get away from the Kurrawang syndicate, for a moment.

LABOUR MEMBER: A pleasant departure, I should think.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I explained that Millar Bros. and others got concessions from the Railway Department which they were not entitled to. I have been asked to produce the rate book, and I produce here the rate book that was brought out by the then Railway Commissioner, in September, 1899. Rate books are only brought into existence after a great deal of consideration, and a fair thing arrived at. They are not brought out every month or every year, but they are brought out when a general change of rates is considered necessary. A rate book was brought out in September, 1899, and in that rate book—and the previous rate had been charged for years past—the charge for the hire of trucks running over private lines was given, and in that rate book it was set forth that for under five miles a charge of 2s. 6d. per truck should be chargeable, per day, or rather for travelling under five miles 2s. 6d., and over five miles a charge of 5s.; that is for double trucks, and half that amount for small trucks. That rate book was brought into existence in September, 1899,

and the Kurrawang syndicate came into existence in November, 1899, and the rate which had been in existence for years —

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: How long?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: For years.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Nothing of the sort.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Then so much the worse if it was not. If it only came into existence in September, 1899, it was evidently considered necessary that a charge should be made. But what do we find? The Kurrawang syndicate came into existence in November, 1899, and the rate which had been in existence for years was cancelled in December, 1899—Mr. Teesdale Smith says only four months, which makes it so much the worse.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: So it ought to have been.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: A rate was cancelled for trucks travelling over the Kurrawang line, and a direct loss was made by the department, to say nothing about Millar Bros., and other firms who had the same concessions. Since the Kurrawang syndicate came into existence a direct loss, owing to the cancellation of the rate, has been made of £6,000, and consequently a direct gain to the company in question. I think in the report of the John Davies inquiry board you will find the chairman of the board, a railway expert that we all admire, and I believe a qualified man, draws special attention—I think he asked His Excellency's attention to this matter, which he could not understand. Is it reasonable to expect it—is it a fair thing to the Railway Department to allow a company like that, or any other company, to use Government trucks over 60 miles of railway—30 miles in and 30 miles out—a railway not properly constructed, thrown together, the rails thrown down, twisted and bent in all directions, and to allow trucks to pass over the line, and not a single penny given to the Government?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I take exception to that remark.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member can do so when he gets up to speak, as I suppose he will.

MR. GEORGE: If he cannot make a railway, you cannot.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We have the statement of the late Commissioner of Railways that Smith and Timms could build a railway at half the price the hon. member could when he was Commissioner, and it seems to me that they could get rolling-stock on almost as favourable conditions. So much has been said of this Kurrawang syndicate that it is necessary, I think, even to say a little more, in order that members should be perfectly clear as to the truth of these matters. This is brought out in evidence, and cannot be denied. I charge the then Railway Commissioner for allowing the Kurrawang Company to be floated on the railway capital of the State. I say the Kurrawang syndicate was floated on the capital of the State. We are told the nominal capital of the company was £18,000. There was nothing in evidence to show that there was any capital, except what Mr. Smith said was guaranteed by him and his partner to the bank.

MR. GEORGE: That is good enough.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: In face of that—

MR. GORDON: He does not know what a guarantee is.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We know the guarantee was only for a limited amount.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: You know that £18,000 cash was paid, do you not?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member's evidence shows that he and his partner guaranteed an amount of £7,000 to the bank.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: That was after the £18,000.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Commissioner came to the rescue, and gave this Company, with a nominal capital of £18,000, a credit of £19,000.

MR. MOORHEAD: You are mistaken there. The water had brought it down.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows that is wrong. The water did subsequently bring it down, but strange to say the credits for water were made before the debits for material that was supplied to the company. The material was supplied to connect the dam with the railway line, and the water could not be got until the material was

laid down, and the indebtedness incurred. The company were supplied with £19,000 worth of material, and that material must have been supplied before any water was supplied. I say £19,000 credit was given to the company with a nominal capital of £18,000. Therefore I am justified in saying the company was floated on the credit of the railways of the State.

MR. MOORHEAD: They supplied water before that.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: They supplied water in February.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am sure the hon. member whom we all honour and respect, will not come into the House as an advocate for the Kurrawang syndicate.

MR. MOORHEAD: I claim the right to defend an absent man, though.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member will give credit for that.

MR. MOORHEAD: I advise you to stick to the evidence.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am charging the ex-Commissioner, not an absent man. It is in evidence that the Railway Commissioner approved of the transaction, and consequently accepted the responsibility. On the hon. member's own showing, the Government paid £14,000 for water to this company. That water was leased to that company by the hon. member, not as Commissioner, but as Director of Public Works, at £15 per month. The Railway Department came to the rescue, and supplied the material to connect the dam with the railway service, and then the department comes farther to the rescue and takes the cost out in water. We have not been able to get our money, and unless it rains we shall never be able to, because of the agreement entered into by the then Railway Commissioner.

MR. GORDON: What a shame!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: What I want to point out is this: at that time there were other dams under the control of the hon. member, which might have been utilised by the Railway Department, and the railway material would still be in the hands of the Department; £19,000 worth of material would still be in the hands of the Department, or have been sold to

someone else for cash, instead of water. The Railway Commissioner could have used other Public Works dams, instead of paying £14,000 for water, as he did, and the Railway Department could have been using water from their own dams to this day.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Will you name the dam?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will name the dam.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: And the time at which the water was in it?

MR. MOORHEAD: A prospector found another dam.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We are told by the Commissioner that this agreement with the company was made in his office in December, 1899. The files of the department show that it was made in the General Manager's office in January, 1900. That is a fact that wants explaining.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I explained that in my evidence, and the evidence shows it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Commissioner says the arrangement was made in his office in December, 1899.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Put into writing on the 25th January, 1900.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The files disclose that it was made in the General Manager's office a month later than December, 1899, and the Commissioner was not present. Coming back to this water, I propose to show what was available to the Railway Department. It was in the middle of December, 1899, the date upon which this agreement was entered into with the Kurrawang Firewood Company, although the Kurrawang Company did not supply the water until March, 1900. At that time there were three million gallons of water, the same quantity of water as was in the 42-Mile Dam. There were three million gallons of water in the Londonderry Dam, 12½ miles from Coolgardie. An estimate has been got out. In fact one of the first things I did when I came into office was to make an arrangement to connect the Londonderry Dam with the railway service at Coolgardie, and I ascertained it could be done for about £6,000. It was never brought into effect, because it was pointed out by the officers of the

department that, seeing the Coolgardie water scheme was so near completion, it would not be advisable to spend £6,000 in erecting that dam at this juncture.

MR. GEORGE: Could they not have erected a temporary connection.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: If the officers of the Department could have done so, they should have sent a recommendation to me. The recommendation to me was that it could not be done; and if it was not done, that was their fault and not mine.

MR. GEORGE: That is right enough.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: What I wanted to point out was that there were three million gallons of water in the dam at Londonderry, which could be connected with the service at Coolgardie for £6,000, and the value of that three million gallons of water at the price we paid the Kurrawang Company for it was £9,000, so that if the connection had been made the cost of the connection would have been paid, the Railway Department would have made £3,000 out of the transaction, and we would have had the Londonderry dam connected with the railway service of this State, and connected to-day. I understand it is one of the best catchment areas on the fields, and it is always full.

MR. MONGER: Who has the lease of it now?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Three thousand pounds would have been saved on that transaction. Every time it filled the water was, at 6s. a hundred gallons, worth £9,000 to the department. In the face of facts like these, the member for the Williams has, I was almost going to say the impudence to criticise the Railway Department. Facts like these, showing gross mismanagement, can be found on almost every page, every record of the Railway Department of this State. There are many other tanks that can be referred to in a like manner. It fact it was given in evidence that this particular tank, the 42-Mile tank, was discovered by two prospectors. Although the Director of Public Works, the member for the Williams, had spent the money in building it, he did not seem to know it existed, and we have it in evidence that it was found by two prospectors. It was stated by the counsel for the defendant

at all events. I take the word of the hon. member (Mr. Moorhead) on this and every other occasion. He made this statement that it was found by two prospectors. It was leased by the Director of Public Works at £15 a month. Every time it fills now it is worth £9,000 to the company, and the Government pay £9,000 for the water which they leased at £15 a month. At Kanowna, only two miles from the railway service there were 30,000 gallons of water, and at Black Flag, only seven and a-half miles from Paddington, there were 1,320,000 gallons of water. The whole could have been connected for the sum of money which was subsequently paid to the Kurrawang Company for the water contained in the dam leased to them at £15 a month. There were only three and three-quarters, or call it four, millions of gallons in the Kurrawang Company's tanks at this time, and yet the hon. member tells us that it was that tank that saved the situation. If that tank saved the situation, surely a tank containing a similar quantity of water, the Londonderry, might also have saved the situation, to say nothing of other tanks. I made the charges relative to the advantages of this company perfectly clear. I have proved to my satisfaction at all events that the Kurrawang Company was floated not by the General Manager, but by the Commissioner of Railways, on the railway capital of this State. The Commissioner told us he exonerated the administrative officers, and he approved of the officers of the Department writing off hundreds and in some cases thousands of pounds. The hon. member says he approved of those transactions. I say in doing that he deceived his colleagues and deceived the then Premier of the country.

MR. GORDON: Ancient history.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No matter if it be ancient history, it is good enough to repeat. I have on many occasions in this House criticised Sir John Forrest, the then Premier, but members will agree with me that I have always given him credit for honesty. I differed from him in many political matters, but I always gave him the credit of being fairly honest.

HON. F. H. PRESSE: "Fairly" honest?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I say that if Sir John Forrest had known that the Commissioner of Railways was allowing subordinate officers to write off hundreds and thousands of pounds, going behind his colleagues, and going behind the Premier of the country, to do it, going behind, I say, the Governor-in-Council to do it, the reign of the Commissioner of Railways would have come to an end sooner than it did. I ask what right had the Commissioner of Railways to allow subordinate officers to undertake duties he was not authorised to fulfil himself? We put in, in evidence at that inquiry, files extending over years to show that in matters of 2s. 6d., 3s. 6d., 4s. 6d., 6s. 6d., and sums like that, the approval of the Executive Council had to be obtained. The Governor of the colony had to approve of that expenditure; yet when it came to hundreds, and sometimes thousands of pounds in relation to certain companies I have mentioned, the Commissioner of Railways allowed his subordinate officers to write off the amount, and so he approved of it.

MR. GEORGE: What did the board say?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Act distinctly says the Governor-in-Council is the only person authorised to write off revenue at all; yet the Commissioner of Railways, in order to save the situation and as he thought, I suppose, to save himself, went into the witness box and said he approved of it. In approving of it he must take the responsibility, and hence I say the General Manager is relieved and the late Commissioner stands convicted. I refer to the evidence given by the hon. member, and with the permission of the House I would like to quote it. I wish to quote from it for my own satisfaction and the satisfaction of those concerned, and every individual in the State who has a natural interest in the railway disclosures which have been made. I want them to know clearly and distinctly from the hon. member when and how this agreement was entered into. We endeavoured to ascertain from the Commissioner of Railways at the inquiry, and he told us it was made in his office, that the General Manager brought Mr. Teesdale Smith to his office in December,

1899, and an arrangement was made then. He was asked:—

Can you explain why, on the 24th January [that is a month later], Mr. Teesdale Smith should have telegraphed making a proposal to supply water within about one month at a uniform rate of 6s. per 100, the department to find trucks, and the syndicate to take payment in rails and locomotives? Can you explain why Mr. Smith should have sent a telegram of that sort if the arrangement had already been concluded by you?

The hon. member answered, "I cannot." He was asked "What provision did you take for securing payment?" and the answer was "None." No provision made to secure payment. He was also asked if he knew the capital of the company he was supplying £19,000 worth of material to, and the reply was "No." The hon. member did not know the capital of the company. The next question was, "For all you knew, it might have been £5?" and the reply was, "That is so." For all he knew of the company he was giving £19,000 worth of credit to, the company might have been worth only £5. Another question was, "Can you explain why, on the 20th January, the company should have accepted the position that they were to pay cash?" and the witness replied, "This will be shown by two letters. First, one on the 17th January?" —

MEMBER: Give us a bit more of it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member will get a bit more, and he will get all he wants before I have finished. This letter is to the Kurrawang Company from the Railway Department, on the 17th January, a month after the hon. member says the arrangement was made whereby they were to pay by water. It said:—

Farther to my communication of the 5th inst., I now inclose one account showing the total order, and shall be glad to receive a cheque for the amount (£10,720) at the earliest.

Counsel then asks (588):—

Can you explain why that was sent?—I should take it in the ordinary course of business, there being no other record.

There is no record in existence that this arrangement took place in the Commissioner's office. The then Commissioner, when giving his evidence, was asked whether it would not have been possible to have the arrangement taken down by a shorthand clerk.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I was not asked the question. Counsel suggested it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member was asked whether having the arrangement taken down by a shorthand clerk would have delayed the transaction, and the hon. member admitted that it would have caused no delay.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Did I not say later that I did not consider it the ordinary way of doing business?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The report of the evidence proceeds:—

Then we have the answer from Mr. Jobson: "I beg to acknowledge the receipt of yours of the 17th instant, with statement of account enclosed, which shall have my best attention." Can you explain how they come to write that? —I cannot explain that.

589. It is hardly applicable?—It is merely a question of office detail.

The question of payment, it will be noted, is a mere matter of detail. The report proceeds:—

Then I take it there is no record of this special arrangement prior to the 25th January? —None as far as I know.

