

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 11th September, 1895.

Building Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Roman Catholic Church Lands (Private) Bill: first reading; referred to a select committee—Message from His Excellency the Administrator: Assent to Bills—Copyright Bill: first reading—Assisted Schools Abolition Bill: first reading—Coolgardie-Kalgoorlie Railway Bill: first reading—Loan Act, 1894, Amendment Bill: third reading—Ecclesiastical Grant Abolition Bill: third reading—Lease 2/434 Eucla Division: adjourned debate—Correspondence between the Premier and the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission—Estimates, 1895-6: further considered in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

BUILDING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by MR. JAMES, and read a first time.

ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH LANDS (PRIVATE) BILL.

Introduced by MR. BURT, read a first time, and referred to a Select Committee, consisting of Mr. Leake, Mr. Marmion, Mr. Randell, Mr. Traylen, and the mover (Mr. Burt).

MESSAGE: ASSENT TO BILLS.

The following Message was delivered to and read by Mr. Speaker:—

ALEX. C. ONSLOW.

Administrator.

The Administrator has the honor to inform the Legislative Assembly that he has this day assented, in Her Majesty's name, to the following Bills:—

"An Act to amend the Laws relating to Arbitration."

"An Act to regulate the Licensing of Land Surveyors."

"An Act for Licensing of Refreshment Rooms on Railways and at Theatres."

"An Act to regulate the Sale of Agricultural Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs."

"An Act to amend 'The Medical Act, 1894.'"

Government House, Perth, Western Australia, 11th September, 1895.

COPYRIGHT BILL.

Introduced by MR. BURT, and read a first time.

ASSISTED SCHOOLS ABOLITION BILL.

Introduced by Sir JOHN FORREST, and read a first time.

COOLGARDIE — KALGOORLIE RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by MR. VENN, and read a first time.

LOAN ACT, 1894, AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ECCLESIASTICAL GRANT ABOLITION BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

EXTENSION OF RIGHT OF PURCHASE OF LEASE, EUCLA DIVISION.

ADJOURNED DEBATE.

Debate resumed on the following motion of Mr. JAMES: "That the Government should give a favorable consideration to the request of the lessee of Lease 2/434, Eucla Division, by which he seeks to have extended the right to purchase the lands comprised in the lease: provided that the Government are satisfied that the land is not auriferous, and that in any case provision is made to secure the payment of a royalty for all gold got or won; and provided that the right of purchase be not extended beyond 1st October next, and a substantial deposit paid at once."

MR. SIMPSON (who had moved the adjournment of the debate) said he had only one object in view, in doing so, and that was to meet the wish of some hon. members, who desired to make further enquiries into the matter. He had since had a conversation with the gentleman who represented the lessees of the land in question, and the only conclusion he could come to was, while sympathising with the lessees in their misfortune, he could not see that the House could be reasonably requested to ask the Government, in this instance, to abandon what was practically one of the main principles of the land laws of the colony. He was aware that these gentlemen had paid the Government a considerable sum in the shape

of rent for these lands, and he was not inclined to think that the country in question was likely to prove auriferous. At the same time, he could not, consistently with the views which he held, in regard to land settlement, assent to any proposal which would virtually confer upon the Government power to alienate a large area of land, without at the same time insisting that the improvement conditions must be carried out, as in the case of other purchases of land from the Crown. He was told that this land at Eucla had been cut up into 200-acre lots, and that a considerable amount of money had been spent in surveys and, if these lessees could provide the Government with satisfactory sureties or a guarantee that this land would be settled and improved, in exactly the same way, and on the same conditions, as other land alienated from the Crown in the settled districts of the colony, the Government might reasonably consider their request. But, in the absence of such guarantee, he did not think that any public good would be accomplished by deviating from the principle which governed land settlement in other parts of the colony. He was informed that these people had been prevented from completing their contract with the Government by the collapse of the banking institutions. If that was really the case, he thought, so far as he knew the ideas of the Government with regard to encouraging land settlement, that if they saw any reasonable way of meeting these people, and were satisfied that *bona fide* settlement was likely to follow the granting of their request, they would be inclined to accede to that request. But he did not think it would be a wise thing for the House to take upon itself the responsibility of practically abrogating the land regulations of the colony, by empowering the Government to deal with the applicants in this particular case in a different way from that which they adopted, and which the regulations prescribed, in regard to ordinary settlement. He did not see any practical and consistent way in which the House could assist these lessees. He should be glad to know that this land at Eucla was likely to become settled and become a productive centre, but, while sympathising with the lessees, he could not see how he could vote for the resolution in its present form. If, however, the Government could satisfy themselves that these lands would immediately be settled upon and improved, upon the same conditions as applied

to settlement on our agricultural areas and our homestead farms, he thought the Government might fairly take the matter into their consideration.

MR. JAMES, in replying to observations made on his motion in the course of the debate, said he had brought the motion forward because he felt that the former lessees of this land, who now desired to complete the purchase, if allowed to do so, were at least entitled to have their case placed before this House, and to have it discussed on its merits. As the Government could not grant them the right to complete the purchase, unless this House were favorable to that course, they sought to have their case placed before the House. This had now been done; and the discussion upon it had been fair and full. It appeared to him that some hon. members, who had spoken against the proposed concession of a right of purchase, misconceived what was the present law on the subject, as they seemed to suppose that this House was pledged, as a principle, against the alienation of the fee simple of land in large areas. Personally, his sympathies were in that direction; but, so long as the law permitted the alienation of land in large blocks, such a principle should not be set up or be pressed against these particular applicants. He did not see much difference between the alienation of a thousand half-acre blocks to speculators, and the alienation of 500 acres in one block to speculators. These former lessees had made their contract to purchase this land at a time when the feeling in this country on the alienation of land was not the same as the feeling at present, although the law as to alienation was then the same exactly as now. These men had loyally paid rent for the land during many years, while other holders of land in the same district had long ceased to pay rent, and this conduct on the part of these applicants was evidence of their *bona fide* intention to carry out their contract by completing the purchase. The financial crisis of 1893 had prevented them from doing so, and for that misfortune they were entitled to sympathetic consideration. However, after the discussion that had taken place, he felt that these applicants had obtained that which they were entitled to, namely, a full and fair expression of the opinions of hon. members, and a statement of the position of the Government on the application which had been made for permission to purchase this land as a part

of the original contract. Having, therefore, obtained all they were entitled to from this House, he now asked leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

CORRESPONDENCE *Re* THE REPORT OF THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest)—referring to what had taken place in the House the previous evening, when the hon. member for Geraldton had quoted some unpublished evidence given before the Civil Service Commission—said he desired to place on the table a copy of correspondence which had passed between himself and the Chairman of the Civil Service Commission, with regard to the presentation of a report by the Commission, which report he had asked for, and also the evidence referred to. Having heard that the Chairman of the Commission, since he had addressed him, had left Perth that day for Coolgardie, he had seen the Deputy-Chairman, who stated that he would propose, at the intended meeting of the Commission, next day, that the evidence taken by the Commission, as far as it had gone, without any report, should be forwarded to His Excellency the Administrator at an early date. If that were done, he (the Premier) would have much pleasure in laying the evidence on the table of the House. He moved that the correspondence between himself and the Chairman of the Commission be read.

Question put and passed.

Correspondence read as follows:

"Premier's Office, Perth,

"11th September, 1895.

"Sir,—In the Legislative Assembly last evening, Mr. Simpson, M.L.A., read to the House extracts from the evidence, taken before your Commission, of the General Traffic Manager, and also gave other information in regard to evidence taken before the Commission. I shall be glad, therefore, to be informed whether it is possible for you to present to His Excellency the Administrator an interim report, embodying the evidence from which extracts were read by Mr. Simpson, as there was an apparent feeling on the part of the House that it should be in possession of this information in the ordinary course, and that it should not be communicated to the House by a member of the Commission. If you can forward such interim

report to His Excellency the Administrator it will give much satisfaction to the Government, and I am sure also to members of the Legislative Assembly.

"I have the honor to be, etc.,

"JOHN FORREST,
"Premier.

"M. F. A. Canning, Esq., J.P.,

"Chairman the Civil Service Commission,
Perth."

"Civil Service Commission of Western
Australia.

"Perth, 11th September, 1895.

"To the Hon. Sir John Forrest.

"Sir,—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of to-day's date, intimating that there was an apparent feeling on the part of the Legislative Assembly that it should be in possession, in the ordinary course of business, of certain evidence taken by the Commission, from which extracts were read by Mr. Simpson in the House last evening.

"The ordinary course would be, undoubtedly that the evidence should be attached to the report, and be communicated first to His Excellency the Administrator, from whom it would, through the usual channel, reach the Legislature; and to communicate such evidence to any person or body whatsoever, in any other way, is entirely contrary to the rules laid down for the conduct of the business of a Commission—rules with which it might be reasonably expected members of the Commission would make themselves acquainted, and observe in every possible way.

"So far as it may rest with me personally, I will endeavor to send in a progress report of the proceedings of the Commission on or about the 1st proximo; but I may be permitted to remind you that the terms of the resolution of the Assembly agreed to last session, whilst limiting the work of the Commission to the investigation of the working and organisation of the Public Works and Railway Departments, at least implied that such investigation should be of a very strict and searching character; consequently the labors of the Commission have been protracted more than they would have been if the Commission had confined itself to the course pursued up to the period terminating with the bringing up of its first progress

"report. Moreover, the resolution referred to also implied that the next report of the Commission should be final.

"I have the honor to be, etc.,

"M. F. ALFRED CANNING,

"Chairman Civil Service Commission."

Ordered, that the correspondence do lie on the table.

ESTIMATES, 1895-6.

IN COMMITTEE.

Section VIII.—"Commissioner of Railways"—further considered.

Vote—Railways and Tramways, £226,900:

Debate resumed.

THE CHAIRMAN said he understood there was a general wish among hon. members that a discussion on both the departments which were under the control of the Commissioner of Railways—Railways and Public Works—should be permitted, before dealing with the items of these Estimates, in detail. This procedure would be contrary to the Standing Orders, but he saw no reason why the general wish of the House in this matter should not be complied with.