Do you know of any record at all?—I do not know of any.

Should there have been one?—That is a question of opinion. I make in the office many arrangements which have been afterwards put on paper, and then brought forward for approval.

MR. TAYLOR: Who says this?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The former Commissioner of Railways says it. His statement is:—

That is a question of opinion. I make in the office many arrangements which have been afterwards put on paper, and then brought forward for approval.

Apparently he makes the arrangement and compels the General Manager to accept the responsibility for it. Having made the General Manager accept responsibility, he gives the matter his approval when it comes back to him from the General Manager. That is a nice position to put the General Manager in! The Commissioner makes an arrangement, and he should accept the responsibility for that arrangement, and not throw the responsibility on his subordinate officer. It is this kind of thing that led me astray, that led me to charge the General Manager with a number of matters which

should have been charged against the Commissioner.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, you were not much led astray!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will take another portion of the evidence:—

598. You know that some of the material was supplied early in December?—That was for the early portion of the siding.

The Kurrawang Siding?—Yes. I did not know these people had any rights to construct this line. Whatever rights they had did not come under my notice. I was surprised to know they were going out into the bush. I did not know anything about their concession.

The then Commissioner did not know anything about the concession, when he leased the syndicate a tank containing three million gallons of water, when he arranged to supply this material to connect the Eastern Line with the tank in the bush! He says he did not know the syndicate were laying the line out into the bush! He leased them the tank 30 miles out in the bush, and he knew that they had to connect in order that they might deliver the water to him; and yet he says in his evidence that he did not know the syndicate were going out into the bush! The report of the evidence proceeds:—

600. Did you know in December, or shortly afterwards, that the Railway Department was purchasing water from Mr. Graham Price at 15s. per 1,000?—I knew that.

And yet you purchased at £3 a 1,000?—Yes, further ahead.

Did you know of an arrangement made to purchase from Mr. Graham Price on the 25th January or thereabouts at 15s. per 1,000?—Yes.

And an arrangement at the same time to purchase from the Kurrawang syndicate at £3 a 1,000?—I knew of that.

Was that a good arrangement?—It was, in the circumstances.

Were you aware of it?—I was.

Have you told us the whole of the arrangements between you and Mr. Smith?—Yes.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: This evidence is most interesting.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, we can hear it! You need not be afraid.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I shall leave the hon. member's evidence at that, and I shall proceed to refer to the evidence given by the member for Wellington, Mr. Teesdale Smith, on the same day. We shall see what the member for Wellington has to say on the subject.

MR. GEORGE: It was on the 24th October the member for Wellington gave evidence, was it not?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Here is portion of the evidence of the member for Wellington. Counsel asked:—

2016. You have told us that the arrangement included the supply of an engine?—Yes.

That is the arrangement you made with the Minister?—Yes.

You recollect a telegram you sent on the 24th January to Mr. Davies?—I recollect that telegram.

That is the wire I have mentioned as having been sent a month after the arrangement was made in the Commissioner's office.

2019. Has your attention recently been called to it?—I dare say it has. I know I have heard of it in the House and elsewhere.

You say, "You find trucks; we take payment in rails and locomotives; if approved, will see you to-morrow if convenient"?—That is correct.

At that time there was a special arrangement between you and the Minister?—Yes.

Then why do you say, "if approved"?—Because that telegram included £1,500 worth more of water, and it also referred to the sale of condensed water.

The Minister told us that the water was to be taken at the option of the department. Mr. Davies also said so. Is that true?—They can contend that it is to be taken at their option, but when they want payment for the material they must keep on taking water.

That is a nice arrangement to be made by a gentleman who criticises my administration! Mr. Teesdale Smith says that the department must, when they want payment, take payment in water, must keep on taking water! The department are in want of water on the goldfields at the present time, and will be very glad to get it from the hon. member, or rather from the Kurrawang syndicate.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: You would be glad to get it at 6s., would you not?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I am sure I wish it would rain!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: And you would be very glad to get it!

OPPOSITION MEMBER: There is risk of another panic.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There will be a panic when certain hon. members go to the country.

MR. GEORGE: Do you really think so?

MR. TAYLOR: It won't be on water that they will go to the country!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No; they will want something stronger than water when they go to the country. The cross-examination of Mr. Teesdale Smith proceeds:—

2024. We have had some evidence as to the interview with the Minister. Mr. Davies and Mr. Piesse said that the arrangement was that water was to be taken at their option, and that they had the right to discontinue taking it at any moment. Is that correct?—That is correct from their point of view.

Is that what took place?—It just depends upon what construction you put upon the arrangement. They say it was arranged that they were to take water at their option. From my point of view, they had some time or another to take the water they had agreed to take in payment for the material.

That is, you would only pay them in water? Yes.

Then we have question 2027, when counsel asked Mr. Teesdale Smith, whom we all admit to be a pretty shrewd gentleman:—

Do you think, or did you think, that Mr. Davies and the Minister were so foolish as to make that arrangement?

And Mr. Teesdale Smith answers, "yes." Now, what can be expected of me when Mr. Teesdale Smith answers, "yes?"

MR. GEORGE: Go on to the next question!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will:—

2028. That was your idea of their business capacities. Did you think that was a business-like arrangement on their part?—I think at the time they made an excellent arrangement for the department.

I think I will qualify that by saying they made a much more excellent arrangement for the Kurrawang syndicate.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: It's all right!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The next question and answer are as follows:—

2029. It was also a pretty good arrangement for you?—Pretty good.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: It was.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The evidence proceeds:—

2030. You received a reply from Mr. Davies?—Yes.

There is no reference in that letter to a prior arrangement?—No.

MR. GORDON: We like this, you know. Do keep on!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The prior arrangement referred to is the December arrangement, which

was come to, we are told, in the Commissioner's office:—

2032. Mr. Davies does not say that he will arrange in accordance with a previous suggestion, but he mentions that he will take water at current prices?—You are correct.

Can you explain that telegram?—I am not going to attempt to explain it. I know what was in my mind when I sent my telegram.

MR. TAYLOR: I should think so!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I say the arrangement should not have been in Mr. Teesdale Smith's mind but should have been on record in the files of the department.

MR. GEORGE: It was all right for him.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The next question and answer are:—

Did you make any suggestion about current prices?—I was then going to Perth, where I saw the General Manager.

Now this was in January, this arrangement between the General Manager and Mr. Teesdale Smith; and Mr. Piesse, the then Commissioner, says that the arrangement was made a month previously in his office, and that he accepts the whole of the responsibility for it. The files, the telegrams, and the evidence all go to show that Mr. Davies is right in the position he takes up; so that the then Commissioner is and must be in the wrong. The finding of the board in this matter exonerates Mr. Davies. In some instances the board exonerate Mr. Davies, whilst in others they blame him. They exonerate Mr. Davies in connection with the transactions with the Kurrawang Company. But why, I ask, does the finding exonerate Mr. Davies? Because the then Commissioner, who, according to Mr. Teesdale Smith, made this foolish arrangement, accepts the responsibility. I repeat the statement that this unsatisfactory business—this disgraceful business, I will call it—was carried out in December, according to the then Commissioner, who tells us he is sure that he made the arrangement in December, no matter what the files may show. We have to put the files on one side and accept his statement. Well, in view of this disgraceful arrangement I say the hon. member is not qualified to hold a position in any Ministry, much less to lead a party in this State.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: We have heard that many times before.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Well, you will hear it again yet!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Oh, all right. Go on!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member will hear more of it when he goes to the country.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, don't say that!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The board exonerate Mr. John Davies for paying the company £594 12s. 6d. for firewood supplied to the Railway Department when the company owed the department some thousands of pounds for material supplied to the company. But the fact was not made sufficiently clear to the board, as I think counsel will admit, that that firewood was paid for out of trust moneys belonging to the people of this State. The Railway Department first refused to pay the money for the firewood supplied, contending that the amount should be set off against the material supplied by the department to the company; but subsequently, pressure was brought to bear upon the department, and it was decided to pay this amount to the company for firewood; and the department had no means of paying it except out of the "Sidings and other works account." I should like to explain that this account represents trust money taken by the department from residents of this State who make application to have certain work performed by the department. For instance, if I require a siding erected, the department estimate the value of the work. Before I, or any other person except the favoured people referred to, who can get £20,000 worth of credit and pay for it in water—before any other person can get anything at all, the department must make an estimate of the work; and if the work is estimated at £100, I have to deposit a cheque for £100. The work is done; and if it costs only £96, the department return me the £4. The only means at the disposal of the department for paying this money was the "Sidings and other works account." And most members will be astonished—I know there are some who would not be astonished at anything—to know that this firewood was paid for out of that account, although the money in that account was money held by the department in trust for residents of this State,

who had paid for work to be done for them.

MR. GEORGE: Your Treasurer will tell you that is financing.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: The Treasurer was the first man to stop it, anyway.

MR. MOORHEAD: It is said it is not stopped.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have stopped a good many things, and if that is not stopped, I undertake to stop it before 12 o'clock tomorrow. If not, probably there will be another suspension.

MR. MOORHEAD: What about the Public Works Department?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: If the hon. member chooses to start out on a voyage of discovery in connection with the Works Department, he had better do it. I am speaking of the railways. Now Mr. John Davies is blamed by the board of inquiry, and justly blamed, for the loan of those engines to the company. I do not know anyone else who ever had the loan of an engine from the Railway Department; and it is astonishing that this company had railway engines for some three or four months, and paid nothing for them. The agreement, we are told, provided that the Railway Department should supply the company with an engine, if the department had one that was suitable. But it so happened that a suitable engine was not available; and what did the department do? They sent a boiler inspector round the country looking for an engine to buy for the company.

MR. MOORHEAD: They first gave the company a Class G engine.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I want to give the facts as briefly as I can: the hon. member can correct me afterwards. The agreement showed the department were to provide an engine, only if they had one suitable. It so happened that they did not have a suitable engine; consequently the ex-Commissioner's famous agreement failed. However, with regard to that engine, the department, to assist the company still farther, sent this boiler inspector round the country to see if they could purchase a suitable engine for the Kurrawang Company. The inspector found a suitable engine in the possession

of Gill, McDowell, and Company. The Railway Department agreed to purchase that engine for £1,500 cash; they did purchase for £1,500 cash; they sold it to the Kurrawang Company at the same price, £1,500; and the only difference is that the department were to take payment in water, and the water has not yet been supplied. Now that is business! That is one of the arrangements entered into by the man who professes to be leading a party.

MR. GEORGE: There is no profession about it.

MR. JACOBY: He is leading.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: His leadership is only a temporary arrangement. When the country speaks, I think the tables will be turned. The General Manager is blamed for giving the free use of trucks to this and other companies. I have dealt with that already: there is no necessity to refer to it again. He is exonerated for writing off revenue—for writing off hundreds of pounds. Why is he exonerated? Because the ex-Commissioner says he permitted the General Manager to do it, and approved of it. I take my guide and authority as the Railways Act for the time being. I am Commissioner under that Railways Act, and I will administer the department as nearly as possible in accordance with that Act, and not get "all over the place," as has been the custom with the ex-Commissioner. The General Manager is blamed in that report for the sale and repurchase of 30 hopper-wagons from Messrs. Smith and Timms. He should have leased those trucks to Smith and Timms, as he had a perfect right to do, and should have received a revenue of £3,756 for them. Instead of that, he sold them.

MR. GEORGE: No; 8s. a day.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The agreement provided that Smith and Timms should pay 8s. per day. And my point is this—

MR. MOORHEAD: What about the maintenance? The board overlooked that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I do not want interjections. My point is that if it had been anybody else but Smith and Timms, the trucks would not have been leased, and the revenue would have been £3,756.

MR. MOORHEAD: It would not.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: But when it came to Smith and Timms, the department sold them the trucks for £1,500, and subsequently, 18 months afterwards, bought them back for £1,125; and the department got £375, instead of £3,756.

MR. MOORHEAD: You have to allow for the maintenance.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member will agree with me that the board appointed was a fair board, and gave a fair decision. At all events, I am prepared to accept it as a fair decision; and these are the figures of the board: they are not my figures. I take it, Mr. Pendleton, the chairman, is one of the leading railway experts in Australia, and his figures are reliable.

MR. MOORHEAD: He forgot to allow for the maintenance of the trucks.

[Several interjections by Ministerial members.]

MR. MOORHEAD: The Engineer-in-Chief allows 2s. for maintenance on another line.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The next transaction for which the General Manager is blamed is the sale of two engines to Mr. W. N. Hedges, nominally the Kurrawang Firewood Company.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: That is not right; there is no connection.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The sale of two engines to Mr. Hedges, nominally the Kurrawang Firewood Company.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I deny that again.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Because the engines were delivered at Sutherland's Siding, were used by the Kurrawang Company, and subsequently leased back to the Government at an enormous profit to the Kurrawang Company, and at an enormous loss to the department. Now those engines were sold for £1,100. The hon. member denies that Mr. Hedges had anything to do with the company.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I did not. I said the engines.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Mr. Smith, in his evidence, is asked: "Is Mr. Hedges a member of the Kurrawang Company?" and Mr. Smith,

who was then on oath, answered: "Yes; certainly; he was the managing director." On oath he says one thing, and in this House he interjects another.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: I did nothing of the sort. What I said was that the engines were never purchased by the Kurrawang Company, and the Kurrawang Company had never anything to do with these engines, as they came from the Government. If I may go on to explain to the Minister —

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I rise to a point of order. The hon. member should not interrupt me in my speech.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must not explain at any greater length.

MR. HOPKINS: It is a case of another *alias*.

MR. MOORHEAD: It is stated in that report that the engines were not purchased by the company.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have asked the last interjector not to appear here as counsel.

MR. MOORHEAD: Oh, thank you. Go on. I will appear later.

MR. GORDON: And the Commissioner will disappear.

MR. WILSON: Take the findings.

MR. MOORHEAD: You exonerate Mr. Davies in one breath, and then you attack him in another.

MR. WILSON: Read the findings of the board.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am going on; I know members do not like it.

MR. GEORGE: We do.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Then they should look pleasant, and not interrupt me as they are doing. I want to explain this engine transaction. It matters not to me if it be the Kurrawang Firewood Company, or Hedges, or who it is. These engines were valued by the officers of the department at £1,000 each. The valuation came forward to the General Manager, who recommended to the ex-Commissioner that the engines were valued at £1,000, and that he could sell them at £1,100, conditionally on their being put in repair for bush traffic. What did the Railway Department do after they had got the ex-Commissioner's approval? They spent £723 in repairing those engines; and instead of selling at

£1,100, as the ex-Commissioner was led to believe they were to be sold, they really sold them for £377. Now that is not the worst feature of the transaction. The worst feature of the transaction was the way the sale of the engines was adjusted in the books of the department; the engines were purchased and debited to the railway capital of the State when they were sold. They should have been credited to the railway capital. What was done? The department received £1,100 for the engines, and credited £600 to the railway capital account, and £500 was credited to the maintenance vote of the Railway Department. And, when the engines were repaired the maintenance vote was debited with £723, consequently that additional £223 became a debit to the general working expenses of the railways. Now we have in evidence that the company was to have paid anything over the £500, if anything over the amount spent on repairs; but the company never paid the additional amount of £223, and that makes a debit to the maintenance vote of the Railway Department. This is quite in accord with other similar transactions, and accounts partly for the enormous increase in the working expenses of the department.

MR. MOORHEAD: It is a wonder you did not make that a charge.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member for the Murray crows because his company was exonerated over coke transactions with the Railway Department. He and his company and the General Manager were exonerated on that charge, but the General Manager is only excused for the irregular transaction—the carriage of machinery from Geraldton to Fremantle as "contractors' plant"—because the General Manager knew nothing about it: the blame rested on somebody else.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I know all about it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member knows everything it is necessary to know, in order to get somebody else out of a difficulty.

MR. GEORGE: The difference was 2s. 4½d.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I do not care whether it was 2s. 4d. or any other amount. The board

does not attempt to deal with the charge of extravagant management; it is too big a subject for them to undertake. That is the only exception I take to the finding of the board, and I say the board should never have undertaken to carry out the duties unless they were prepared to deal with the whole question, and not during a stage of the inquiry say that the time does not permit of dealing with the most important charge made against the General Manager.

MR. MOORHEAD: They did not deal with that because the evidence was not there. Whose fault was that? The onus lies on the person who makes the charge.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: One of the charges made against me by the hon. member for the Williams is that I robbed the department of its permanent head at a critical time. That is strange, because it was the custom in his time to allow the department to be robbed not only of one of the permanent heads but of a number of the permanent heads. It was nothing unusual during the hon. member's administration to find a number of the permanent officials travelling about this State and other States, and in some cases out of Australasia altogether. But because I suspend the General Manager and call for an inquiry, I am charged with disorganising the railway service by robbing it of its permanent head. If that is disorganising the railway service, and I will show subsequently that it is not, if the suspension of the General Manager has disorganised the service, it has been the means of giving us a fair idea of the disorganisation that has gone on for years past—the disorganisation created by the member for the Williams, continued by him for five years, and existing when I came into office. Because I attempt to bring about better results I find the hon. member in direct opposition, charging me with disorganising the department, while he claims to have properly administered it; but blaming me for not reorganising the department, is an admission on his part that he left the department in a disorganised state.

HON. F. H. PRESSE: Fifteen months ago.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: When I came into office I was

worried, not only here, but by members of Parliament in the street to know if it was possible to get a few trucks here and a few trucks there, and a few trucks to meet a case of emergency elsewhere. What do we find now? The truck trouble has disappeared.

HON. F. H. PRESSE: How many new trucks have you had in the five months?

MR. WILSON: No; the trouble has not disappeared.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will tell the hon. member how many trucks we have had in the five months, and how many he left us. But I say the truck difficulty has practically disappeared. When I came into office a return used to be furnished me week to week, showing that there were train loads of stuff stuck up in all directions, and that there were no engines to deliver the stuff at its proper destination. We have got over that difficulty. The last report I received from the acting General Manager last week is as follows: "I am pleased to notify that the central district for the last week was cleared daily of all the trucks." The truck difficulty was one of the greatest difficulties I had to contend with. It has disappeared, because I insisted and it was my duty as the representative of the people to see that every customer of the department got a fair supply of trucks. There was a fair distribution, and no favour to any particular person or company. That was the way the difficulty was overcome which the General Manager or the Minister preceding me—I am not prepared to say much—could not deal with. If the Commissioner ordered the General Manager to favour a certain company the Commissioner must accept the responsibility, and the General Manager is not to blame. But my instructions to the Acting General Manager were to treat all companies and all customers fairly, and the truck difficulty has been overcome.

MR. WILSON: The truck difficulty is there still.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am not blaming the General Manager for it, for the reason he may have had other instructions, but I say now the truck difficulty is practically overcome. The public on the whole are satisfied, in spite of what the leader of the Opposition says. The hon.

member says I treated some officers of the department in a high-handed manner. I deny the charge. Statements have appeared in the Press that I called on the Acting General Manager to resign. Where the statement emanated from I am not prepared to say. Mr. Short, the Acting General Manager assures me that he did not make the statement, and I accept his assurance as correct. But I repeat the statement that I did not call on Mr. Short to resign. Mr. Short, like some of the other officers of the department, was accustomed to do as he liked instead of doing as he was told. It is not my custom to take anything in hand, to take any responsibility, unless I am in a position to have my instructions carried into effect. Mr. Short was not prepared to carry out my suggestions or instructions, and I gave Mr. Short to understand that he would either have to do so or tender his resignation.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Is there any charge against Mr. Short now?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is no charge, and never has been.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: If there is no charge, why give him an opportunity of resigning?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have explained to the hon. member, and other members seem to be clear on the subject; but I excuse the leader of the Opposition, because I do not think he is clear upon any subject; therefore I will repeat the statement.

MR. JACOBY: No; do not.

MR. CONNOR: Give us some general policy; never mind details.

MR. NANSON: We have had enough detective business, for the time.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I would like to explain to the House the result of the working of the railways for the first quarter of the year. I would like to explain also that my position since I became Commissioner of Railways has been a very difficult one to fulfil. It is only five months since I took office, and I first had a strike to contend with, brought about by my predecessors.

MR. CONNOR: By yourself.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Then I had the trouble with the officers of the department, and

suspensions ensued, including my own newly-appointed secretary. Then I had two months' illness, which kept me away from my office, and a serious illness it was at that. However the instructions which I had issued were carried out during my absence satisfactorily, and the result for the first quarter of the year shows that there is, taking the estimate of the revenue and the estimate of the expenditure, a surplus over and above the estimate of £9,000 for the first quarter of the year. I would explain also the first quarter of the year is the worst from a revenue point of view, because the whole of the revenue collected in the first half of July, or all the revenue outstanding in the books of the department at the end of June, is collected in the first part of July and paid to the credit of the June month, the last month of the financial year. And whilst we have £9,000 surplus—a profit for the first quarter of this year—we have an additional amount in the books which should also be placed to that credit. I have already explained to the House that I have suggested a certain reorganisation scheme to the officers of the department, a scheme whereby money could be saved, and a scheme that I find absolutely necessary, because of the cumbersome system which has been allowed to grow up by my predecessors. I found that the Chief Accountant had 75 clerks under his control; the Chief Traffic Manager about 34, and the District Superintendent 23; all those officers in the Chief Traffic Manager's office repeating a lot of the work done in the Chief Accountant's office; and the officers in the District Superintendent's office repeating a lot of the work done in the Chief Traffic Manager's office. I suggested a scheme to bring about a better result. I pointed out that in the absence of the Chief Traffic Manager, Mr. Short, the Acting Chief Traffic Manager had kept these two sets of officers going. He was filling the dual offices of District Superintendent and Chief Traffic Manager. The natural result was that as District Superintendent he would write to himself as Chief Traffic Manager, and as Chief Traffic Manager he would write to himself as District Superintendent. This is one portion of the reorganisation scheme I attempted to bring about, and which I

am prevented from bringing about by the leader of the Opposition. And this is one of the reasons of the trouble between the Acting General Manager and myself, which I referred to just now. The Chief Traffic Manager, Mr. Douglas, approved of my suggestion of the amalgamation of those two offices, those of Chief Traffic Manager and District Superintendent, and he pointed out that some 13 clerks could be dispensed with, and £2,000 to £3,000 saved. The effect would be this, that the Chief Traffic Manager would address an out-station direct, when trouble arose, instead of addressing the District Superintendent and asking the District Superintendent to address the station in question, the station replying to the District Superintendent and the District Superintendent replying to the Chief Traffic Manager. Apart from the saving we should effect by the amalgamation of those two offices, the dispensing with the services of 13 clerks, and saving £2,000 to £3,000 in that particular office alone, the effect would be that matters would be dealt with promptly, and there would not be the circumlocution going on from day to day, built up by the present leader of the Opposition, which makes it impossible to control the railways as they exist now. That is one thing. I addressed other officers in like manner, and they made suggestions in reply. The Acting General Manager was not prepared to adopt those suggestions. He contended that he, as General Manager, was responsible to me for the working of the department. That is correct; but I say that I know as much about accountancy as the Acting General Manager does, and asked him to call on his Chief Accountant for a report, the Traffic Manager for a report, and the Chief Mechanical Engineer for a report. Surely the Chief Mechanical Engineer is better qualified to give a suggestion upon the administration of the mechanical portion of the Railway Department than is the Acting General Manager; and I made a request to the Acting General Manager to call upon his subordinate officers to reply to the suggestions I made. I contend that was the proper way to proceed. Had I gone behind the Acting General Manager direct to the officers, the Acting General Manager might have had some complaint to make. But I went to him and asked

him to call upon his subordinate officers, and hence the trouble arose, and hence his refusal to accept my suggestions, which were indorsed by them. I am told I am like a Czar of Russia, trying to create disturbance, "firing out" these officers in all directions. I undertook to control that department, and there is only one way in which to control that or any other department, and that is to be master of the situation.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Quite right.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: These are some of the difficulties I had to contend with in trying to bring about a better result in the Railway Department. I say honestly, it requires a strong man, a determined man, to take on the department at the present day. If I am beaten honestly, and if there be one man who will be pleased to be relieved of the responsibility, it will be myself, but I have to be beaten honestly, and I will go down with my colours flying, and will come up again if the opportunity offers.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Glad to get rid of it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes. I never shirk my responsibility, and will never go back on my party. I will stick to them and keep my colours flying as long as I can. I have shown the result of the working of the department for the first three months of the year. I propose to explain the result of the last year's business. If the hon. member for the Williams is not responsible for the working of the railways for the last year, then one of his old supporters, one of the old Forrest party, is. The result of last year's working of the Railway Department shows that the estimated revenue was £1,290,000, and the actual revenue £1,354,000; an increase of revenue above the estimate of £64,000. The estimated expenditure was £898,000; and the actual expenditure, £1,045,000. It will thus be seen that whilst we earned increased revenue to the extent of £64,000, we had an increased expenditure of £147,000. The excuse made in this House and elsewhere is, that the increase of wages brought about this unsatisfactory result. I took the trouble to call for a report to see what the increase of wages was for last year, over and above the amount voted by this

House, and the result shows that the increase of wages for last year, which the late Commissioner said was squeezed out of the department, and which went to bring about the increased expenditure of £147,000, amounted to only £8,000. Then we are told there is a loss on haulage of timber; but what I cannot understand is this, that whilst we were hauling timber at a loss, we were allowing timber companies the free use of the trucks on their own private lines, and we were writing off demurrage charges, although we were carrying the timber over the companies' lines at a loss. I would not like to give offence to the member for Wellington (Mr. Smith), or I would repeat the name of Millar Brothers once more, on the question of writing off demurrage. It appears to me that if we were carrying the timber at a loss, we should have charged hire for the trucks on a private line, and we should have charged demurrage when trucks were kept longer than the time allowed. Demurrage was charged in some instances, but not in others. We are told that the increase paid for coal last year, over and above the estimate, is a cause of the increased expenditure. Members will bear in mind that when the Railway Department put their estimates before the House, they were to buy Collie coal at the pit's mouth at 9s. 5d. per ton. It was subsequently agreed by the Government of the day and the companies to pay them 13s. per ton instead of 9s. 5d. This arrangement was made by the late Government in order that the workers might obtain an increased remuneration for getting out the coal. But what were the results? The Government agreed to give 13s., an increase of 3s. 7d., and when this arrangement was given effect to, the wage-earner got 7d. a ton, and the coal companies 3s. Was that assisting the wage-earners, or the companies? After all is said and done, the increased rate paid to the Collie coal companies by the late Government amounts to £1,000 a month; £12,000 a year. But this arrangement was made about the middle of the last financial year, so the increased expenditure, owing to the higher price paid for coal last year, amounted to £4,500. It will thus be seen that the increase of the rate for Collie coal last year did not

have much to do with the increase of £147,000 in the expenditure. We are told that there was a loss on the haulage of this Collie coal, and that consequently there was a loss to the department. We are told that the department lost revenue because Collie coal was carried at a loss. But what do we find on looking into the matter? That nearly the whole of the Collie coal is used by the Railway Department.