MR. JAMES, referring generally to the Railway Estimates, said various complaints had reached him, as they probably had reached other members; and it was not surprising that a number of complaints should arise in the working of a large department which affected the public convenience at so many points. A constituent complained to him that after tenders had been called for the supply of certain uniforms, and a contract had been made, the price was increased to the contractor, presumably because he might have promised to supply a superior cloth, or some such reason which no one in the department could well test. It was not fair to the other persons tendering that the successful tenderer should have the price increased for his benefit. Indeed, no such variation in the terms of a contract should be permitted, and he hoped this grievance would be inquired into. Another complaint was as to the want of weigh-bridges at the Goods Shed in Perth. Representations to this effect were made twelve months ago, and an official promise was then given that the department would obtain weigh-bridges; but, after the lapse of a year, they were not supplied. Private individuals recently imported a weigh-bridge, and applied for leave to fix it near the Goods Shed, there being no such convenience supplied by

the department; but the permission was not given, and the complaints as to the want of this essential convenience were increasing.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) asked which kind of weigh-bridge was referred to—that used for engines or that used for weighing carts?

MR. JAMES said he meant the weigh-bridge used for weighing carts and loads. Either the one already imported by private persons should be used, as they suggested, or the department should purchase it, or should immediately supply what was wanted. Referring to the Works Department, he suggested that the office of Colonial Architect should be abolished, and that designs for buildings should be obtained from the architects practising in the colony. This method would introduce variety, would ensure competitive excellence, and would do away with sameness. It was absurd to have all the designs for public buildings drawn by one architect. He had also a personal grievance in reference to the building of a railway station for East Perth. He understood that £1,600 had been voted for a suitable station on that side of the city, whereas he now found that only a miserable platform and shed had been erected—not nearly so good as a station lately put up at a place near Cottesloe, called Salvador Beach, of which people had heard only within the last few days. It had been said there was not much space available for a station at the East Perth crossing, but ample space might be obtained by building the station between Edward-street and Samson-street. There was another matter which he had also mentioned last year. It was in connection with the second-class carriages used on the railways, and the question was one he trusted the Commissioner would be in a position to attend to. The accommodation provided for second-class passengers was of a most inferior description, the carriages being more like dog-boxes than anything else. The distinction between the first and second-class carriages was too great, and unnecessarily so at a time when everything in the colony was so prosperous, more especially with the Railway Department. The hon. member for Geraldton had referred to a matter which required, not only the official, but the personal attention of the Commissioner. That was in connection with the treatment of the men in the lower grades of the service. The general meaning of the term "commercial principles" (of which

they heard so much) was unqualified and unrestricted competition, but, if it also meant working people unduly, and not paying them a proper wage, he did not want to see the railways of this colony worked on that system. The class of men such as engine drivers were grossly overworked, while the porters were called upon to work too long, and they received too little for what they had to do. It was only that day he had heard of the manner in which the permanent way men were being treated. They received 6s. a day, and had to go out great distances to work. The Department was supposed to provide them with cottages, but the cottages that were provided were two-roomed structures without any door at the back. They were built on the same principle as the chimney of a certain school in Perth, which, when finished, was found to have no means of permitting the smoke to escape. These so-called cottages had no back door and no verandah. There surely was some means whereby these people could be more fairly treated, and be made more comfortable. At present they could not help feeling both irritated and annoyed. Then there was the free-pass question. From the return of free passes issued, he noticed the names of several, in respect of which information was desirable. Mr. J. F. Stone had been given a free pass, and the reason stated for the gentleman being so favored was that he was an Imperial officer. He (Mr. James) saw no special reason for an Imperial officer having a free pass; and, if he was given one, why should passes not also be given to other officers in the service? The Collector of Customs, also, had a free pass, and, if it was more than a temporary one, he saw no reason for this gentleman having the privilege. [THE PREMIER: It is an old arrangement.] Then it was to be hoped the arrangement would cease. Surely there was no special reason, again, why the Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and the Clerk of the Legislative Council should have free passes. The mere fact that they were civil servants should not entitle them to this concession. It was not right to give these passes merely because the gentlemen receiving them were nice young fellows, or were much respected. [THE PREMIER: It is a usual thing in the other colonies.] If that was so, it was an answer to his question. Was there, then, any special reason for the private secretary to the Premier enjoying a standing free pass? Another question he should like information

upon was with regard to the passes granted to officials of private railways. He noticed, in connection with the Midland line, that several passes were issued. Mr. Keane, the general manager had one, Mr. Stafford, the Engineer-in-Chief had another, and passes were also given to Mr. Sayer, the solicitor, and Mr. Dobbs, the solicitor's clerk. Now, the Great Southern line had solicitors, and those solicitors had clerks, but they had no free passes. [THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Those passes were only temporary.] Then again, passes had been issued to a Mr. Rose and Mr. Ednie Brown. Why should they have free passes? [THE PREMIER: Mr. Rose came from South Australia and was traveling in connection with some working man's organisation. Besides that, he brought a recommendatory letter.] That was no reason for granting free passes; while, as to a letter entitling anyone to a free pass, the Premier would find himself in a very difficult position if he adopted that principle. So far as letters of introduction were concerned, they all had a lively recollection of a person named Hopkins, who came to the colony with letters of introduction from influential people in South Australia. He noticed that several hospital nurses had free passes. These would probably be the Sisters of the People, and the only objection he could see to their having them was that it would be difficult to know where the practice would end. If the Sisters of the People had them, the Sisters of Mercy would want them also. The name of a Miss Fysh was also noticeable in the list of free passes. She appeared to be a nurse, who was not attached to a charitable institution in the same way as some other nurses, and there could be no reason for her being treated differently to ordinary people. [AN HON MEMBER: She was the sister of a Tasmanian Premier.] That was no reason why she should have had a free pass on the railways of Western Australia. In many cases these passes are a mere exchange of courtesy between one colony and another. He (Mr. James) would stop the practice if he could. They had a good lesson from Victoria. The member of Parliament there found he could travel free. Then he took his wife, and then he took all his sisters, and his cousins and his aunts, and his grandmother; and the practice had gone on until at last the member expected free passes even for his man servant, his maid servant, his ox and his ass. The system was a very vicious one,

which easily grew up, and then caused a lot of ill feeling and trouble. In his opinion, free passes should only be issued when there was some cogent cause for doing so, for the simple reason that, if a definite rule on this question was laid down it would be far more comfortable for the Commissioner, and there would not be the same chance of the privilege being abused. These were comparatively little matters, but at the same time, they were matters which required the attention of the political head of the department.

MR. WOOD was very glad to find that after the storm of the previous evening the House had met in a calmer frame of mind, and it was satisfactory to know that hon. members would soon be in possession of the whole of the information from which the hon. member for Geraldton had quoted last night, and which was the cause of all the trouble. Personally, he felt very sorry to hear the Commissioner of Railways attacked in the general way he had been, and he would be very glad when that hon. gentleman had the opportunity of replying, for the simple reason that he (Mr. Wood) felt perfectly sure that the Commissioner would be able to give a good answer to all that had been alleged against him. The very satisfactory report presented by the Railway Department the other evening, was the most complete answer to those who were finding fault with the administration of the department. It appeared that the railways had been worked so satisfactorily that they were paying, not only working expenses, but a considerable amount towards the interest on the cost of construction as well. This fact went a good way to provide a satisfactory answer, for results like these undoubtedly covered a multitude of sins. When the tremendous volume of traffic was considered, it would be seen that the Department was doing all it possibly could be expected to do. So far as the minutes of the evidence given by the General Traffic Manager were concerned, it really did not appear that the department had yet had sufficient time to carry out the requests that had been made by that officer. There was every reason to suppose that in a few months, whatever was complained of now, in that respect, would be remedied. A good deal had been said with reference to the William-street crossing, but hon. members appeared to forget that it was only recently the traffic at that spot, either on the railway or by the road, had become so large. Six months

ago the spot was not at all a dangerous one, and, even now, by proper signalling, by placing men at the crossing, and by exercising ordinary precautions, there was really no danger. However, the crossing was a bad one, and he did hope that in a very short space of time, the Commissioner would see his way clear to make such alterations that any chance of accident might be obviated. The hon. member for East Perth had referred to the question of uniforms, and he desired to support what had been said on that subject. The same hon. member, however, in speaking on the office of the Colonial Architect, made a proposition which did not meet with his (Mr. Wood's) approval. The plan of giving the work to outside architects could never work, because of the expense. The cost of specifications to private architects was now 5 per cent. while the specifications of the Public Works Department were prepared at a cost of about $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. [MR. GEORGE: I question it.] It really only cost $\frac{1}{4}$ to 1 per cent., and no private architect would undertake the work for anything like that amount. What would be far better would be to engage an assistant architect, and, then if there was still a pressure of work, give some of it to outsiders. References had been made to the condition of the second-class carriages on the railways, but he thought there could be no fault found with any description of carriage other than the old composite carriage, of which there were now very few running. Those second-class carriages which had cane seats were certainly more comfortable, in summer at any rate, than the cushioned seats of the first-class carriages. He often travelled in the carriages with cane seats himself, for the reason that they were far more comfortable than the first-class compartments. There was one question to which the attention of the Commissioner should be directed, and that was with regard to the price of season tickets for stations between Perth and Claremont. He proposed, in a day or two, to lay the whole matter before the Commissioner, when a deputation would interview him, in order to prefer a request that season tickets should be issued between Claremont, Subiaco, West Perth, and Perth, at more reasonable rates than were charged at present. To encourage settlement along the suburban railway lines, monthly tickets should be issued at one-third the price of a quarterly ticket. He agreed with what the hon. member for Geraldton had urged against the Department