MR. GEORGE: Not all.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The bulk of the Collie coal is used by the Railway Department; and the Railway Department take it at the pit's mouth at 13s. per ton, whereas to my mind they should take it delivered at Perth, debiting the working expenses accordingly by adding the cost of the railage from Collie to Perth—debiting the additional cost of haulage to the working expenses at Perth—[SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—and crediting the amount for haulage to the South-Western line. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] But we are told here that the South-Western line—I am pleased the member for the Murray (Mr. George) has just come in—that the South-Western line is worked at a loss.

MR. CONNOR: Whose fault is that?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is not my fault, at any rate; because I am endeavouring to bring about a better result. I am now trying to show how I proposed to do it; though hon. members opposite are not going to allow me to do it.

MR. GEORGE and MR. CONNOR: Oh, we are!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes; for a day or two. The bulk of the Collie coal is carried over the South-Western railway for railway purposes; and the South-Western line is not credited for the carriage of the coal.

MR. GEORGE: What?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The South-Western line is not credited with the carriage of the coal; for if the line were so credited, the amount would immediately or should immediately become a debit to working expenses. This, however, would have a tendency to increase the percentage of working expenses: hence the Railway

Department get over the difficulty by neither debiting nor crediting.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The department does not—

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Oh, the hon. member can reply to me to-morrow!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The carriage of coal from here to Coolgardie is neither credited nor debited.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member can reply to me to-morrow. The reason for neither crediting nor debiting the cost of the carriage is that if the South-Western line were credited with the revenue and the working expenses of the department were debited accordingly, there would be a debit of 100 per cent.; and rightly so, too. The result then would be an increase in the ratio of working expenses.

MR. GEORGE: We will look into that point.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They got over the difficulty by not crediting the freight to the South-Western line and in not debiting it to working expenses.

MR. GEORGE: Who are "they"?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The officers administering the department.

MR. F. CONNOR: But you are in charge.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes; but I cannot reorganise in a couple of weeks a system which it took five years to disorganise.

MR. TAYLOR: Ten years!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It took five years to disorganise the department; and you must give me a chance. I have been in office only five months: for two months of that period I was in bed, for three months I was without a secretary, and for three months without a General Manager. [Laughter.]

MR. F. CONNOR: You have been on your legs for a month now.

MR. MOORHEAD: Where is the credit, then?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is no credit at all. Collie coal is taken at the pit's mouth at 13s. a ton, and is debited to railway working expenses at 13s. per ton; and the cost of hauling the coal from Collie to Perth is neither debited nor credited. This, again,

constitutes one of the reasons why the South-Western line does not pay.

MR. GEORGE: We will alter all that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member, I have no doubt, when he takes my place—I understand he is to follow me—will look into the matter and alter it.

MR. GEORGE: I will buy a new pair of shoes the first time, with good kicking points on them, too!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I wish to draw attention to another matter which came under my notice. I am now only explaining a few of the difficulties I have had to contend with, and a few matters which require adjustment. Not that I shall have an opportunity of attending to these matters: I merely wish to draw the attention of my probable successor to them.

MR. GEORGE: You are not going to Karrakatta yet!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member will be taking office in a day or two. I find farther that the Midland Railway Company have been living practically on the railways of this State.

MR. GEORGE: And yet you want to give them £1,400,000 for their property!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Nearly all the goods travelling over the Midland line are loaded at Fremantle by the Railway Department or by the consignee. The goods are loaded at Fremantle, and the trucks go through to Midland Junction and are handed over to the Midland Railway Company. The company then take the trucks, run them over their line and hand them over to the Government at the other end. The Government discharge the trucks, and the Government are responsible for any shortages or discrepancies there may be. Any shortages or discrepancies occurring on the Midland line the Government are responsible for; because the Government take possession of the goods at this end and take possession of them again at the other end. Thus any discrepancies or shortages are laid to the charge of the Government. As regards the hire of the Government trucks running over the Midland line, the Midland Company have the free use of them.

MR. GEORGE: This is what you might call the missing link.

MR. HOPKINS: The link has been missing lately.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: This is one of the reasons why the Midland Company are doing so well, and are getting so independent, and want such a big price for their railway.

MEMBERS: Oh!

MR. HUTCHINSON: That is one of the reasons why you tried to block the appointment of a committee, I suppose.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Was that the member for Geraldton? I really thought the hon. member had been knocked out altogether, that a public meeting held to-day at Geraldton had finished him.

MR. GEORGE: How much a head did you pay the people to attend that meeting?

MR. HUTCHINSON: The meeting was engineered by the Government.

MR. RESIDE: Oh, let us all go to the country!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Midland Company have, like a good many other people, done what they like with the Railway Department—done absolutely what they liked; and I have had to fight the Midland Company among others during my brief administration. But I say that if I am allowed to continue on the course I have set out on—

OPPOSITION MEMBER: You will suspend the Midland Company.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Not suspend them, perhaps; but possibly persuade them to reduce the price they are demanding for their railway, by making things so unpleasant for them and by enforcing such compliance with conditions as to make the company glad to sell at a satisfactory price; instead of allowing them to live on the State railways, as they have done for years past.

MR. JACOBY: The Colonial Treasurer won't like that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is another matter I have to deal with; and here I have to come back to Millar Brothers.

MR. GEORGE: Millar Brothers?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: There is no such firm in Western Australia.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member says the firm is not Millar Bros. He may call them

what he likes; but I will call them Millar Bros. for the time being.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: There is no such firm.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I find that certain demurrage charges —

OPPOSITION MEMBER: This is ancient history again.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No. Thousands of pounds were wiped off with the approval of the late Commissioner; but this is an amount not yet wiped off, and which will not be wiped off by me, at any rate.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Nor by me either.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: My successor, if he likes, may wipe it off.

MR. GEORGE: You won't have a successor!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Since the 1st July, 1899, to the 1st August, 1901, there is to the debit of Millar Bros. an accumulation for demurrage totalling between £3,000 and £4,000.

MR. WILSON: Sue them for it!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: And Millar Bros. won't pay.

MR. GEORGE: No; I don't suppose so.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Well, I propose to make them pay.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: Hooray!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Strange to say, the debits do not appear in the books of the department.

MR. TAYLOR: Perhaps these debits are payable by instalments of water, too.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: These debits do not appear in the books of the department, where they ought to appear.

MR. TAYLOR: Perhaps they have been paid off by water.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They do not appear in the books of the department, because there was an arrangement with Millar Bros. that a record should be kept, but that no debit should appear in the books.

MR. GEORGE: Who is running the railways? Millar Bros., or you?

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: We are.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Well, Millar Bros. have run the department until the last few months—until I assumed office. After some difficulty, I was able to obtain a return showing the amount due by Millar Bros., which amount the audit office advised me did not appear to the debit of Millar Bros. in the books of the department, as it should have done. That amount runs into between £3,000 and £4,000. The Chief Traffic Manager points out, in a report, that it is a just debt and should be paid. If I do not have an opportunity of making Millar Bros. pay, I hope my successor will make them.

Several **MEMBERS:** Hear, hear.

MR. WILSON: I would not necessarily treat it as a just debt, because the departmental officers say it is.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: If it is not a just debt, it should be adjusted.

MR. TEESDALE SMITH: It has been adjusted, time after time.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It has been going on since the 1st July, 1899.

MR. WILSON: It is not right.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is not right. I called for another report to show what companies were allowed to exceed their credit bonds, and who those companies were. Hon. members know that an ordinary customer must enter into a credit bond before he is allowed credit. Of course, we except from that rule a few people and corporations such as Millar Bros. and the Kurrawang Company.

MEMBER: And hundreds of others.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Any ordinary customer has to deposit a certain amount with the department, and that is the amount for which he is given credit. For instance, if I wanted £100 freight credit from the Railway Department, I should have to deposit £100; and when I reached my limit of £100, I should have to pay in another cheque or adjust the account by some other means. The return concerning credit bonds put before me showed that the bonds amounted to £1,860, whilst the liability against those bonds totalled £5,486. So that there was an overdraft against the bonds amounting to £3,626. Included in this return was

an amount of nearly £200 for Mr. Vanzetti, of Northam. No bond at all was entered into in that instance. Included in that amount was a sum of £1,500 standing to the debit of Baxter and Prince, and standing to their debit, moreover, for two or three years past. Now if Baxter and Prince do not owe that money, it should not be allowed to stand to their debit in the books of the department. [Several **MEMBERS:** Hear, hear.] Either it is a just debt and should be paid; or it is not a just debt and should be written off.

MR. WILSON: Why do not you sue them for it?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Hon. members will grant that Rome was not built in a day; and the man who undertakes the reorganisation of the Railway Department will not achieve it in a day, or in a year, either.

MR. JACOBY: Why bring these accounts up in the House unless you are certain they are owing?

MR. CONNOR: Hear, hear.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I take it that when I call for a return and get one of this nature, it is my duty, as Commissioner of Railways, to inform hon. members of it. I wish to show the difficulties which I as Commissioner have had to contend with—

MR. JACOBY: We will take your word for that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: And the wrongs I have tried to right. In connection with the return I called for, all the departmental officers complained of the system of book-keeping. Will hon. members believe that I had a report from the Auditor General during the last few days in connection with one of the principal cash books of the department, kept at the Central Railway Station, to the effect that to balance that cash book took fully a week, and that there was only one man in the service who could do it. And what puzzled me was: if anything happened to that man; if he died suddenly, or was killed as some unfortunate railway employees are occasionally killed in an accident, what would happen to the cash of the Railway Department? The Auditor General's point was that as it took a week to balance the cash book, if anything happened to be wrong and a clerk professed

to be sick, it would be a week before they found out the discrepancy, and the clerk might have left the State. That is not a satisfactory state of things, nor is it one for which I am responsible. But the leader of the Opposition, who wishes to undertake more responsible duties than those of the Commissioner of Railways, is responsible.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The Auditor General gave very creditable testimony to the railway accounts.

THE PREMIER: Yes; he said "the Railway Department were hoodwinking the Audit Department."

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I shall deal with another report of the Auditor General; and this is not a year ago nor a month ago; it is a report dated the 29th October, 1901, within the last week or ten days only. I will read what the Auditor General's officer has to say.

MEMBER: What is his name?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Charles E. Newsham. It is addressed to the Auditor General, and signed by this officer. He says:—

I have the honour to report that during an examination of the cash accounts of the Paymaster for Railways, I find the following transactions shown in the cash book which require explanation:—On 3rd July, 1901, a cheque for £1,525 6s. 9d. was drawn for wages, and not cashed.

Hon. members will please note the amount.

The entries in the cash book appear as follows:—Cash book No. 7, 3rd July: The bank account is credited with the amount, £1,323 8s. 11d. In cash book No. 8, 2nd July, the day before the cheque was drawn, the bank is credited with £201 17s. 10d., the balance of the amount. These entries clearly show that the balances in the bank as shown on the dates mentioned are not correct. I would draw your attention to the practice of carrying forward in black lead pencil the daily totals and balances in the cash book until the end of the month; and I beg respectfully to point out that that form of cash book which permits of irregular entries as shown above, is hardly suitable for recording the disbursements of the moneys of the Treasury.

MR. WILSON: Change your accountant.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Why, I tried to change my General Manager, and what a howl was there!

MR. GEORGE: Did you ask the accountant to send in his resignation?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No; I will explain that. The report continues:—

On the 5th September, 1901, an amount of £603 6s. 8d. was received from the West Australian Firewood Supply Company.

I should like to explain that this is the same old Kurrawang Company. It appears here as the Goldfields Firewood Supply Company:—

This money was placed to the credit of "Payments in suspense account." In cash book, 15th October, nearly six weeks later, part of this amount, £444 12s., was paid to the Treasury to the credit of "Sidings and other works account," leaving a balance still in suspense of £158 14s. 8d.

MR. GEORGE: The General Manager is not responsible for that.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am talking about the Railway Department as built up by the ex-Commissioner of Railways, the present leader of the Opposition—the Railway Department which he blames me for not reorganising. It is only a few months ago the hon. member said it was the best-managed and best-equipped Railway Department in Australia. The report continues:—

A satisfactory explanation should be given as to why the delay occurred in paying the sum of £444 12s. into the Treasury, and also why the balance of this money is still lying to the credit of "Payments in suspense account." Another matter which I desire to draw your attention to is the undesirable practice still in vogue of cashing officers' private cheques from the office cash.

MR. GEORGE: I thought that had been stopped.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Instructions have been issued to that effect by me; and if I had been allowed to pursue the policy with which I started, effect would have been given to those instructions.

MR. GEORGE: The Premier said he had given those instructions.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: And the officer who refused to comply with those instructions would have been suspended. But what do I find? That immediately I begin to undertake reorganisation and to put these men in their places, there is a howl and a cry throughout this House that we have a Czar of Russia trying to manage these railways. But you will never manage them properly without a Czar of Russia.