overworking and underpaying the members of the railway staff. On one occasion he travelled with a railway man who had started work at five o'clock in the morning, had gone to York, had returned to Perth, and gone on to Fremantle at night. That man would not be relieved of the duty until half-past eleven in the evening. This was too long a stretch of duty altogether, for the endurance of anyone. Good careful work could not be expected when the officers were overtaxed. With regard to the suggestion of appointing a Board of Commissioners, in his opinion it would be injudicious to place the control of the railways in the charge of anyone but a Minister, who was responsible to Parliament. In Victoria, and he believed in South Australia, the management of the railways of those colonies by Commissioners had been abandoned, and the old system of having the Minister at the head of affairs had been reverted to. Surely if large railways, like those of other colonies, could be managed by the Minister, the twopenny-halfpenny service of West Australia, which had only 500 or 600 miles altogether, should be administered by the Commissioner. The principle that non-reproductive public works could be constructed out of surplus revenue was a sound one, leaving reproductive works to be defrayed out of loan funds, so that the interest on the capital expended, and a sinking fund to repay the capital could be earned. The Opposition, which he supposed had to justify its existence by finding fault with the Government, did not mean all the hard things that they had said about the Commissioner of Railways and the administration of that Department; and he hoped that the Premier and the Commissioner would give a very complete answer to that adverse criticism. It was a good thing to have a real active Opposition, and there was no doubt that the House had it; but he thought that, despite the Opposition, the Commissioner of Railways had no reason to be cast down, and he was glad to observe the hon. gentleman looking a little more cheerful than he had done on the previous evening.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) was very glad that a calmer feeling prevailed in the House that evening than on the previous night. As the hon. member for West Perth said, the answer of the Commissioner of Railways to any charges of maladministration that were brought against him was to be found in

the 25th paragraph of the speech of His Excellency the Administrator, wherein it was stated: "We are informed that the railways are proving of the greatest importance to the country, and the revenue of the present financial year will not only exceed the working expenses, but will also pay the interest on the sinking fund and the capital expended in their construction." That was a complete answer to any charges of bad management brought against his friend the Commissioner. Of course hon. members might say that the Railway Department might be worked haphazard, and yet be profitable; nevertheless, it was a fair conclusion that, when the lines were made to pay, not only working expenses, but the interest on the cost of their construction, some credit was due to the Commissioner, and to his officers, who had the supervision of the service. So many people travelled on the railways that there was bound to be a certain number of complaints, more or less well founded. The department could not satisfy everybody, and, even when the service increased and the lines were better equipped than they were now, it would still be found that complaints would still be made. But on the whole, the administration of the department was as good as it could be expected to be, and it should be a subject of congratulation to every well-wisher of the colony that the Railways were as profitable as they were. As the outlook was peaceful that evening he only wished in a casual way to refer to the remarks which the hon. member for Albany made the previous evening. He only desired to say that the proper time for the hon. member to have criticised the actions of the Government during the past twelve months was when the Address-in-Reply was moved at the beginning of the session, instead of raking up, at this late period, allegations as to ill-feeling existing between him (the Premier) and his friend the Commissioner of railways. No such friction had ever existed between himself and the Commissioner, nor did it exist at the present time. Of course, nothing would please the Opposition better than to believe that the Government were not quite a happy family; because family quarrels might be the prelude to a smash up, out of which the Opposition might expect to gain some advantage. Well, when the Government did quarrel and a smash up did occur, he should not begrudge to hon. members opposite any benefit they might gain from the

situation. The Commissioner and himself were, however, on the same amicable terms which had always subsisted between them; and, with reference to what had occurred some time ago, and the correspondence which had passed as to the redistribution of portfolios, to which the hon. member for Albany had referred, he was quite sure that the Commissioner gave him credit for acting in that matter, as he always endeavored to act, in the best interests of the country, and his hon. friend did not resent what was done in any way.

MR. LEAKE: Did he reply at all?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Yes, they had had several talks about it. The hon. member for Geraldton, in his most serious manner, and in the most solemn tones, had on Tuesday night told the House of the "grave peril" the travelling public were under in travelling over the railways. The hon. member represented that every passenger took his life in his hand when he bought a railway ticket. He (the Premier) deprecated these alarmist statements. The Government were fully alive to the importance of taking every precaution for the safety of passengers, and, when the evidence of the General Traffic Manager, which the hon. member for Geraldton had quoted, was brought under the notice of the Cabinet, he had consulted the Engineer-in-Chief as to whether the travelling public were really under any risk of accident because interlocking gear and signalling apparatus had not been provided at the principal stations. Mr. O'Connor had given a very reassuring reply, when he pointed out that New Zealand, which had half a million of people and a much larger railway system than West Australia had, had not yet introduced interlocking signalling gear into their railway service. Thereupon he wrote to the General Traffic Manager, telling him that the Government would hold him responsible for the safety of the travelling public, that he was to take every possible precaution against accident, until the new gear, which had been ordered, could arrive in the colony and be set up at the stations. While the Government were most anxious to make railway travelling safe, he did not believe in the hysterical statements of the hon. member for Geraldton, that the passengers on the West Australian lines were in grave peril when ever they made a railway journey, and that a serious accident might occur that very night. He hoped not.

He had asked his friend, the Commissioner, not to take too seriously the strictures on his management, for there was no doubt that hon. members (as well as himself) often spoke more warmly than they, in cooler moments, thought justifiable; and, for his own part he was always ready in such a case to make the *amende honorable*, and say that he was sorry for what he had said.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) hoped that the House would give him a patient hearing while he replied at some length to the adverse criticism which had been passed upon his management of the railways. As a rule he did not take much notice of adverse criticism, but listened to it stoically, with a passive exterior, and allowed time to show hon. members whether the complaints they made were just or not; and, when they found they had made a mistake, he left it to them to make an acknowledgment of their error to the House. At any rate, he could assure the Premier that it was not his intention, and never would be, to take exception to every adverse remark that was made against himself personally; but he must refer to the attacks which had been made upon the administration of the Railway Department. He thought it was his duty to the House that he should do so, and on this occasion it was due to his own honor, to his own reputation, to make a reply. In doing so, he felt himself very much strengthened by what the Premier had said in regard to his position in the Cabinet. Never, to his knowledge, had there been any want of confidence on the part of the Premier in regard to himself (Mr. Venn). Had there been any, he would at once have ceased to be a member of the Ministry. In small matters of detail there had been trifling differences of opinion, but such unimportant differences that he would have been foolish to have thrown up his position on account of them. He had never shown any animosity in these matters, but, on the contrary, he had a desire, and was always glad, to be put right. The Premier held a very responsible office in this colony. Practically he was responsible, as the head of the Government, for the actions of every other Minister. He (Mr. Venn) had studied Constitutional law and procedure for some years, and it was just possible that on the introduction of Responsible Government he did not at all times agree with the procedure that was being

adopted. The Premier and himself did not agree in everything as to the proper form of procedure, and it was the duty of the Premier, as head of the Government, to set him right. He admitted freely that, in some cases, he was wrong; in others he was sure he was right; and it was his desire at all times that the procedure adopted should be the right one, because, in forming a Ministry for the first time in a colony which had just been granted Constitutional Government, it was important that proper precedents should be set and followed. All the members of the Government were new to the work, and they were all men marked by a certain amount of character, and it was impossible to get five such men together for the first time in a Council of the State, and expect them to agree on every point, or expect them to carry on the Government of the country—without possessing previous experience of the task—without some differences of opinion occurring. In fact, if there was no difference between them, it would show their weakness rather than their strength. It was an indication of their determination to do the best for the country, and of their strong force of character, that they should agree to differ on certain minor points of procedure; but, on all questions of policy which they had to bring before the House, they had always been—and he hoped they always would be—a united body, in sympathies and in views. He hoped, whatever differences they might have with regard to minor details, that, as a Government, they would be unanimous on public questions, and in moulding the destiny of the colony, so long as they were in office. The hon. member for Albany had referred to some old departmental “minutes” which had passed between the Treasury and his department with regard to the advance account of the Works Department, and he was sorry, to a certain extent, that the circumstances connected with those minutes had been brought to light. However, as they had been referred to, and as an endeavor had been made to cast a reflection upon his administration of the Works Department on the strength of those minutes (one of which had been referred to as a “scathing” minute, addressed by the Hon. the Premier to himself), he proposed to read the correspondence that passed between himself and the Treasury on that occasion. Hon. members would no doubt remember that the Auditor-General, in giving evidence before

a Select Committee of the House some two or three years ago, put in a minute written by the Hon. the Premier to him (Mr. Venn) relating to the system of keeping the departmental accounts, in order to endeavor to prove that a certain amount of friction existed between the Works Department and the Treasury on that subject. He regretted that the Auditor-General did not, at the same time, put in the minute which he (Mr. Venn) had written, and which elicited from the Premier the “scathing” minute referred to, which, however, he had never replied to, because, after all, the difference had only arisen over a mere matter of detail in administration, and did not involve such important issues as some hon. members would make out of it. He could not do better, at that stage, than to read the minutes referred to, and he hoped that his hon. friend, the Premier, would recognise that, in doing so, he had no desire but to vindicate his own action in the matter, and to show exactly how it was that the Premier was induced to write in the manner he did. The first minute which he proposed to read was addressed by the Under-Treasurer to the Colonial Treasurer. It was dated June 12, 1893, and was as follows:—

“No. 29 of the Audit Regulations distinctly provides that claims from public creditors are to be scheduled separately under each sub-head of service. (2). Regulation 39 clearly sets forth the description of payments to be made from an advance account, the vouchers of which are to be scheduled in the name of the advance holder. If in the exigencies of the service it is necessary to pay moneys due to a public creditor through an advance account, the regulations in the clearest manner possible lay down that such claims are to be scheduled in the name of the public creditor, and not of the advance holder, and that the public creditor is to give a receipt for the money, as well as signing the authority for recouping the advance account, through which the payment has been made. (3.) It is nearly nine months since any statement has been forwarded to the Treasury of the position of the Director of Public Works' advance account, and there cannot be a doubt that the difficulty which has been experienced by the department in balancing the advance account is attributable to the fact that the Audit Act Regulations have not been complied with in making the disbursements and rendering the claims. (4.) It is almost

"manifest that if the regulations are
 "infringed, the nominal indexes of
 "public creditors paid at the Treasury,
 "which are kept in the Audit Office for the
 "purpose of checking double payments which
 "are often being made, will not affect that
 "purpose; and the Treasury books also will
 "not disclose correct information as to the
 "names of public creditors, as the advance
 "account holders' name is shown in the
 "voucher as the public creditor and not the
 "person to whom the money is due. (5.)
 "Under such circumstances it is absolutely
 "necessary that the regulations be strictly
 "adhered to." To that minute the Hon. the
 Colonial Treasurer wrote to him (Mr. Venn) on
 the same date, as follows:—"Please instruct
 "your officers to carry out the wishes of the Un-
 "der Treasurer, in which I concur. I wish that
 "innovations would not take place without the
 "approval of the Treasury." Now he would
 read his own minute referring to the advance
 account of the Works Department; and, he
 desired to mention, in passing, that the
 advance account of the Department was at the
 time very large indeed.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How much did it
 amount to?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS
 (Hon. H. W. Venn): It amounted to about
 £50,000 or £60,000, or perhaps more, and he
 declined to take the responsibility of such an
 enormous sum; and the following was the
 minute he wrote on the subject on June 24,
 1893:—"I take the opportunity to express
 "my views on this matter, and I beg to say
 "that, in my opinion, the whole system is
 "wrong, leading to responsibilities compli-
 "cations, and departmental expenditures, that
 "should not exist. A Treasury procedure and
 "Treasury regulations that were pertinent
 "to a state of things existing under a Crown
 "Government, in a small colony, with a small
 "expenditure—and that expenditure princi-
 "pally made from the Consolidated Revenue
 "—is not always applicable to a widely differ-
 "ent state of things existing under Respon-
 "sible Government, with an expenditure cer-
 "tainly three times larger from Consolidated
 "Revenue and twenty times larger from
 "Loan Procedure, should at all times be regu-
 "lated by the volume of the business to be
 "done; and regulations that admit of no in-
 "terpretation save what is confined between
 "the four corners of hard and fast lines,
 "should be amended to meet the altered state

"of things. Under the Crown Government
 "the whole business of the colony was
 "focussed through the Governor. The re-
 "sponsibility rested with him; and heads of
 "departments had no responsibilities what-
 "ever, except those responsibilities incurred
 "by them in any small recommendations they
 "might make. Payments were made under the
 "Governor's warrant, and as the whole business
 "was a limited one, the procedure of monthly
 "payments from the Treasury fitted in fairly
 "well with the small volume of business done.
 "No departure from this procedure was
 "urgent, or permitted; in fact, from long
 "usage, the public—a body who had grown up
 "with the institutions themselves, and in this
 "way, as it were, formed part of them—accepted
 "this procedure, and regulated their business
 "accordingly, as they knew no other. I say
 "the population, the business population, of
 "the colony identified themselves with all
 "Government procedure, because they had
 "grown up with them, and knew no other, and
 "would have probably resented any innova-
 "tions, or departure from established customs,
 "as would the Government themselves. With
 "a profound faith in them, these immacu-
 "late conceptions that were respected,
 "revered, and adhered to; and no
 "one wonders at this, or finds fault
 "with that procedure as applied to the then
 "existing state of things, as it was eminently
 "suited to them, and probably the best that
 "could, under the circumstances, be devised;
 "they were, I venture to say, a testimony to
 "the wisdom and business capacity of the
 "Government and of the people. Therefore,
 "it does not follow, when I say that these
 "regulations and this procedure are now alto-
 "gether wrong, that I in any way underrate
 "their value as applied to the time they
 "were passed. The circumstances are cer-
 "tainly changed. A complete revolution has
 "taken place in the body politic, as also in
 "business; and, as the old system of barter
 "and long credits suited olden times, but has
 "since been swept away and replaced by the
 "multiplication of banking institutions, mar-
 "kets, and cash payments, so does it follow that
 "Treasury and Audit Regulations should also
 "be made to apply to the changed times, and
 "to business as it is, and not as it was. The
 "Advance Account is a very noticeable feature
 "in this respect, and should be swept away,
 "and no Minister should be called upon, and
 "be made to be actually responsible for such an

"account, which is clearly and entirely a business of the Treasury. I never have yet shirked the responsibilities attached to my office, and never will. On the other hand, I protect them as far as I possibly can; but it occurs to me as manifestly improper to allow this to continue. This issue has been accentuated by the delay which has recently occurred in producing a correct and reliable balance-sheet, and, although it may be quite correct for the Under-Treasurer to say that the delay is attributable to the fact that the Audit Regulations had not been complied with, the impossibility of complying with regulations unsuited to the occasion, without bringing the Government into discredit, is entirely lost sight of. Irregularities must of necessity arise when conditions are imposed with which it is impossible to comply, and, so long as we continue to disregard the necessities of the present, and force obedience to regulations that are unsuited to our business, irregularities must exist. To say that all the regulations suited to a Crown colony are equally applicable to Responsible Government is on all fours with saying that Letch's old mail coach would be equal to the present Fremantle-Perth traffic, and that railways are not required. What has led to the irregularities alluded to? Payments made out of the advance account, and the immense volume of business thrown upon this department in consequence. Business men, contractors, wages men, and others cannot remain out of their money for a month, or for some indefinite period until their accounts can be scheduled." [Mr. GEORGE: That is what they have to do.] The minute continued: "The times we live in will not allow it. When work is done, the men, to meet their own daily incurring liabilities, demand and must be paid their money. If, in their own business relations with other sections of the community, they were told that no payments would be made until the next month, or when their accounts would be scheduled, they would immediately rush the client into court and force payment, simply because the ever recurring of business demands that when the money is due it shall be paid. The times we live in demand this. The old class of people have got out of the running, and we have to deal with a class whose ideas of business keep pace with the times, and the result has been

"that the Advance Account had of necessity to be used to meet the daily and current business of the department. Had this not been done, I am sure the present Government would have been discredited all over the colony. To attempt now to draw a hard and fast line and revert back to an obsolete system will accentuate this, and bring things to a crisis. I am clear on this point, that the Advance Account, as carried out during the last two years, has been a necessity. I am equally clear that it should not have been so, as no Minister should be exercised to that extent. I am equally clear that until the Treasury of the colony alters their present system to daily or weekly payments, our present improper system of Advance Accounts must exist. Accounts coming into this office, it matters not for what, should be checked, scheduled, and then at once passed to the Treasury for payment; and, until this is done, we will never be on the right way of doing business. The Treasury is the properly constituted department to make payments, and it should be done by them, and a delegation of this business is not, in my opinion, either wise or proper. I would point out that in order to work in with present regulations, and at the same time not to increase the limits of the Advance Account, this office and the Government are daily incurring ill-feeling outside, and this arises from the fact that it is absolutely impossible, after the accounts come in to the accountant, for his office to check, regulate, and schedule all of them before the end of the month, for payment. The business is too large to admit of this being done without increasing the staff to an enormous extent. Nor is it by any means a secure thing for any Government to force any hurried system of checking accounts. If they are, the consequences can easily be foreshadowed. I am satisfied, after nearly three years' experience, that our present system requires immediate alteration, and without this is taken in hand at once, a serious revulsion of public feeling must ensue, to the prejudice of the present Government. Under any circumstances, I must be relieved of the responsibilities attached to the Advance Account, and will leave you to suggest the best course to pursue under the advice of our colleagues. In urging this matter, I have no inclination or intention to 'talk' to the Treasury on their business, but I deal

"with the question from the standpoint of its relation to this office and the public." That was the minute which called forth the very strong remarks which the hon. the Premier used in his subsequent minute. He thought it would speak for itself. He failed to realise at that time, and he failed to realise now, that there was anything in it that justified the adverse criticism which was passed upon him by the Hon. the Premier. However, he felt sure that the Hon. the Premier recognised, on calmly reflecting on what he said, that his minute was rather too scathing, especially when he wrote as follows:—"As Premier and Treasurer, I am most concerned in taking care that discredit does not come upon the Government, and I am convinced that, if your department had worked with the Treasury in the loyal and proper manner it should have, the difficulties that have arisen, and which have culminated in the Auditor-General reporting your department to the Legislature, would not have arisen." He had never mentioned this matter to the Premier since, and he was sure that his respected chief was aware and he hoped the House was aware—that it was his (Mr. Venn's) fixed desire to act in accordance with public opinion, as far as he could, at all times. The minute he wrote, and which he had read to the Committee, was not written in any spirit of insubordination. It was written by him as a man of business; and, if it had been published in the newspapers at the time when the minute of the Hon. the Premier was published, he was sure that there would have been no occasion at the present time for the hon. member for Albany to have alluded to it, while that hon. gentleman would certainly have not been justified in placing the construction upon the Hon. the Premier's minute which he did do the other evening. The hon. member for Albany had also insisted upon drawing the attention of the committee to another circumstance, which the hon. member alleged reflected discredit upon his administration of the Works Department, and that was with regard to an allegation that he had spent £50,000 last year in connection with the goldfields development vote, without the knowledge of his colleagues. In spite of what the Hon. the Premier said on that occasion, in order to try and dissuade the hon. member from persisting in that statement he had made, the hon. member had repeated it during the present debate, and it now remained for him (Mr.