The leader of the Opposition claims to have had charge of the railways for five years, and I claim to have had charge of them for five months. I guarantee I have brought about a better result in five months than he will achieve in the next five years, if he takes them on and continues the practices of the past. I say that the railways, or rather that the officers of the Railway Department, had charge of him. He had no control at all over the department. Another difficulty I had to contend with I may just as well mention at this stage, the difficulty of placing the responsibility upon the shoulders of any officer. In the past, the custom has been for the officers of the department to meet every month in conference to decide certain matters. That meeting was known as the General Manager's conference. On the following day they held what was known as the Commissioner's conference—an executive council of their own. The officers met and sat round a table: the same officers—

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Not all of them.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The principal officers met, and sat round the table. The seat at the head of the table was reserved; and when the Commissioner arrived, every officer stood on his feet; the Commissioner took his seat, the officers sat down, and the business was proceeded with.

MR. HOPKINS: "All hail, Macbeth!"

MR. JACOBY: What is wrong with that?

MR. CONNOR: The only funny thing about it was the Commissioner.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It was not very funny; it was somewhat serious for me. To proceed, I attended two of these conferences. I made up my mind I would discontinue the practice at the earliest possible date; but I attended two of the conferences to see the manner in which business had been conducted by my predecessor; and I learned that at each Commissioner's conference the General Manager had met his subordinates on the previous day, had got them to indorse his action, then on the following day made his recommendation to the Commissioner; the Commissioner approved, and nobody was responsible. There was no direct recommendation by a particular officer that certain work should be done. It was agreed to in conference. Minutes were

kept of the proceedings of the conference. I think they had a printing office of their own. Minutes were kept, but there was no record as to who had made the recommendation; and the result is that nobody is responsible for the many works which have been done. They were "agreed to in Commissioner's conference." Now, I abolished the conferences; I called upon my heads of departments to make their own recommendations to me; and if I thought they were good recommendations, I approved of them, and if not, I sent them back and made suggestions of my own. I arrived at a conclusion, and sheeted the responsibility to someone who was responsible for seeing the work properly carried out. There is another matter I want to point out. Hon. members on the Government side of this House, when sitting in the Opposition, pointed out that the custom of the Railway Department in the past was to buy rolling-stock, charge it to the capital account of the railways, and wear it out and not repair it; because, in repairing it, the cost of repairs became a debit to working expenses account, and that debit the department wished to avoid. We have 259 engines in this State at the present time, only 108 of which are in running order. That is a nice bill of repairs for my successor to meet!

MR. WILSON: You blocked the removal of the loco. shops.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Ah!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I may have blocked the removal of the workshops; but I never blocked their construction on a suitable site. I blocked their removal to Midland Junction, because I did not think there was any necessity for it; but surely there are many other places beside Midland Junction on which they could have been constructed.

MR. GEORGE: Fremantle again!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Only a few months ago we took stock in the Railway Department; and what did we find? That 101 wagons, of the estimated value of £18,620, cannot be found at all. We do not know where they are; they cannot be found. In order to adjust the account, I arranged that the railway capital account must be cut down by that amount.

MR. GEORGE: You should find the trucks.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We cannot. The officers of the department cannot, and I have not the time to go out and look for them. Stock-taking also discloses that there are 1,399 wagons that will cost £40 each to repair; that is a debit of £56,280 that I, or my successor, will have to find to repair the trucks. That is the way our railways have been managed in the past. They have knocked the rolling-stock to pieces, they have lost trucks, they have broken up engines instead of repairing them, and have bought new ones and debited them to capital. Stock-taking also discloses that nine locomotives were purchased at £17,181, and when purchased they were debited to the railway capital of the State. They were sold for £5,826. There was a natural deficiency between the purchase and re-sale of £11,355. This amount cannot reasonably become a debit to this year's working expenses. It is one of the transactions of the past, and it has to be written off capital.

MR. WILSON: Spread it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There is another difficulty. You cannot spread it; the Audit Act will not allow it. Nine locomotives are only fit for scrap iron.

MR. GEORGE: I will buy them from you.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: They will have to be replaced. They are there and must be replaced; at any rate they are of no use, and they will cost £22,900 to replace.

MR. GEORGE: I will give you £50, and remove them out of your road.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The mechanical engineer says it will cost £22,900 for nine new locomotives. Each year a number of other locomotives are becoming fit for scrap-iron. That means that the number of engines must increase, which will mean an increase in working expenses to replace; and the money will have to be provided for out of the earnings of the railways. I think, in the face of all this, in the face of my criticism to-night, and in the face of the criticism of a number of members who have preceded me, and who will follow me, it is safe to say that the leader of the Opposition, the gentleman who

had control for five years—and I say it honestly and believe it to be true, and I believe the country will back me up if given an opportunity—has impertinence to move a motion of this kind, well knowing, as he should know—I do not know if he did know before—the condition in which he left the railways of the State when he deserted the last Government, and the condition in which he will land the country if he is allowed to assume office at the present juncture.

MR. J. L. NANSON (Murchison): I have to apologise to the hon. member who has just sat down for being asleep during portion of his remarks. As I dropped off, I thought I heard the words,

Men may come and men may go.

But I go on for ever.

And as I awoke from my sleep, it seemed to me that my dream had come true, because the hon. member was still going on and going very strong, and with every appearance of going on "for ever." I am glad to see now he is apparently leaving the House; therefore he will not have an opportunity of speaking again to-night—the infliction would be too great. I am sure you will sympathise with me, Mr. Speaker, when I assure you that if I had to choose between going to the gallows and immediately listening to a speech of the same enormous and dreary proportions as that of the hon. member, I should feel at the present moment inclined to choose the fate of the gallows. When the John Davies inquiry board was appointed, the members of this House thought they would at least be spared a recital of the vast array of detail that the hon. member has given us to-night. They thought these matters would be threshed out by the board, and that members would have to deal with the results. I would not mind so much if the hon. member were not so exceedingly dull. The Government gutter organ, if scurrilous, has at least the merit of being amusing; but the hon. member is not even amusing. I protest that it is not fair that because the John Davies board failed to convict the hon. member's pet aversion of guilt for alleged malfeasance of duty, therefore the Commissioner of Railways should for the space of nearly three hours inflict on us an undue amount of verbiage, with very little matter in it. I trust that when the hon. member relin-

quishes his portfolio, the first thing he will do is to take a ticket for China; and I make this suggestion because, as members of the House are no doubt aware, there is always in China a very keen demand for any new torture, and the more refined its description may be, the higher price it will fetch. It seems to me that if the hon. member will go to China, he will immediately give to the governing powers of that country an instance of his oratorical powers, and he will immediately be engaged at a salary very much larger than that which he now draws, in order to inflict the new refined species of torture on the unfortunate criminals of that country. In the Middle Ages, I may remind members, it used to be the practice to kill criminals by slowly allowing drops of water to filter on their heads. To-night the Commissioner has allowed his drops of words, dropped out so slowly and regularly and with such endless reiteration, that I believe his new species of torture, if continued a little longer, would have proved thoroughly effective, and the Government would have succeeded in defeating the no-confidence motion, if only for the reason that there would have been no members on this (Opposition) side left alive. The Commissioner tells us he attended conferences of railway servants. I wonder if it was his habit, when attending those conferences, to deliver similar orations to the unfortunate officials. If he did so, it is an easy matter to understand why there has been friction in the Railway Department. Having given these few remarks on the lengthy speech of the hon. member, I should like to observe that at least one point has been made clear in this debate, that however much members on this side of the House may try, it is difficult to please the Government. When, early in the session, hon. members announced their intention of giving the Ministry a fair trial, they were invited to turn that Ministry out, and were met with the taunt, when they refused to turn the Ministry out, that they dared not because they were afraid to face a general election. Now the scene is changed. The Premier and other members of his party are uniting in an *ad misericordiam* appeal that they have not been given a chance to prove their mettle. Surely it is humiliat-

ing to hear the Premier pleading, as he did at the commencement of his speech on Tuesday, for more time to prove his worth, when again and again with blustering defiance he has challenged the Opposition to "tread on the tail of his coat."

THE PREMIER: Or feel the toe of his boot.

MR. NANSON: It has not been the experience of any hon. member on this side to feel the boot of the Premier. The Premier kicked, no doubt, and it is an unmanly thing to do; but, as sometimes happens with people who kick, he missed his mark and came to the ground himself. I would suggest that his present attitude is suggestive of the whimperings of a beaten and discredited bully, who never wished to fight and tried to avoid doing so, playing the "game of bluff" for all it is worth. The fact is —

MR. TAYLOR: Rats!

MR. NANSON: As soon as the hon. member for Mt. Margaret has finished, I will proceed.

MR. GEORGE: Get vermin-killer for him.

MR. NANSON: Has the hon. member finished? The fact is that in every issue of importance that has come up this session, in every issue involving a far-reaching consideration of policy, the Government have gone on the policy embodied in the lines:

He who fights and runs away
May live to fight another day.

MEMBER: You ran away.

MR. NANSON: It is only when driven into a corner by a motion so clear, so short, and so direct that there can be no possible mistake as to its meaning, that this Government of bluster, this Government of hypocrisy, this Government of political Pecksniffs, fight when it finds no method of escape. On a question of importance, like the recognition of the Railway Association in the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, Ministers dared not stand or fall. They knew that if they did, they would have to face the displeasure of the Opposition, and what is worse for them, an adverse vote of the Labour party. Without the votes of the Labour party, and without the support of the Labour party, members opposite would be so small in number, so insignifi-

cant in talent, that they would not be worth calling a party at all.

MR. HOPKINS: All since you left us.

MR. NANSON: When we consider the numerical proportions of the power of the Government party, it is easy to understand why the Premier is "your most humble, your mostobedient servant." No exception can be taken to an alliance on equal terms, and of an honourable character, between the Government benches and the Labour benches; but I submit that the present relationship is not of that description. It is a relationship rather more like that which exists between a slave and a slave-master. An instance was afforded some weeks ago, and was alluded to in forcible and amusing terms in that very witty speech with which the member for South Perth (Mr. Gordon) favoured the House last night. The Premier, forgetting for a moment that he was "on the chain," referred in vigorous terms to some objections by a labour union to the employment of a Hindoo tailor; but the interjections by the member for Hannans (Mr. Reside), the member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor), and other members of that party soon reminded the hon. gentleman that his was a strictly dependent position; and a speech which was begun with a fine show of manly independence ended in a bondsman's key, with "bated breath and whispering humbleness." The Premier's attitude regarding the sliding scale is another instance of his determination not to stand or fall by a single issue, but to run away when he has an opportunity. On no two occasions has the Premier spoken about the sliding scale in identical terms. He said on Tuesday in this House that it was not the intention of the Government to interfere with the sliding scale. In the Assembly on the 22nd October, he said he would be very glad if Parliament would abolish the sliding scale.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. NANSON: In the Queen's Hall he said that what was known as the sliding scale had been introduced; and a voice immediately from the body of the hall cried out, "Abolish it." Then the Premier went on to say that, owing to his promises, he could not move to abolish that scale, but if any party took the initiative they would probably find his

opposition to the removal would not be so strong that they could not overcome it. The hon. member, if I may call him an hon. member, admitted that when he was a federalist he was pledged to maintain the sliding scale.

THE PREMIER: So I am now.

MR. NANSON: I wonder what meaning is attached to the word "pledge" by the hon. gentleman, when he tells us that if an agitation arises to remove that sliding scale he will not offer any opposition, but will stand idly by and not help. What value is the support of the hon. gentleman worth, in circumstances like those? What value are we to attach to pledges when meanings of this kind are put on them? Surely that is not the meaning that members of his honourable profession put upon the giving of a pledge! Surely he is an exception to the rule, and the majority of the members of his profession do not, when they say they pledge themselves to maintain a thing, go the next day or the next few weeks and tell the country they will offer no opposition when that thing which they have pledged themselves to maintain is attacked!

THE PREMIER: Why, you do not read your own articles.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not wonder at it, either.

MR. NANSON: Now I should like to deal rather more in detail with the speech which the Premier favoured this House with on Tuesday; and I would remind him—although I do not object to interjections, because I always think they are to some extent a tribute to the speaker, for they show his shots are hitting home—that when he was speaking to this side of the House we treated him with studied courtesy; and when we allowed him to proceed without a solitary interjection, it somewhat disconcerted him, I believe.

THE PREMIER: No; it did not.

MR. NANSON: I can assure him that if he does not interject, it will not discomfort me in any way; and if he does interject, it will not discomfort me, but it may simply have the effect of keeping the House a little later than usual, because I like to hear the hon. gentleman's interjections. Whilst he makes them I will stop speaking, and as soon as he finishes, if the Speaker do not

deem it advisable to stop him, I will proceed with my remarks.

THE PREMIER: They will only be given by way of assistance.

MR. NANSON: I am much obliged to the hon. gentleman. He spoke last Tuesday for three hours, and his attack was mainly directed against the leader of the Opposition and Mr. John Davies. It struck me, as it must have struck every member of the House who is honest and sincere, that he modelled his methods in that speech on the Government gutter organ. The hon. gentleman has admitted on one occasion that he is an appreciative and constant reader.

THE PREMIER: I read the *West Australian* every day.