Venn) to state the facts of the case. A certain sum of money was allocated for the development of the goldfields, and, up to a certain date, large and expensive works were carried on. The amounts which had been paid into the Treasury, to the credit of the vote, did not represent the whole of the sum voted, because there were liabilities on the previous twelve months' operations to be debited. He hoped hon. members would follow his meaning, because it was a peculiar fact that some people, including the hon. the Premier, drew a distinction between what were "liabilities" and what was "expenditure," in connection with a vote. He might say that he took an altogether different view to the Premier on this point. Now, with regard to the goldfields development vote, he could see at the time that it was being consumed gradually by the liabilities it was debited with, and by the current expenditure, and that more money would be required to carry on the work. The Premier did not agree with him, but he (Mr. Venn) pointed out that he did not feel justified in incurring fresh liabilities in excess of the vote. The Premier thereupon said that the liabilities should be met when they fell due, and not before, and he (the Premier) was so much impressed with the idea that if the money was not actually expended (notwithstanding the liabilities which had already been incurred) it still remained to be expended, and was (as it were) an asset of the vote, that he did not think there was any great necessity for bringing the matter prominently before the House. The Premier in proposing the allocation of the money for the goldfields development vote, thought he had made ample provision for the work; but, towards the end of last session, when he was at the Vasse, he drew the Premier's attention to the fact that the liabilities on the vote were very great, and that he did not feel justified in carrying on fresh works without the Legislature knowing about the state of the vote. The Hon. the Premier, however, did not favor the idea of bringing the matter before Parliament, because he considered, not having taken the liabilities on the vote into consideration, that there was plenty of money available, and he added that he (Mr. Venn) had no occasion to worry about the matter. The Hon. the Premier, however, did bring the matter before the House, and, not being in possession of the whole of the papers bearing on the question—he (Mr. Venn) being at the Vasse at the time—the Premier

was not able to deal with it as he (Mr. Venn) had dealt with it subsequently; and he expressed his surprise that the condition of the vote should be as it was. The impression of the House was that the Premier was not aware of the condition of the vote. The Premier told him afterwards that he did not wish that impression to remain, because, as a matter of fact, he was aware of the condition of the vote. It stood in this position: the original allocation would show that there was no cause for alarm. They had out of that allocation £12,000 still unexpended, and out of the £50,000 approved of by the House on new works, something like £26,000 had been spent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How much is earmarked.

THE COMMISSIONER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he could not say just then. Hon. members would therefore see that the original vote, upon which there were liabilities, was not spent, and that of the new vote of £50,000 there was a recoup of £26,000, which was the amount the Treasury had had to pay up to that date, so that if they had never asked the House for the extra £50,000, the overdraft on the old allocation would not have been more than £14,000.

At 6.30 p.m., the Chairman left the Chair.

At 7.30 p.m. the Chairman resumed the Chair.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn), resuming his reply, said he would refer next to the remarks of the hon. member for Geraldton, which were intended to be strictures on the administration of the railways. The hon. member had attempted to show that there had been a disregard on his (the Commissioner's) part for the expressed wishes of the General Traffic Manager, with reference to the obtaining of sufficient rolling stock. When the Loan Estimates of 1894 were before this House, the traffic branch did ask for a very much larger sum than the £174,000 put on the Estimates for rolling stock for the new railways and additional rolling stock for existing lines; but the Government, having in view the many and great obligations for expending money in other ways, did not then see their way clear to place on the Estimates a larger sum for rolling stock. It was true the traffic branch did not consider that sum would be nearly enough; but the expectation of the Government was that this amount for rolling stock would meet the

traffic requirements for perhaps not longer than two or three years. In regard to the £44,000 for additional rolling stock required for opened railways, that amount should have been £176,000, if all the requirements had been complied with at that time; but the Government, in view of other requirements, could not see their way clear to provide so large a sum for this purpose. What the Government did provide in the Loan Estimates, for rolling stock, was as follows:—For the new railway from Southern Cross to Coolgardie, £36,000; for the new railway to Cue, £53,000; for the proposed railway to Bridgetown, £20,000; for the proposed railway to the Collie coalfield, £21,000; also, additional rolling stock for opened lines, £44,000; these sums making a total of £174,000, provided in the Loan Estimates of 1894. This amount was placed at the disposal of the department for railways that were opened, and for others that were authorised or contemplated in the Loan Act of 1894. But included in this amount was rolling stock for the Bridgetown and Collie railways, which the House was not in that session asked to sanction in the form of separate Bills; therefore, the rolling stock estimated for these two lines, amounting to £41,000, was not ordered, but stood over; and the amount actually available for expenditure was £133,000. The department ordered from England, on the strength of this vote, £106,000 worth of rolling stock, and the General Traffic Manager had estimated that more rolling stock would be required to the amount of £130,000. The hon. member for the Murray, in referring to the memo. of the Engineer-in-Chief, and the hon. member for Geraldton, in quoting some figures to the House, asked how these things stood. The Engineer-in-Chief, in his memorandum, showed a sum of only £27,000 as being available for a probable requirement of £170,000. That was how the matter then stood. It left £27,000 to meet the estimated requirements of the General Traffic Manager. But the requirements of a large department had to be viewed in reference to the ability of the Government to comply with them at all times; and, upon the facts he had stated, it could not be said to be any want of administration on the part of himself or that of the Engineer-in-Chief, when they could not at the moment accede to all the requirements of the Traffic branch. The whole of the available money, except £27,000 odd, had been applied to this purpose by rolling stock

being ordered; and the remaining £27,000 odd would be used very shortly in the purchase of some rolling stock from South Australia, and some engines obtained in this colony. The Government did not, at the time, feel justified in dealing with the further amount estimated for rolling stock in connection with the Bridgetown and Collie railways. But, since then, realising the importance of additional rolling stock, the department had ordered rolling stock to the amount of £45,000, in anticipation of the vote of this House, and that order was now in England. Hon. members would have observed that a sum for rolling stock, to be purchased out of current revenue, was provided in the annual Estimates then before the committee; and the Engineer-in-Chief, in his report to Parliament, had mentioned that this amount for rolling stock had been ordered in anticipation of the vote of the Legislative Assembly. But, outside of all that, there was now being prepared an order to be shortly sent to England, for another indent of £55,000 for rolling stock, including some higher-speed engines. By calculating these several amounts expended, or about to be expended, in the purchase of additional rolling stock, it would appear that, by the time these liabilities became due, the Government would have to come to this House, on another occasion, for a further sum of £20,000, in addition to the amount to be voted out of current revenue, in the present Estimates. That being so, he did not think the hon. member for Geraldton had substantiated his strictures on the administration of the department, in saying that the requirements of the General Traffic Manager had not been acceded to; inasmuch as he (the Commissioner) had shown, on the contrary, that the Government had anticipated his wishes. It was impossible for this, or any Government, to anticipate the enormous strides that were taking place in the railway traffic of the colony; but this he would say, that while it was a moot point as to what the probable Traffic might be a year or two in advance of the present, yet the Government had provided all the rolling stock that was actually required up to the present. If, on the one side, the traffic branch estimated for so much traffic in anticipation, and if, on the other side, the Engineering branch promised that it would try to provide rolling stock to the amount of the traffic estimated by the Traffic branch, and did provide accordingly, it could not be charged

against the department that it should have anticipated the extra traffic that was developed beyond the estimated amount. Another point which had been labored very much, was the question of interlocking gear. An attempt had been made by the hon. member for Geraldton to startle the House and harrow one's feelings, by making it appear that there was great insecurity in the working of the railways, especially in going in and out of the Perth station, and that he (the Commissioner) had not given sufficient attention to the necessity for ensuring the safety of the public, in working the traffic over the level crossings in Perth. As the hon. member had quoted some evidence which he (the Commissioner) did not know was in existence, and which had not been presented to the House in regular course, he might say that he (the Commissioner) was now able to refer to it, in the paper then before him.

MR. SIMPSON: It is all over the town. Three men showed me copies of it to-day, in the street.

THE PREMIER: Three members of the Civil Service Commission, perhaps.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he had been surprised to hear the hon. member quote that evidence, when it had not been presented to the House. To quote part of it was a little unfair, because there was no rebutting evidence. However, he (the Commissioner) would now place the rebutting evidence before hon. members, showing that the action of the Government in that manner had been reasonable and correct. The General Traffic Manager did write the minute which the hon. member had quoted.

MR. SIMPSON: I am glad the Government admit he did write the minute, and that they don't insinuate I manufactured it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn): I did not attribute those motives.

MR. SIMPSON: I do not say you did, but the Premier might.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said the minute had been referred to as a very important point bearing on the safety of the public travelling on the railways, when going in or out of Perth. That minute was forwarded by him (the Commissioner) to the Engineer-in-Chief, and his remarks upon it were very much to the point, as follows:—From the Engineer-in-Chief

to the Commissioner of Railways.—“As
 “to whether the General Traffic Manager
 “is justified, under the circumstances, in
 “placing on record the intimation contained
 “in last paragraph of his memorandum here-
 “under, in view of its possibly very detrimen-
 “tal effect to the Government, in the event of
 “accidents occurring in the future, is a ques-
 “tion for your consideration; but I may say
 “that such declarations are very unusual, as
 “applying to pioneer railways in the colonies,
 “it being admitted on all hands that the
 “traffic on such railways is altogether insuffi-
 “cient to admit of their equipment up to
 “such a high standard of efficiency as is the
 “case in more thickly populated countries,
 “and the amount of equipment to be pro-
 “vided from time to time being a matter of
 “expediency, to be determined by the vary-
 “ing circumstances and requirements. In
 “this connection, too, I may mention that
 “there is scarcely any interlocking on the New
 “Zealand railways, although many of them
 “are doing immensely more traffic than any of
 “the railways in this colony, and there are
 “also several stations there, with practically
 “no interlocking arrangements, which do five
 “or six times the traffic that is done at Perth.
 “To sum up, in fact, it would mean that if the
 “various experts engaged in working colonial
 “railways were to stipulate for all the high-
 “class appliances prevailing on railways in
 “England, or else demand to be relieved of all
 “responsibility in the matter, the construction
 “and working of pioneer railways in the
 “colonies would be rendered altogether im-
 “practicable, and the question raised in last
 “paragraph of Mr. Davies’s memorandum is,
 “therefore, such a very serious one, that I
 “think it should receive the careful considera-
 “tion of the Government, as to how it should
 “be dealt with. Were it merely applying to
 “any one particular instance, in which the
 “acceding to the wishes of the Traffic De-
 “partment could be held to be not otherwise
 “than reasonable and imperative, I should
 “not consider it necessary to draw your
 “attention to it; but the paragraph, as it
 “stands, has a very much wider application
 “than this, while at the same time, as already
 “stated, making a demand for a class of equip-
 “ment which is not by any means universal
 “on railways in the other colonies.”
 The minute which he (the Commissioner)
 made upon the matter, for the consideration
 of the Cabinet, was as follows:—“Minute by

the Commissioner of Railways to the
 Premier.—“The question dealt with in these
 “papers involves a very large expenditure,
 “indeed, and one that has been before me for
 “a long time, whether we shall, or shall not
 “adopt the most improved appliances for the
 “safety of the public on our railways. The
 “General Traffic Manager expresses himself
 “very forcibly on the subject, and always
 “as having been accustomed to run rail-
 “ways that have been supplied with the
 “most modern and improved conveniences
 “for working. The Engineer-in-Chief’s
 “memo. also deals with the same question
 “from another standpoint. And I now would
 “ask the Cabinet to advise me as to this ex-
 “penditure. If an accident does occur, and
 “such a memo. as that of the General Traffic
 “Manager is in evidence, it doubtless would go
 “very hard with the Government, and I by
 “no means approve such a protecting clause
 “being written by any officer of the depart-
 “ment, whose object is to protect himself at the
 “expense of the Government. To yield, in every
 “instance, to the demands of any particular
 “department of the Government would mean
 “an expenditure far beyond the means of the
 “colony. It, of course, is a very easy thing to
 “run up an enormous expenditure and secure
 “the latest and most costly electric ap-
 “pliances for working our railway
 “stations; but the question is, whether
 “such an expenditure is justified—whether
 “the public can not be secured from
 “accident by foresight and capable administra-
 “tion—as was done before these patent me-
 “chanical appliances were adopted in other
 “parts of the world. We require all the
 “money we have to improve the conveniences
 “on our open railways all over the colony, in
 “the shape of crossings, sidings, platforms,
 “stations, &c., and, if we concentrate a very
 “large expenditure at, and on, our central
 “stations, the conveniences for the open
 “lines cannot be found. I am quite alive to
 “the advantages of possessing the latest and
 “most improved appliances, but I hesitate to
 “approve such a large expenditure without a
 “reference to my colleagues. The cost of
 “the patent interlocking and signal gear for
 “the Perth station will be at least £4,000, and
 “a very much larger sum later on. For the
 “Perth station I would recommend the expen-
 “diture, if my colleagues agree.—H. W.
 “VENN. 28th December, 1894.” The
 House had been informed by the Premier

during this discussion, that the Minister's memo. did come before the Cabinet. The memo. of the Premier upon it was as follows:—Memo. from the Premier to the Commissioner of Railways.—“The General Traffic Manager should be distinctly told that the Government hold him responsible for the safe running of the trains, and for the avoidance of accidents. The William-street crossing is a dangerous place, and I think the only way to make it quite safe is to bridge it. We can consider this matter in Cabinet.—JOHN FORREST. December 31, 1894. Ministers advise that the Engineer-in-Chief should report as to what can be done to meet this difficulty. The General Traffic manager cannot relieve himself of the responsibility of his position.—JOHN FORREST. 31st Dec. 1894.” He (the Commissioner) sent on the Premier's memo. to the Engineer-in-Chief, with these remarks:—“The Commissioner of Railways to the Engineer-in-Chief.—I submitted this question to the Cabinet, with the result that you are again asked for a report as to what is best to be done. Your memo. (5/12/94) fairly exhausts the subject, but, beyond dealing with the recommendations of Mr. Davies from a general-policy standpoint, you have made no recommendations yourself. I take it the question would not be altogether met by the erection of a bridge over the crossing, at William-street, as that is only a part of the question. The question of a system of interlocking is one that applies to the arrival and departure of all trains coming into the station, and for the regulation of the whole traffic at the goods shed. It is more than probable a bridge will have to be erected over the William-street crossing under any circumstances. The expenditure asked for interlocking gear by Mr. Davies runs into large figures; but I quite realise the urgent necessity of doing something. The question is, shall we adopt at once the most modern and approved system of signalling, or shall we adopt something more primitive? My memo. hereunder to the Hon. the Premier explains my views; but I am willing to admit that although £4,000 does seem a large amount, it would be better to adopt the system suggested at once, rather than try the ordinary methods of signalling, and eventually be compelled to undertake the larger expenditure. You, however, may have some recommendations to make on the subject. I shall be glad if you will make

them.—H. W. VENN, 10th January, 1895. Hon. members would thus see that he (the Commissioner) had grasped the situation, and that the Government had grasped it; also that he (the Commissioner) gave authority for the expenditure of £4,000 for the interlocking gear. That indent had since been sent to England, and he expected the appliances would reach this colony in a month or two from the present time. Was there any fault on the part of the Government, in that matter? The most modern appliances for interlocking might be very good, but the safety of the public could be safeguarded very well by hand-signalling at the crossing in William-street, as was shown by the fact that, up to the present, no accident had occurred. Therefore, the charge made by the hon. member was not supported by the facts. The same hon. member, after eulogising the General Traffic Manager, proceeded to find fault with his management, by saying he paid the workmen a sweating wage. He (the Commissioner) had on that day obtained a statement showing the ruling rate of wages for railway men in other colonies; and, from it, he found that the wages paid here to guards, porters, and other employees compared favorably with the rates paid in other colonies, being in some instances slightly higher than the wages paid elsewhere. Therefore there was no reasonable ground of complaint that the railway men here were paid less than the same class of men in other colonies. He regretted that some of the men on these railways were worked very long hours, but that was being reduced as much as possible. The service of the country must be carried on, and if men were worked over-time he hoped they were fully paid for the over-time. The charge of “sweating” the men was entirely confuted by the facts as to the wages in this and the other colonies. Referring next to the remarks made by the hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George), it was not necessary to say much in reply at present, and as that hon. member might speak again on these Estimates, there would be another opportunity for reply. When he did reply, he hoped it would be found satisfactory; and there was certainly no desire on his part to do other than give a straightforward answer to any question put to him. The hon. member for the Gascoyne (Mr. R. F. Sholl) had made some complimentary remarks, and he would now thank that member for the generous

manner in which the administration of the railways, in particular, had been dealt with. He would also thank those friends in the House who had assisted him when he had wanted some assistance. Referring to the few remarks made by the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James), he believed the contract price as to uniforms was altered upon the recommendation of the General Traffic Manager, as the class of material tendered for was found to be not so good as that which the contractor was in a position to supply. Still, it was not desirable to alter the terms of a contract; and, as a rule, he was so unwilling to vary a contract after it had been signed that, if there was any ground for complaints of this nature, it was that he was too hard and strict in enforcing the terms of a contract. In the present case, rather than call for fresh tenders, the difference being so small, he consented to a slight increase in the price, as recommended by the head of the department. The providing of weigh-bridges, for weighing loads in carts owned by private persons, did not come within the railway system. Material put into the railway trucks was weighed, but there was no provision for weighing material that was loaded into carts. Still, it had been decided to provide this convenience for the carters, and the weigh-bridge would be fixed very soon. As to calling for competitive designs required for public buildings, he could not agree that it would be wise, at all times, to adopt this course. If the desire was to vary the style of one architect, that could be done by appointing an additional architect. As to the accommodation in railway carriages, the intention was to renovate the older carriages of the second-class and make them more comfortable. He did not desire that the travelling public should put up with what were called dog-kennels, but that the second-class carriages should be made as comfortable as the first-class, if not quite equal to them in other respects. He had tried hard to get some of the carriages repaired, but there was so little space available in the railway workshops that this work had to be done outside the shops. As to the permanent way men's cottages, the two-roomed or three-roomed cottages which had been supplied were at least a great improvement on the tents in which the men formerly lived. If these wooden cottages were in some cases too small, he hoped the House would support him in increasing the expenditure for this purpose.

Reference had been made to the granting of free passes, but the return which had been laid on the table would show that he had not much to answer for in comparison with the free passes that were granted on Government railways by the Commissioners in the other colonies. It was not always pleasant to say "no" to the applicants for free passes; it would be much easier to say "yes," but, in any case, he did not say "yes," unless satisfied that the application was one of which he could thoroughly approve. It was the practice in other colonies to grant railway passes to the officers of Parliament, and the Clerks in the two Houses had received passes in this colony. Complimentary passes to contractors and their principal officers engaged in the construction of a railway were given in all the colonies; and this compliment was returned by passes being granted over the new line, as far as constructed, for the use of officers of the Government. Some applications for free passes were so difficult to refuse that he had preferred, in certain cases, to pay the amount out of his own pocket rather than send a refusal which might not be rightly understood.

MR. SIMPSON: Why does the Premier's secretary get a free pass?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said it was granted because he thought it was a right thing to do in this case, and it was not granted on the recommendation of the Premier. It was usual, in other colonies, to grant a free pass to the Premier's secretary. He (the Commissioner) took the whole responsibility for having granted a pass in this case, and did not wish to shelter himself under anybody's recommendation. As to the remarks made on the general administration of the department, he thought the report on the working railways, which had been presented to the House, was, as the Premier had said, the best justification and the most complete answer he could make. Perhaps he ought to thank hon. members opposite for having made remarks which had enabled him to reply, by placing before the House the departmental evidence which he had quoted, and which would place himself right in the eyes of hon. members. He would be happy to answer any further questions that might be put.

MR. GEORGE, referring to the Estimates generally, complimented the Commissioner on the defence which had just been made.

As to providing weigh-bridges, a reference to the admirable report on the working of the railways would show that the erection of a cart weigh-bridge was contemplated by the Department in 1891, as shown on the plan of that period. That fact appeared to have been lost sight of for a time. The practice in giving free passes to railway contractors was generally adopted, because the contractors and their officers would otherwise be put to the expense of travelling long distances over the Government railways in order to consult officers of the Government at the central office, in reference to the contract work. With regard to other free passes, he was pleased to see the Commissioner was exercising careful supervision. As to the General Traffic Manager protecting himself at the expense of the Government, he (Mr. George) would say, with all deference to Ministerial opinion, that if the General Traffic Manager had made his representations to the Ministerial head, and those representations did not receive prompt attention, and if he was not assured they would receive prompt attention, then the General Traffic Manager would be only doing what was just to himself by emphasising the matter in the way that Mr. Davies seemed to have done with reference to the safety of the public at the William-street crossing. The question was not as to interlocking gear, but Act was whether proper measures should be taken for preventing loss of life or serious personal injury, or destruction of property, at a very dangerous crossing. On the 3rd of July he had given notice of a question as to the necessity for erecting a bridge at the William-street crossing, and when the Commissioner, after asking for delay, did answer the question some days later, he said the Government had finally decided to erect a bridge, and that this work would be put in hand as early as possible, after funds were voted by Parliament. From certain minutes of the department read that evening, it appeared the question of erecting a bridge over that crossing had been under consideration months before, and that, when he asked his question in the House in July, no new arguments were needed for emphasising the necessity for that work, in the interest of public safety, and he could not understand why the Minister had asked for delay. When, in August, he found there was no provision in the annual Estimates for this bridge, he was certainly astonished.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That will have to be a large work.