MR. NANSON: On one celebrated occasion—I believe it was in the Queen's Hall—the hon. gentleman told us he could fight like a tiger. Well, the illustration in one sense was somewhat apposite, because it was just at that time he was contemplating his attack upon the Railway Association. The hon. member is familiar with the natural habits of a tiger, and no doubt he will know that although the tiger is a personification of ferocity and unsparing cruelty, it is a beast characterised by a great amount of cowardice; it is in the habit of springing on its foes unawares, from the safe refuge of an ambush; and, except when driven to bay by desperation, it will never meet a beast so strong as itself.

THE PREMIER: Then why attack me?

MR. NANSON: It seems to me that this illustration of "fighting like a tiger" was somewhat apposite, because it explains and illustrates very well the way in which he has attacked the Railway Association in his Arbitration and Conciliation Bill. But when I heard the hon. member speak on Tuesday, I felt that he had done an injustice to that savage beast in comparing it to himself. I felt, after listening to the exhibition on Tuesday, that his methods resembled those of another animal to which the scientific name of *Mephitis* is given.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: They do not understand that.

MR. NANSON: The Minister does not understand what that means.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I said your side do not.

MR. NANSON: I will explain; but I gave the Latin name because it is somewhat an offensive name in the vernacular. In the homely and expressive Saxon, the name is the word "skunk." When I call the hon. gentleman a skunk, I do so strictly in the terms of natural history. I do so because his attack answers and his methods answer in a very remarkable degree to that extremely nasty, that extremely unsavoury, and I suppose that most loathsome of all animals.

MR. HOPKINS: That is charming!

MR. NANSON: The skunk, I may remind the House, depends very much for its defence upon an exceedingly foetid fluid, and when assailed it discharges that fluid with considerable force. So confident does the skunk seem of the efficacy of this peculiar mode of defence, that it permits itself to be approached till it is just upon the point of being seized, and then it discharges this nasty, this sickening, this disgusting, this beastly battery.

MR. HOPKINS: Mr. Speaker——

THE PREMIER: Don't stop him.

MR. NANSON: Naturalists are agreed that there are a great number of species of the skunk, and after listening to some of the other speeches made in the course of this debate on the Government side of the House, and particularly the speech by the Commissioner of Railways, I think it is not improbable that the Premier is not the sole representative of the skunk tribe sitting on the Government side. The Premier made a violent, unjustifiable, and disgraceful attack upon the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piessé). The character of this hon. gentleman, and the character of that hon. gentleman is well understood by the people of this country. They were both born here, and both have been bred here. They have lived in the view of their fellow colonists, and I venture to say it was absolutely unnecessary for the leader of the Opposition the other night to make any sort of exculpation whatever. With regard to these attacks he may have said, in the language of our greatest poet:

I am armed so strong in honesty
That they pass by me as the idle wind,
Which I respect not.

When you take the character of this hon. gentleman, and the reputation of that

hon. gentleman, who can suppose for one moment—[Laughter by a member on the Government benches.] When the hon. member laughs in that way it reminds me of "the loud laugh that speaks the vacant mind." But it cannot be an amusing thing for a man of honour to know that his charges have rebounded against himself, to know that he has been condemned in the public opinion of this State as a dastardly libeller who, under the privileges of this House, has made charges which he cannot substantiate. The evil habit of casting aspersions and making insinuations has become so confirmed with the Premier that he cannot handle any subject without leaving upon it the slimy finger-prints of innuendo. The Premier has devoted so much time to abusing previous Administrations that he had very little time indeed in his speech on Tuesday to defend his own; and he adopts a characteristic principle of the Old Bailey practitioner, who I believe, when he has no case, starts away to abuse the other side. He had, however, something to say about the inability of the Government to reform the civil service within the space of five months. There might have been something in that excuse if the hon. gentleman and his colleagues had shown any indication of a desire to carry out reforms. He told us on Tuesday that the service was admittedly over-manned. If that be so, why, I should like to know, has he introduced into that service a man from outside to fill a vacancy which could have been equally well filled, if not better filled, by those already in the service? One notable instance is that of Mr. G. W. Davies. The Commissioner of Railways told us that at the time of making that appointment there was no man in the service capable of doing the peculiar work required of that gentleman. I can well believe him, if it be true that Mr. G. W. Davies was needed to play the part of the tale-bearer and of the sneak, the part of the spy and the informer. But apparently another gentleman is now filling that position, a gentleman chosen from the ranks of the civil service; and I have not yet noticed that he has been suspended. No doubt —

MR. HOPKINS: Mr. Speaker, may I ask whether the hon. member is in order in reading his speech?

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member is reading his speech.

MR. HOPKINS: Oh, that's all right, then.

MR. JACOBY: The Premier prompted you in that.

MR. NANSON: I am not in the habit of reading my speeches.

THE PREMIER: No; you only write them out.

MR. NANSON: I am observing that the gentleman who now holds the position of secretary to the Commissioner for Railways has not yet been suspended; but perhaps that will come later, if he refuses to adapt himself to the very peculiar tactics which the Commissioner of Railways apparently associates with the discharge of secretarial duties. Then there is the case referred to by the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) last night, in which a former bookkeeper in the employ of Mr. Sommers, at present the Minister for Lands, but then keeping an hotel in Coolgardie, was appointed by the Attorney General assistant clerk in the police court. Are we to understand there was no one throughout the entire length and breadth of the service capable of filling that position? Surely it is too great a strain on our credulity! Yet, if we are to believe it—and we must believe it as a matter of fact, for has not the Premier told us that the service is admittedly over-manned? [THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Hear, hear.] It is impossible to believe that so high-minded, so scrupulous, so honourable a gentleman, one so severe in regard to the shortcomings of others, would be guilty of a petty piece of political jobbery in order to oblige a colleague of his own! The Premier has also told us, as one excuse why he has not entered on the reorganisation of the departments, that he must have money if that reorganisation is to be proceeded with. I can well believe that, if the endeavour be to reorganise the public service, which is admittedly over-manned, by bringing into it people from outside, on the occurrence of vacancies which could just as well be filled from within the service. The hon. gentleman also told us that the Public Service Act stood in the way of a reorganisation of the public service. That Act, however, was passed last session, and the hon. gentleman was, I believe, in the

House at the time it was passed. [MEMBER: No.] At any rate, he as a public man, I take it, followed the course of business in the House. Several of his colleagues were in the House at the time. Surely, if he saw the Act was faulty, and if he was really earnest in his desire to proceed with the reorganisation of the departments without any delay, one of his first actions on meeting Parliament, on the assembling of Parliament this session, would have been to introduce a short amending Bill to that Act: a Bill which would have removed any doubt that may exist as to the power of the Government to get rid of unnecessary civil servants, civil servants for whom there is not sufficient work to do. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The Premier has urged, as one reason why the House should reject the motion, that if the Government are turned out at the present time it will not be possible to get supplies. I do not hesitate for a moment to characterise a statement of that kind as an absolute mistatement. [MR. HOPKINS: Bah!] It is open to any private member at the present time to move the third reading of the Supply Bill, and though the Premier might bluster and bluff in his accustomed manner, he would not be able to prevent that private member from doing so. Moreover, I take it that as soon as this motion is disposed of, the Supply Bill will be proceeded with, and that, too, before the House adjourns. The hon. gentleman, if he has any regard for his character, ought not to make misstatements of that kind; because, apart from considerations of the interests of the country for which he professes to be so solicitous, statements of that description do really sail very close to absolute falsehood. Another reason given why the Government should not be turned out, and a reason on which great stress has been laid by a number of members on the other (Government) side of the House, is that if the present Government do not remain in office, it will not be possible to proceed with a great part, or rather with any, of the legislation already in progress. This statement, like many of those made by the hon. gentleman and by hon. members on his side of the House, is likewise wholly without justification. [Several interjections.] I was about to

explain that on the House resuming after the adjournment of a few weeks—I presume the adjournment will not be for more than a month, at the outside—the business can be taken up where it was dropped. If Bills have to be sacrificed, it will not be because of the change of Government: it will be because the Bills are of that class of carelessly-examined, scissors-and-paste legislation of which the member for East Perth (Hon. W. H. James) is so noted an exponent. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear hear.] As regards social legislation, I take it that the difference between the new Government and the old one—or rather I must say the present one—will be that while the present Government give us theoretical legislation, the new one will give us practical legislation. The member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie) laughs; and his, I suppose, is the laugh of incredulity. I will, therefore, give the hon. member an example of what I mean; because I understand he has for some hours, or for the last day or so, been an ardent inquirer as to what the democracy on this (Opposition) side of the House means to do. [MR. HASTIE: That's right.] Reference was made yesterday afternoon by the member for Northam (Hon. G. Throssell) to the Land Act Amendment Bill which has been passed in another place. The hon. gentleman referred to the possibilities of that Bill for helping the working man. The ideas which the hon. gentleman expounded are such as might be expected from a man of his broad and statesmanlike views. At the present time, he pointed out, we give to the farmer 160 acres of land free of cost, and provide him with financial assistance during the development of his holding. The member for Northam proceeded to argue—and I hope this will form part of the policy of the future Government—that we must now proceed to give the farm labourer, and every other man who desires it and will make his home on it, a grant of 10 acres of land. Legislation of this kind has one great social advantage: if adopted in time, it will in future years, should depression unfortunately come upon the country, largely relieve the cry of the unemployed. It will take men out of the towns, and it will give to them a happy home amid healthy and invigor-

ating surroundings. I take it that the member for Northam meant, by his remarks, to convey a desire to provide for the granting of assistance by the Agricultural Bank to the holders of these 10-acre blocks. Indeed, he has assured me that this form of assistance is already provided for in the Agricultural Bank Act, of which it is perhaps hardly necessary to remind the House he is one of the originators. The member for Northam, who is one of the members of that old Forrest régime which the Premier affects to despise so much, was the originator, certainly in this State and I believe in Australia, of this invaluable method of assisting the poor man, of assisting the struggling settler. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] That method he now wishes to carry farther, in order to assist the working man to make a home for himself. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] If, as I trust, the proposals of the hon. member are adopted by this House, it will mean that while the present Government give the labourer a Bill, the new Government will give him a home. It means, in other words, that instead of giving the labourer a stone, the member for Northam will give him bread. This is the kind of labour and social legislation which, in a special degree, commands my sympathy, my admiration, and my support, and I venture to say the sympathy, admiration, and support of all hon. members on this (Opposition) side of the House. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It is based on the principles of the great poet of democracy, Robert Burns, who sings:

To make a happy household clime
For weans and wife,
That's the true pathos and sublime
Of human life.

There are other subjects on which I should have liked to touch to-night; but the hour is getting late, and as there are several members who have still to speak, I have no doubt my shortcomings will be made up. Before I leave detail, however, I would just like to refer to one other matter, because it is a matter of extremely great importance. I regret that while I am referring to it the Commissioner of Railways is not in his place in the House. The fact is significant that in the whole of that long three-hours speech we had from the Premier,

and in the whole of that longer three-hours speech—for it seemed longer, owing to the manner of its delivery—from the Commissioner of Railways, although we had an intolerable amount of useless and irrelevant detail, we were not told, and we have never yet been told, what the Premier and the members of the Government intend to do with Mr. John Davies. I challenge members on the Treasury bench, before this debate closes, to let it go forth to the country—do they, or do they not, intend to act on the report of their own appointed board; and do they, or do they not, intend to reinstate Mr. John Davies?

MR. HASTIE: I hope not.

MR. NANSON: The member for Kanowna says he hopes not. I hope the Premier will endeavour, for once, to give a straight answer to a straight question, and will tell members on that (Labour) bench whether he intends to reinstate Mr. John Davies or not. It is an interesting question, and it is a question that should be answered before the motion is put to the vote.

THE PREMIER: It is a State secret.

MR. NANSON: A State secret, to be kept secret until the vote has been taken! It is one of those secrets which the hon. member—

THE PREMIER: I have no intention whatever of telling you. (Laughter.)

MR. NANSON: The Premier has no intention whatever of telling us whether —

THE PREMIER: None whatever.

MR. NANSON: I ask the House to mark, and the country to mark, the coward's castle in which the hon. member takes refuge. A State secret! A State secret, forsooth! The hon. member is afraid of losing the votes of the members on the Labour bench. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] He has to admit that he intends to get rid of Mr. John Davies: for, if he says he does not intend to get rid of Mr. Davies, the Labour members will immediately have to vote against the Government.

MR. HASTIE: Who said that?

MR. RESIDE: The country will decide all that.

MR. NANSON: The issue now before this House is, I take it: shall the Administration be continued in the hands of the Premier, who, on his own con-

fession, does not know the meaning of a pledge, and who, judging by his public utterances, thinks a solemn promise may be broken if sufficient pressure be brought to bear on him? If the hon. gentleman is denied the possession of statesmanlike ability, the House is at least justified in demanding from Ministers of the Crown the same honesty, the same sincerity of purpose, and the same allegiance to principle as hon. members practise in private life. It has been said that on this motion public opinion is against members who sit on this (Opposition) side of the House. Whatever hon. members on the other side of the House may choose to comfort themselves with, I do not believe that is the case.

MR. TAYLOR: You represent a minority.

MR. NANSON: But assuming for the sake of argument that it is so, is public opinion always so invariably right that we have no need for men of iron mould and steadfastness of purpose, who will themselves do what they conceive to be right regardless of what others say? I venture to think that in a democratic country, where public opinion is the ultimate court of appeal, there can be no need greater than for true leaders of the people, for men who are ready not only to accept the honours and the advantages of the position, but its pains, its penalties, yea even its martyrdoms.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear. Are you a martyr?

MR. NANSON: The world has no lack of so-called leaders like the Premier; but it has few genuine leaders.

THE PREMIER: We have you.

MR. NANSON: The sycophant of to-day is to be found less frequently in the palaces of Sovereigns than in the Parliament House, on the public platform, and in the public journals.

THE PREMIER: I hope you are not reading your speech.

MR. NANSON: I am not reading my speech.

THE PREMIER: That is all right.

MR. NANSON: And the object of his adulation and his sycophancy is King Demos, the sovereign people.

HON. W. H. JAMES: What?

OPPOSITION MEMBER: Bring out your harness.

ANOTHER MEMBER: True; here is the "outrigger."

MR. NANSON: We hear much now-a-days of expediency; we are never tired of extolling the virtues of compromise; but our first duty is to abide by principle, however much it may pain hon. members opposite to remember that first duty. Our first duty, I say, is to abide by principle, even if having to do so should happen for the time to bring us into conflict with the majority of our fellow citizens. I contend there can be no higher patriotism of which human nature is capable. Whether or not the verdict of posterity has justified the action of those men who, in times past, have dared to stand for the moment against a temporary wave of public opinion, I care not; but of this I am certain: without the revivifying influence of men of that stamp, society would very soon sink beneath the burden of its corruptions.

HON. W. H. JAMES: But those men fought in minorities. You do not follow their example.

MR. NANSON: For the present, I believe we happen to be on the side of a majority. Perhaps we were not always in that position. The hon. member has reminded us in the course of his speech that in the country we are in a minority, that the majority is only in this House.

HON. W. H. JAMES: You will not appeal to the country.

MR. NANSON: I am assisting the hon. member, for I am assuming for the sake of argument that we are in the majority here and in a minority in the country. None the less it is our duty, and we are sent here to perform that duty, to do what our conscience dictates, regardless of what might be the consequence. I will not go so far as to say that the minority are always right. That would involve the foolish contention that the majority must always be wrong. This much I do say; there are a few good men and brave who stand at the beginning of every movement for the true benefit of humanity; and it is to their devotion and to their self-sacrifice that the world owes its deepest gratitude.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. NANSON: In every period of history they have lived and have taught their imperishable lessons. May we still, if the need arises, learn to imitate

their heroism and their strength of purpose. In defence of the right, no odds daunted them. They could at least give their lives, and all that life holds dear. Their words of exhortation to follow in their steps and to play our parts manfully seem to come to us from all the ages. We can hear them in imagination saying:

They out-talked thee, hissed thee, tore thee:

Better men fared thus before thee,
Fired their ringing shot and passed,
Hotly charged, and sank at last.

Charge once more, then, and be dumb:
Let the victors, when they come,
When the forts of folly fall,
Find thy body by the wall.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (Dundas): I have the undeserved reputation of one who asks a lot of questions; but I think there is one question I have a perfect right to ask to-night: Have we all in this House descended to the lowest gutter politics? I must say that if we continue the tone of the debate which has been so apparent during the last few days, it becomes a question whether it would not be advisable to change the name of this Chamber, and to substitute for it "The Western Australian Government Laundry." I am absolutely disgusted to find that the whole tone of this debate has been one of attack on the honour of the members of this House. For some weeks past, it has been apparent where our debates are drifting to. We have had one motion desiring the House to affirm the principle that no relative should appear before our Judges, because, apparently, there are some members in this House who consider that our Judges have not the honour to listen to pleaders whether they be their relatives or not, and give unbiassed judgments. We have heard the member for the Murray (Mr. George) make in this House a strong attack upon Judge Parker.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, no; on the gutter Press.

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Oh!

MR. THOMAS: On Judge Parker. Whether that attack has any item of truth in it or not, I do not know; but I do challenge that hon. member, and I challenge any other people who think that our Judges are so corrupt as such people want the country to believe, to follow this matter to its logical

conclusion, and move for a petition from both Houses to His Excellency the Governor, asking him to remove from the Bench the men who, apparently, in the opinion of some members of this House, are not fit to remain on it. In regard to this debate, I do not want to single out one side; but I say the majority of the speakers so far have not looked on this matter of the no-confidence motion from the higher political standpoint, from the broad principle of politics which will appeal to the West Australian public, but have simply devoted the main portion of their time to see how much dirty linen they could wash, and how they can throw insinuations and innuendoes against the honour of members of the House.

MEMBER: That was from the Government side.

MR. THOMAS: From every side of the House. I do not single out one side or the other, and I shall have something to say about several members before I have finished this subject. I say if we are going to descend to this level, it is time we closed up the Assembly and asked the Minister for Works to add another 50 cells to the State gaol and put all the members in them, because evidently we are fit for nothing else. We are sent here in the name of the public of Western Australia; we are supposed to represent the opinions of the public in Western Australia; and I say that if the tone of this debate is a fair gauge of the political morality of the House, and if it can be taken as a reflex of the political morality of the country, then I say in all sincerity this country is sinking to the lowest depths of degradation. We have heard attacks made which I am sorry were ever brought into debate. I have read the proceedings of other Parliaments, I have read the proceedings of the all-night sittings in the New South Wales Parliament, but I venture to say, search the Parliamentary records throughout the world and you will find nothing to equal the abominable way in which this debate has been conducted in this House. I do not want to single out anyone in connection with this. Although I am sitting on this (Government) side, and although I am standing here as a Government supporter, I say the Premier of the country has been as big an offender as any member of the House.

MR. GEORGE: The biggest.

MR. THOMAS: We have heard attacks made on the honour of the leader of the Opposition. We have heard it insinuated, not only insinuated but direct charges made, that the leader of the Opposition was a partner in the Kurrawang business, and I shall have more to say in regard to this matter later on in the few remarks I intend to make to the House to-night. But I will say this much before I go on, that in reply to the charges which the Premier made—and he challenged the member for the Williams to authorise him to make investigations at the National Bank—the member for the Williams wrote a letter to the manager of that bank which was read to this House, as also was the reply from the manager authorising our Speaker to make inquiries on our behalf. The Premier after that said, "But you have not said you had no connection with it," and the member for the Williams stood up in this House and gave a most dignified and emphatic denial that he ever had any connection whatever with the Kurrawang Company or any of them. I would have liked to have seen the Premier then stand up in his place and accept that denial; for I feel certain, and I cannot help saying so, the Premier would have done himself more good throughout the State of Western Australia had he stood up in his place and said so.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was not here when the House opened. I did that this afternoon.

MR. THOMAS: If the Premier did so, I am delighted to hear it.

THE PREMIER: I said I accepted the assurance of the hon. member that he was not interested.

MR. THOMAS: I was not present at that time, and I am very glad to hear the Premier say that he did so. The main talk in regard to this motion has been on the question of our railways and their administration. In regard to our railways I will say the country has been crying aloud for months past against the way the railways have been run. The public have been crying out for months past, rightly or wrongly, against the General Manager and the staff controlling our railways, and public opinion is fairly correct. There is nothing much wrong with the general public opinion in any British colony or in any British

country. At any rate that is what rules this House. At the last election every member in the House knows full well that most members who are now sitting in the House—I know it at any rate particularly on the goldfields—was talking on the hustings about the management of our railways. We had the ice frauds, we have had the Kurrawang business, we had had the lost sleepers, we had had several other things too numerous to mention which point to the fact that there must be something wrong somewhere. There is no smoke without fire, and public opinion is not going to definitely say one thing unless there is some groundwork for the opinion at which it arrives. We have found the railways auditing their own accounts. This principle was systematically condemned by the Auditor General, and the best test as to whether there was good and economical management in the control of our railways is the result, and the general result has been distinctly bad. We have had our preferential railway rates, we have had goods being carried over the railways at an absolute loss to the country. We have had, as the Commissioner of Railways told us to-night, the South-Western railway run at a loss, and unfortunately as far as the goldfields are concerned the Eastern railway has had to carry the burden. What I maintain in regard to the railways is this: we want some solid business management in connection with them. I repeat again what I emphatically stated on the hustings that we want our railways independent of political influence, we want independent commissioners, and we must pay them big salaries so as to command the services of the best men in the colonies, or in the world for the matter of that. I can quite understand the trouble the Commissioner had when he took office. I think everyone in the House will say that not only is the Commissioner a jolly good fellow outside the House as Joe Holmes, but the Commissioner of Railways inside the House is a man who went into this business honestly to endeavour to put the railways on the best footing it was possible to place them on. I can quite understand the Commissioner of Railways, having run a business of his own for many years, having built up a busi-

ness that is a credit to him, and attained a position that is a credit to him, I can quite understand he might feel somewhat horrified in the department to find so much red-tapeism. But I cannot agree with the Commissioner of Railways in all that he has done. I cannot agree with the speech he delivered to-night in its entirety. I would have liked him to have missed out the first part of his speech altogether; I would have liked him to confine himself to the last hour of his speech, when he used solid arguments and facts which would be open to any member of the House to take up and contradict. There is no question about it in my mind, as I said before, the country did call for a change; the country did call for some reform in the railway administration. I cannot help thinking also that the Commissioner of Railways succeeded in doing the right thing in the wrong way. The General Manager, according to the public outcry, had to go, and I would like to have seen the two years' salary which he wanted paid him to go, and we would have had no farther bother about it. I appreciate the position of the Minister, and I must say I cannot go as far as some members in the House in the matter and impute false motives to him in doing what he has done. Our railways are certainly bad, or have been bad; but in my opinion our public works are equally bad, if not worse. If I remember rightly, or if I have read rightly, I have seen some reports by the Engineer-in-Chief, and I have seen that the Engineer-in-Chief has found occasion to find fault with officials, with men and with departments that are no concern of his, and have nothing to do with him. I would like to see the Engineer-in-Chief confine his attention more to seeing that when goods are indentured from Great Britain they shall arrive here in a condition which will pass our engineers' inspection, so that they can be put into the work for which they are intended. The joint rings now lying in the Fremantle yard may be a very small matter, and that question I have asked on the subject may, in the opinion of some, be a waste of time of the House.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

MR. THOMAS: But whether it be a matter of £5 or £50,000, the principle is right; the principle is the same

throughout. When I found these things ordered in England were such that a man could put his thumb into them and twist them round, or take pieces of stick and put through them, and that they were intended to go into our Coolgardie Water Scheme, I wondered how much water we should have for our goldfields, if those things happened to be put in.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: They are not joint rings.

MR. THOMAS: Scour rings, or whatever you may term them. Everyone knows what I mean. I consider it is about time a public works board was appointed. The Government have brought in a Bill, which is now in the Committee stage, for appointing a Public Works Committee. In regard to the public service generally, I say there are too many public servants in the service generally, and those public servants are too badly paid. I am not speaking from an intimate acquaintance with any particular department, never having been in one of them. But, after going round in the departments, I feel certain we could dispose of a huge percentage of our public servants in Western Australia. I see men working on the goldfields for a paltry £150 or £170 a year, men who have to use their brains, men who are supposed at any rate to do skilled labour, and I see working alongside them men engaged on unskilled labour and getting more wages than those men are in our public service, whose best services we wish to retain in this country. In this country we should get rid of a whole crowd of our civil servants, and pay those who remain in the service the same sort of salary as we should pay to them if we wanted them to work in our own offices. I maintain without fear of contradiction that the administration of Western Australia is the most expensive in the world or that it is possible to find. I remember there was a statement made by the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain in the House of Commons regarding the revenue extracted from the people in the Transvaal. He said the revenue was excessive, and that if such a revenue were exacted from the people in order to carry on the administration of any British country, it would become a serious question whether it should not be interfered with and put a stop to. I venture to say that, high as was the revenue in the

Transvaal, it was lower than the revenue of Western Australia. I would not mind the highness of the revenue if we did something with it, but I do not see what we are doing with it. I have seen here for years past Colonial Treasurer after Colonial Treasurer stand up in his place, and I was very sorry to see the present Colonial Treasurer stand up in the House and boast of the increased revenue we are getting. I looked through the Blue Book for 1900. I looked through the Estimates of revenue and expenditure, and I have attempted to analyse those figures. Another member analysed some figures earlier in the evening; with what result we all well know. I got through 67 pages, analysing them very carefully, and could hardly find a single penny-piece out of that lot outside the salaries of civil servants.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You must go through the lot.

MR. THOMAS: I went through 67 pages, and I could not find anything. Go right through the book and you will only find a few paltry amounts for carrying on works or railways or anything in the way of construction in Western Australia. I am not blaming the present Government for that, but everything for years past. And it would be hopeless to expect that we could remedy that in five months. I am not attacking one portion, but the whole system of the public service in Western Australia. I would like to see the civil servants in this country treated in the same way as we would treat men in our own businesses. I would like to see them free and open for promotion, and to take higher rates of pay, if competent and worth it to the country. I recognise fully that the reorganisation of the whole of this business will take some considerable time. We have in this country a Public Service Act that undoubtedly is a block to radical reform which is necessary with regard to our civil service, in all branches and in all departments; and I should have liked to see included in this lot a Bill providing some amendments in the Public Service Act, although I understand that such a Bill would have been there within a few short days. As to our railways and our public works—if I may be permitted to revert to that subject for a moment—there is no question

that there are in Western Australia men filling positions which, to say the least of it, are one grade too high. I am reminded in that connection of something which a rather celebrated American mining engineer said in the Eastern States. His words were, "I guess from my experience of Australia that there are lots of men here running big concerns, who, had they been brought up to farming, would have planted their wheat with a gimlet." (Laughter.) I am afraid, although it is not necessary for me to speak quite so strongly as that, there are such cases in some of our Western Australian departments. [**MR. JACOBY:** Hear, hear.] I want to see the best men come to the top; and I want to see our public service reformed in such a way that the best man will always have a chance of coming to the top; which chance, I say, he has not in Western Australia at the present moment.