MR. GEORGE hoped the bigness of the work would not cause it to be delayed, in view of the evident danger to life and limb at that crossing.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is an enormous question to bridge over that large crossing, and the decision does not rest with me only, but with the Government. I have yet to make a recommendation as to what class of bridge should be erected, and the probable cost.

MR. GEORGE said that if a single life was lost—whether that of a Commissioner, a Premier, or the child of a poor citizen—the Minister responsible for this delay would regret it more than anything that happened in his career. With regard to rolling stock, the Commissioner's explanations had, in some degree, dissipated the doubts he had felt as to sufficient provision having been made. In dealing with the admirable report on the railways, he regretted that, concise as it was, it did not include a report from the General Traffic Manager upon the working of the traffic under his control. The Engineer-in-Chief was probably one of the ablest in his profession, in the colonies, and no one would wish to detract from his professional abilities; but he (Mr. George) might be allowed to question whether Mr. O'Connor's professional abilities and experience were such as to give him a right to pose as an authority on running traffic. That was very questionable. Therefore he would prefer to see the General Traffic Manager's report, in his own words, on the working of the traffic. He was glad to see it stated, in the report, that the Engineer-in-Chief found the dual position he now occupied was becoming too onerous for him to continue, and that he suggested the time had arrived, or would shortly arrive, when it would be necessary to consider whether his connection with the Traffic Branch should be severed. On that point there would not be two opinions in this Assembly. On page 6 of the report was a table showing the percentage of working expenses to gross earnings on the railways in Australia and in Cape Colony, showing that Western Australia stood fifth on the list in point of economy. But on the same page appeared a deduction from the comparative figures, in these words:—"There has also "to be taken into account the higher charges

"on the goldfields railways in Western Australia, in order to create a reserve fund to "repay the cost of these railways by the time "the goldfields are worked out." He asked what was being done with that reserve fund - was it a reality or a myth, a tangible asset, or only a reserve on paper?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is a matter of "if."

MR. GEORGE said the report was all "if," if it came to that. From another part of the report, it appeared that further and better results were to be expected from the railways in the future, owing to the new Workshops and the adoption of a system of expert management of stores. So far as the former question was concerned, he believed that had already been settled. The site for the Workshops having been fixed, there was no doubt the plans were also ready, and consequently this grievance on the part of the department would be remedied. The sooner this was done the better, so that another of the excuses for not obtaining better results would disappear. With regard to the management of stores, however, he thought the proposal was one that should not have appeared in this report. When the alteration in the stores system, by which all the stores were placed under one general department, was made, there was no doubt it must have been for a very good reason. The Hon. the Treasurer was hardly likely to have formed one general department of stores unless this was the case. At any rate, he trusted the Government would not permit the creation of such a Stores Department for the railways, as was shadowed in the report. If the Government wanted to see the evils of of a separate stores system, they had only to go to Victoria, where they would find hundreds of thousands of pounds worth of material rotting and useless, and the whole of it was due to the separate stores system. Let the department have new locomotive Workshops by all means, but the House should never permit the control of the stores to pass into the hands of a separate authority. There was another recommendation the Engineer-in-Chief appeared to be about to make during the recess. It shadowed forth a change in the administration of the department, and suggested, among other things, that he himself should be relieved from certain responsibilities—a suggestion which he (Mr. George) did not agree with. The report went on to say:—

"I should, however, mention, at the same

"time, that it is my opinion, that if I am "relieved of this duty, it would be desirable "that some one else should be appointed to "fulfil it, as I do not think that it could be "expected that three, or (including Stores "and Accounts), five branches of a department (the work in most of which is of a "technical character) would pull together "without a good deal of friction, unless there "were somebody with technical knowledge to "settle their differences. It would also, I "think, be desirable, if one of the existing "officers is appointed to this position, as I "should imagine would be the case, that he "should be relieved from immediate personal "responsibility in respect of his present "branch of the service." Whatever the Engineer-in-Chief meant by this it was very clear that he still clung to his ridiculous belief that no one but a trained professional man was any good in the practical work of a Railway Department. [THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: You are quite wrong; he does not mean so.] It was no use the Commissioner stating that, for the reason that he (Mr. George) had seen the Engineer-in-Chief's own writing, to the effect he had stated. Professional men were wanted for the building of the lines, of the yards, and of the buildings, according to the desire of the House, but when it came to practical management of the railways, it was not trained engineers they required. Turning from the Railway Department, for a moment, he would like to refer to the remarks of the hon member for East Perth, in regard to the architectural work in the Public Works Department. The hon. member had suggested that the plans for buildings should be open to competition. There were arguments both for and against this course, and it might not be an unmixed blessing if something could be done in that direction. At the same time, the suggestion was not a practical one, when the fact was taken into consideration that the architects in the colony at the present time had quite enough to do without competing for Government work. It had also to be borne in mind that even if this course were adopted an Architect's Department would still be necessary to superintend the work, and see that it was carried out according to the plans. What should be done was to make improvements in the present system. They wanted improvements, and, without doubt, there was room for plenty of them. For instance, atten-

tion might well be drawn to the new wing of the public buildings, in which the Commissioner and his staff were themselves located. There was no need to refer to the case of the unfortunate contractor, who was nearly ruined by the contract. The fault was in the construction of the building according to the ideas of the Colonial Architect. The design for the eaves in the original plan provided for their being of cast iron, but the parapet was found to be too weak for this to be carried out. Galvanised sheet iron had finally to be used, for the simple reason that, if the iron eaves had been put in, the whole parapet would have come down. This was one of the cases that went to prove most conclusively the want of proper supervision and skill in the preparation of the plans. In connection with this matter it would be very interesting to be told what the total cost of the Colonial Architect's Department was, and what was the capital cost of the buildings, so that hon. members could see the comparison. There were one or two matters appearing in the interim report of the department, which called for some reference. It was very curious that the report was not even dated, and, as to its contents, they were most misleading. An instance of this was to be found in regard to the post office at Jarrahdale. According to the interim report, the whole of the money voted for this work had been expended, and the work was returned as "finished." Turning to the Estimates, it was found that the department were asking for a vote for this work, and a gentleman just down from Jarrahdale had told him there was not a stone or stick on the site for the new building. Surely this was an extraordinary state of affairs. [THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: You know what the explanation is.] He could assure the hon. gentlemen he did not know, but he would like to know. There was another sentence in the report worthy of some reference, and that was where the Engineer-in-Chief stated:—"I regret that, owing to the great pressure of work in the Accountant's branch, the returns of expenditure connected with the Loan votes are not yet completed." Surely the Hon. the Commissioner was not going to tell the House that, not only did they not have sufficient men, but that the organisation of the department was so defective that they had no means for employing sufficient men in order to keep the work of that important branch of the department up to date. Of course, they knew

that the Departmental Report was delayed in this respect, simply because of the want of the proper officials, proper supervision, and proper organisation in the accountant's branch; but, in these great spending departments, such conditions ought not to exist. Either the officers had far too much to do, or else the Government was too parsimonious in not giving the department a sufficient number of officers to keep up with the work. No matter how it was caused, the excuse was a lame one, and discreditable to the department. He trusted the Commissioner would see such a thing did not occur again. Looking further into this interim report, they would find the following statement: "The execution of the works which appear on the Estimates for the year ending 30th June, 1895, was very much retarded in consequence of the Estimates not having been passed by Parliament until November, and owing to the fact that copies of the Estimates could not be obtained until December." Hon. members might supply their own explanation to this. It would probably be that owing to the Christmas and New Year holidays the work of the department could not be commenced until February. The excuse was a wretchedly lame one to bring before the Assembly. The Department could hardly be blamed for the Estimates not having been in their hands sooner, but, even then, the excuse put forward for many of the works not being put in hand did not do the compiler of the report any credit. Personally, he doubted if the Commissioner had ever seen the report before it was laid on the table of the House, otherwise his good sense would have prevented these excuses being made. They were far from creditable to the Department. He had, on a former occasion, referred to the question of the non-payment of accounts by the Public Works Department, and the Hon. the Commissioner had courteously doubted his statements on the subject. The question, however, was one capable of being proved. The account he referred to more particularly was that for the delivery of broken metal to the department, and the account extended from January to the end of May. When the Commissioner replied to a question he had put to him the other day, and said the account had been paid in July, the hon. gentleman had been misled, intentionally or otherwise, by the officers of the department, for, as a matter of fact, the account in question was not paid

until a week after the complaint was made in the House. There were other contractors supplying stores and material for the harbor works at Fremantle, and these were kept without their money, when it should have been paid. If the Hon. the Commissioner could find time and inclination to go into the methods adopted by his department towards the public creditor, he would probably see that the cause of complaint was removed. The very reasons for delay mentioned in the report, while unsatisfactory in themselves, were satisfactory to him, because they proved the truth of his assertions. Questions had also been asked by him in the House with regard to what was known as the Cemetery Road, Subiaco. He had asked that the tender should be laid on the table, but the Commissioner thought it his duty to refuse to do so. The confidence refused him by the Commissioner had been readily granted by the tenderers themselves, and copies of the tenders were now in his possession. The question having been raised, it was only right that the House should now be put in possession of some information, to prove the unsatisfactory way in which these departmental affairs were sometimes conducted. In the first place, tenders were called for when the Department had no funds to carry out the work. Not even the most ordinary business precautions were observed. After the tenders were in, the contractor who was successful was informed that the contract could not be signed until the money for the work had been voted. It was, of course, right for the Department to say this, but they should have known it before contractors were put to great expense and trouble in preparing the tenders which the Department had called for, knowing, at the same time, that no tenders could be accepted. If a business man was to do this, he would soon get the name of being a humbug, and contractors would avoid having anything to do with him. There could be no defence of such proceedings. Now, in the case of the Subiaco Road, tenders were called, and the lowest one was for £2,443. That man went to considerable expense and trouble to make up his plans and estimates; and then, when he was found to be the lowest tenderer, he was called upon to send in not only two or three, but nine alternative tenders, in order to see how far the departmental estimates could be met. For ten weeks this man had been kept hanging about, trying to meet the