Several MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

THE PREMIER: We must observe the Public Service Act.

MR. THOMAS: In connection with reforms which we have all been crying out for, I wish to say that a commendable attempt has been made by the Minister for Mines to reform his department, especially in regard to the management of public batteries. In that connection, I think, some hon. member—I think it was the member for Guildford (Mr. Rason)—led the House to believe that he did not want to see public batteries made to pay. The hon. member appeared to maintain that we had no right to make them pay. For my part, I do want to see public batteries made to pay, as a whole. [**MINISTERIAL MEMBERS:** Hear, hear.] In some cases it may be necessary to run a battery at a loss for a few months; but it can never be necessary to run a battery month after month with no possibility of its ever paying or sending ahead the district in which it is. I am glad I have brought up the subject of public batteries; because it gives me an opportunity, which may not occur again for some months to come, of making a few remarks with respect to a battery in my own constituency, which has been referred to on two or three occasions in this House. That battery showed a loss again last month; and perhaps the circumstance may be brought up—I dare

say it will be brought up by some hon. member—as an argument why batteries should not be run in this country by the State. In reply to that I say the battery in question charges the same for crushing as other mills in the district, if not higher rates; that the battery is booked for months ahead; and that if the Government cannot make it pay, then it is the fault of the Government and not the fault of the district or of the prospectors in that district. The Minister, I think, fully recognises that. He has treated my district very fairly in the matter, and has treated me, as the member for that district, very fairly also. The hon. gentleman has now appointed a board of inquiry to look into all matters in connection with the battery. He has, farther, in order to show his good intentions in regard to the mining industry, brought in a Mining Development Bill, which in my opinion is an excellent measure in many respects, although, as I said on the second reading, so far as subsidies to mining companies are concerned, the application was very, very bad, no matter how good the intention. However, the Bill shows at any rate that the intention of the Minister has been to help forward our mining industry, which in all conscience does want some little helping forward. [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It is about time that a few mining members came into this House and gave hon. members generally a warning in reference to the mining industry of this State. It will not take much more to break the back of that industry. It may be thought that I am speaking without having fully considered the matter; but I warn hon. members that for years past they have been piling tax after tax on the mining industry. The House put a dividend tax on the mining industry without having the fairness to put on it the same tax as on the rest of the limited liability companies, from which they expect to get a tax. But you say in regard to our mining companies, you are not going to tax us on distributable profits, but on the book profits, and on the profits we put back into our mines, to re-develop those mines for the benefit of the State. We have seen what the Federal Government intend to do with one of the main industries of this great continent of Australia, and I

tell you again, and I say it because I embrace the first opportunity I have of pointing it out to members—I warn you not to put too many more taxes, or increased rates, or anything else, on our mines: because, if you do, with the exception of a few rich ones at Kalgoorlie, you will succeed in shutting up every low-grade mine in Western Australia. And I tell you that those low-grade mines must eventually be the backbone of this country. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It might be considered by some that this is a question apart from the motion now before the House. But I do not consider that any question involving the national prosperity can be foreign to this motion; because were I not appealing to one side of the House, I should be appealing to the other, which might possibly take notice of my appeal. I have heard the member for the South-West Mining District (Mr. Ewing) speaking on this subject—

MR. JACOBY: We do not mind being appealed to.

MR. THOMAS: I do not know whether he meant to say what he did; but I do know he told this House that the gold-fields had received too much consideration at the hands of this country. In connection with that, I need only say that if there had been no Eastern Goldfields, there would have been no Collie: if there had been no Eastern Goldfields, there would have been no necessity to come to this House to advocate the Collie-Goldfields railway line.

MR. EWING: I rise to explain. I was perhaps misunderstood. I did not intend what the hon. member has attributed to me.

MR. THOMAS: I am glad indeed to hear it. I think I said at the start that I did not believe the hon. member meant to say it; but he certainly did say it, and I simply brought it up so as to give the hon. member a chance of saying that he did not mean this House to put the construction on his words which I considered I had a right to put on them. It might be said with perfect truth, in a way, that nothing has been done by the present Government in regard to new works or railways. I quite understand the present position. I came down here as a new member, and I expected to find an overflowing Treasury—plenty of money avail-

able to do all sorts of things throughout the country. But I must recognise there was not sufficient money to carry out every work the country required. In that connection, of course, I cannot know what the Government are going to do if they stay in power, neither do I know what the Opposition will do if they become the Government. But so far as I am concerned, whoever may be in power, I shall not sit down in this House and be a party to the hanging-up of this country; for I certainly consider that any country is justified in going to almost the verge of bankruptcy in employing its money in works which it is certain will not only be reproductive, but will give a big profit on the money invested. I want to see in Western Australia some go-ahead railway policy, and needless to say I want to see the old business done away with of trying to centralise everything in Perth and Fremantle, and that policy of decentralisation put into actual practice in Western Australia. We threshed out that question on the floor of this House, and we had the House unanimously in favour of that policy of decentralisation, as opposed to the old policy which it had carried on so long. At any rate, if we had not a unanimous vote on the question—as a fact, there was no vote at all—I take it that if any man had a violent objection to the motion, which was withdrawn after being moved in the House, that man would have divided the House; otherwise, I think I have a perfect right to maintain that he was in favour of the principle. When I addressed the House on the Address-in-reply, I affirmed my independence in no unmeasured words. I told the House that I pledged myself to absolute independence; I pledged myself that I was not bound to follow any party or be the direct nominee of one. I told the Government then that as long as they attempted to introduce progressive legislation I would support them; and I told them if the time came when they did not attempt to introduce progressive legislation into the House, and if I were satisfied that their policy was a policy not in keeping with the opinions of a majority of the people of the country and for the best interests of the country, then I would be found in opposition to them and help to turn them out. The words I used at that

time were that “I should be one of the first to say to them ‘Go out, and let us have some better men in your places.’” I say candidly if the House had met after recess, and no farther progress had been made, it would become a serious question with me if the Government were entitled to my support longer; but this I say in all fairness to them, as the Commissioner of Railways has said, “Rome was not built in a day,” and we cannot expect that the Government should do everything which this House wanted in the few short months they have had at their disposal. We must remember that a considerable amount of time was taken up over the Royal celebrations, that other matters broke in on the serious business of the session—the railway strikes and the debates on the adjournment of the House on the subject, in order to allow members to discuss the matter which occupied two days one week, and one week was taken up on the Address-in-reply—I say that this shows, as far as the Government are concerned, that they have wasted no time. I do not think anyone can accuse the Government of having shown favouritism. I think they have treated everyone alike. I think myself they have treated me rather badly. As far as my district is concerned, I feel I can stand here as the member for the people who are opposed to being eaten out by rabbits. Very little of my constituency is protected, but I hope a little more of it will be protected before the fence is completed. I know also I have asked for very moderate sums for different works in my constituency, and have been unfortunate enough to have struck a “snag,” if I may be permitted to use that expression. To the hon. member—as the member for South Perth called him, the minister for promises, I mean the Minister for Works—

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I did not make any promises.

MR. THOMAS: I was referring to the member for South Perth (Mr. Gordon). I do not consider that because a member does not get everything he wants for his constituency, he would be justified in saying to the Government, “I have no farther room for you,” though I have heard of that being done in the past. It cannot be said the Government have done very much, because, as I said before, they have not had time to do it.

It cannot be said they are a perfect Government. I made a few remarks about the Premier at the beginning of my speech, and I see no reason to withdraw anything I said about him.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear; it is very fair comment.

MR. THOMAS: The Government are not perfect by any means. I never knew any Government who were. I think at present the Government are prepared to do something, and they honestly mean to do something, and I am prepared to give them that chance. I am not here as a direct supporter of the Leake Government, nor of any other Government, for the matter of that. I am here with a certain defined political platform which I enunciated before my constituents. I intend to go ahead with the planks of my political platform, which I have brought, before the House, and I am going to support those who, I think, will support my platform. I am not going to adopt any other person's platform and sacrifice my own by doing so. When I took my seat on this side, the Government at that time had a policy which seemed to me to be most in keeping with the policy I enunciated to my electors, and therefore I took my seat where I did. The Government have not yet had sufficient time to tell us all their policy, or show us in the few short weeks they have had at their disposal what they are prepared to do, what sort of mettle they are made of, and what sort of opinion the public have a right to form of them after having judged their work and their action. I do not want to support anybody for the sake of party politics. I have not found a party yet that I would follow blindly, and in relation to which I would swallow anything they told me. To-night I have spoken my mind freely and openly. Where I have had fault to find with the Ministers I have found it, and in some respects I have found it in words which could not be misunderstood. Let any Government go into power, and as far as I am concerned, as an independent member, I shall support their measures, if their measures are my measures. I must say candidly I would like to have seen a better result for all the time during which the House has been in session; but I do not think the Government have to

take all the blame for that. I fancy I have heard a member say that something like 120ft. or so of *Hansard* was occupied by the member for the Murray (Mr. George), and I think I have occupied a few hundred inches myself. I may be guilty of filling *Hansard* beyond my due proportion, but I did it considering I was acting in the best interests of my constituency, secondly, and of my country first. We have a whole series of Bills here now which I want to see disposed of, because I know the country is crying out for them. Speaking as an independent member, I cannot blame the Government because these Bills are not passed. It is the fault of the private members of the House. What I want to say in conclusion is, that I hope I have not offended the susceptibilities of any member in any remarks I have seen fit to make in the House. I look on this question of a no-confidence motion from a higher standpoint than that of personal abuse and dragging men's honour and men's names in the mud, which I scorn, and which I have refused to take part in. I do not think that when I sit down any member of this House will be able to say that I have dragged his name in the dirt, or that I have impugned his honour. But I say this much in all sincerity; if one tithe of the allegations made against various members on either side of the House be true, those members have no right to sit here, and have no right to be at liberty, but should be impeached by Parliament. [**SEVERAL MEMBERS:** Hear, hear.] I am sorry indeed to observe that the tone of the debate has fallen so low. I desired to see the debate carried on at a high level, to see every member address himself to the question from a high standpoint—from the standpoint of the broad politics of the State. Regarding the motion of no-confidence from such a standpoint, I have come to the conclusion that the right course for me is to continue, at any rate for the present, my support of the Government in power. Therefore I shall cast my vote against the motion of the member for the Williams.

On motion by Mr. TEESDALE SMITH, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER: Is it necessary for me, sir, to move the suspension of the

Standing Orders in order that the House may sit to-morrow?

THE SPEAKER: No. The order as to sitting days is merely a sessional order. Therefore, it is not necessary to move the suspension of the Standing Orders.

THE PREMIER: I move, then, that the House at its rising do adjourn until to-morrow, at half-past four o'clock.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: No; half-past two.

THE PREMIER: Very well; I make my motion that the House at its rising do adjourn until to-morrow at half-past two o'clock.

Question put and passed.

The House accordingly adjourned at 11:53 p.m., until half-past two o'clock the next afternoon.

Legislative Assembly,

Friday to Saturday, 8th and 9th
November.

[ALL-NIGHT SITTING.]

Question: Coolgardie Water Scheme, an Inspector—
Motion: No-Confidence in the Government; debate
(fifth day) concluded; Division—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—COOLGARDIE WATER SCHEME, AN INSPECTOR.

MR. RASON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Whether it is a fact that Mr. Rowland Rees has been appointed as an inspector, engineer, or in any other capacity in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme. 2, If so, the date of his appointment, the nature of his duties, and the amount of remuneration he receives.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Yes, as a supervisor. 2, He

was appointed on the 14th June last, and is intrusted with the supervision of erection of employé's cottages at pumping stations. He is paid wages at the rate of 16s. per day.

MOTION—NO CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

DEBATE, FIFTH DAY.

Resumed from the previous day, on the motion by Hon. F. H. PIESSE, "That the Government does not command the confidence of this House."

MR. TEESDALE SMITH (Wellington): I am glad, after all the epithets that have been hurled at myself and my company, that I am alive to tell the tale. At one time I thought I was going to be thoroughly annihilated by the Premier. Still, I am here to answer the charges that he has levelled at me and my company, to the best of my ability, and also to state to this House and the country why, in my opinion, the Leake Ministry have forfeited the confidence of the House. I think the principal plank in the Governor's Speech was one of economy. Right from start to finish, it was economy pure and simple; not the lavish expenditure that had pertained to the former Government, but the present Government were to bring in such economical measures and such reduction of expenditure as the country would approve. If we look at the Budget, we find there is not one item regarding which it can be said that any economy has been effected. The Ministry were supported by all members on both sides of the House who spoke on the Address-in-reply, and were backed up to the best of the speakers' ability in their programme of economy. The Ministry have failed to carry out that policy. The Premier says "Give me time." I think five months should be ample time for the Premier and his Ministers to have conferred with one another, and to have laid before this House some definite scheme whereby they were going to effect this great economy foreshadowed in the Governor's Speech. Yet there is not one single reference made to it in the Budget. The only thing the Premier said, when speaking on the question of economy, was that he thanked the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) for his suggestion. And what, may I