wishes of the officers of the Department, and finally, he was not given the work, which was proceeded with as day work. Such a proceeding was neither right, just, nor honorable, and would at once be condemned in any ordinary business transaction. The information he had culled for on this matter had produced some curious figures. First of all they found the Engineer-in-Chief stating to a reporter of the *West Australian*, on November 28th, 1894, that he was "confident that when the work was finished it would be admitted to have been well carried out. Especially in view of the amount at the disposal of the Department, being only equal to £10 per chain." Now, it appeared that the sum of £2,000 had been allotted for this work, and, of this amount, a good portion was spent by the City Council. But that body appeared to have been too liberal, and the Department decided to complete the work. The Department did proceed with the work, and, while it had only £1,175 in hand, it spent £2,928 8 5s. in bringing the work to completion; so that instead of costing £10 per chain (as the Engineer-in-Chief said it would), the road had absorbed £25 a chain. A more important feature of the matter was that, if the best of all the alternative tenders which the lowest tenderer had sent in had been accepted, the work would have cost £2,258 11s. 9d., or £700 less than the amount actually expended by the Department in doing it, under their system of day labor. The whole thing was very unfair to those who were asked to take contracts under the Department; and the results, through this want of fair dealing, were also most unsatisfactory to the country. He did not know that much could be said in support of the system of day labor. Attention would probably be drawn to the quantity of stuff got out for the Fremantle harbor works, but he doubted the figures. He did not believe the quantity of material had been delivered at the works, and the system of measuring adopted was calculated to be very misleading. A whole train was measured at a time, and set down at containing so many cubic tons, and every train on each day in the week was calculated to contain the same, although it was possible the measured train had been specially prepared. Personally, he would not be satisfied that the quantity of material had been taken out until he could examine the cross-sections, and compare the area removed with that deposited at the harbor works. [THE COMMISSIONER OF RAIL-

WAYS : We can give you the information in a very few minutes.] The question was one which he (Mr. George) regarded from the economic point of view. It appeared to him there was a danger of establishing in this colony a huge system of day work in connection with public works. Plant was being acquired, and would be put forward as a reason for perpetuating a system which did not bring about the best results to the Department. The question of day work was also important from a political point of view, for the simple reason that any large body of men would vote for the candidate who pledged himself to continue a system so favorable to them; and the Government would always be provided with a strong army of voters, in return for the day system of public works. Some of the complaints he had raised were no doubt of a technical nature, but they very much affected the good administration of the Department, and gave a fair idea of the way in which he regarded the methods pursued by the officers of that department.

MR. MORAN considered that the information elicited, as a result of the attack made on the Commissioner of Railways, would be received with much interest, not only by hon. members, but by the general public. So far as the complaints that had been made were concerned, he was quite satisfied that any fair-minded and reasonable man would come to the conclusion that the Commissioner had delivered a defence which brought him with very great credit out of the ordeal. The hon. gentleman had showed that he had very fair explanations to make, and he stood far higher in the estimation of the House for having made it. There was no doubt that, for some things especially, blame was attachable to someone, and, inasmuch as that blame could not now rest on the shoulders of the Commissioner, it meant that the one to suffer was the Premier. Personally, he saw no reason to revive what was really ancient history, but the responsibility of the occurrence of twelve months ago seemed to rest on the shoulders of the Premier. He was glad, indeed, to congratulate the Commissioner upon his announcement with regard to the Advance Account. The determination of the hon. gentleman was in accord with the spirit of progress, and the desire that the methods of the Government should advance as the country advanced. The Commissioner was to be commended for the fact that the discussion had

proved one thing most clearly, and that was that he (the Commissioner) had a backbone of his own, and that other members of the Cabinet were also independent enough to hold their own opinions. Of course, what was necessary in a Ministry was complete unanimity, but the members should still be independent when the occasion arose. The time had gone by when they were content to have a system of "one man one Government," and, doubtless, after this discussion, that was a suggestion they were not likely to hear anything about. Having said this much, he desired to say something with regard to the report of the Engineer-in-Chief. At the same time, he could not help expressing the opinion that it would have been far better for some hon. members of the House to have confined their attention to more important matters of administration than that of free passes—a question which, if necessary could have been debated when more weighty questions had not to be discussed. The report of the Engineer-in-Chief showed most conclusively that the people of the goldfields were mulcted in heavy penalties, merely in order to pay for the loss on "duffer" railway lines—not that he would suggest these lines would not ultimately pay. On every train running from Fremantle to Southern Cross the people using it were improperly penalised. The reason was very shortly given by the Engineer-in-Chief, but that gentleman had also gone into other matters which should have had no place in such a report. He had actually declared that a sinking fund was being provided, so that, by the time the goldfields were worked out, the railways to the fields would have been paid for. The suggestion of the goldfields being worked out was unwarranted. It was a mistake on the part of the department to suggest such a thing, and the Engineer-in-Chief was assuming a knowledge and uttering a prophecy which the greatest experts in the world would not dare to make. What possible precedent could the department have for determining the life of a goldfield? [THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There are plenty of precedents.] It would be far better to state facts, instead of indulging in generalities. The suggestion was one which he challenged. Did any one venture to say how long the Ballarat goldfield would last? [THE COMMISSIONER: Take the Thames goldfield in New Zealand.] As to that, he ventured to say there was as much machinery

going to the Thames goldfield to-day as there was to Coolgardie. It was rank absurdity for this suggestion to have been made as to the goldfields of the colony, when the leading experts of the world, now at Coolgardie, were declaring them to be of a permanent character. That paragraph in the report was not a wise one. He would remind hon. members that all were prepared to admit that nothing but the goldfields had made the colony what it was to-day. Therefore it was a most foolish thing to cast doubts upon their permanency when the facts were all the other way. However, there was one point where the permanency of the fields could be very much affected, and that was in the question of railway rates. The people who developed the mining industry were not all Jay Goulds, but were those who speculated a little, and invested under the idea that they would get a return in dividends. When a mine was started, a certain sum was set aside for development, and the difference between the penalising freights to the goldfields, and those charged on other lines, might make all the difference to a struggling company, for the reason that not the least item of expenditure was in getting their raw material and machinery on to the field. When all the facts were taken into consideration it did appear a most extraordinary thing that the Government of this colony should set themselves up as being able to determine the number of years the goldfields were going to exist. With regard to the freight rates, the Government ought to give a trial to reduced rates on the goldfields lines for one year, and revert to the old charges if they found that the reduced tariff did not pay. By doing so, they would help to develop the mines, and would remove a grievance from the minds of those who resided on the goldfields. Although the Commissioner denied the accuracy of the report in *Hansard* as to his promise last year, the fact remained that the hon. gentleman had promised that, when the Southern Cross line became remunerative, the rates would be lowered, and he (Mr. Moran) would keep on pressing this promise upon the hon. gentleman upon every opportunity. In conclusion, he would press upon the Director of Public Works to provide more adequate accommodation for the Coolgardie telegraph office, through which thousands of telegrams affecting very important interests, passed every year. The present telegraph office was such a flimsy building that the public could

see the messages, and those who were acquainted with the telegraphic code could learn the contents of every message that was received or transmitted. The faults of the building, and the evils to which it gave rise, had been very forcibly pointed out by Mr. Griffiths, a young member of the South Australian Legislative Assembly, and he (Mr. Moran) would send on the letter to the Director of Public Works, in the hope that a better telegraph office would be constructed without delay, especially as the extension of the line to Kalgoorlie would cause a great increase of telegraph business at Coolgardie.

MR. ILLINGWORTH had no doubt that the position taken up by the Commissioner in regard to the control of the Advance Account was the correct one, as no Minister should have at his command large sums of money, which he could expend as he chose, even though the adoption of a proper system of book-keeping should put an unwilling Treasury staff to the trouble of adding a few extra columns to books that were already in existence. It was necessary that contractors who employed a large number of hands should be paid promptly by the Government, in order that they might promptly pay their men, and contractors' accounts should be met as soon as they were passed as correct, no matter on what day of the month the accounts were received by the department. But they should not be paid out of the Advance Account of the Director of Public Works.

THE PREMIER: There is no Advance Account now—or only a very small one, the same as every other Minister has.

MR. ILLINGWORTH was glad to hear it. Coming to the consideration of the receipts and expenditure of the Railway Department, there was no doubt, as he had often urged on the House, that the working expenses must not be allowed to exceed 54 per cent. if the lines were to be made to pay, and that was merely the percentage that the working expenses amounted to last year. But he was afraid that this result was not due so much to economy as to the sacrifice of efficiency, and the undue reduction of wages. Looking at the returns he had before him, he found that Cape Colony very nearly attained the proper standard of working expenses, with a record of 54·7 (or nearly 55 per cent.), while the working expenses of the Western Australian lines amounted last year

to 61'50 (or nearly 61½ per cent.). The report of the Engineer-in-Chief showed that were it not for the penal freight rates imposed on the goldfields line, the working expenses on our railways would have been something like 70 per cent. Yet the House was asked to believe that the Railway Department was in a satisfactory position. Now, where had the savings which represented the profit on the lines come from? The Chief Engineer's report showed that the Yilgarn line had earned by its penal rate 12'66 (or, say 12½) per cent. The penal rate was defended, on the ground that there was a certain degree of doubt as to the permanency of the goldfields. Well, if there was any doubt about the permanency of those fields, there was doubt about the future of West Australia. The point he wanted to emphasise was this: that in order to bring up the average returns from the 1'04 of the Eastern line to the 12'66 of the Yilgarn line, a rate in excess of what would cover working expenses, interest on construction account, and sinking fund, was charged upon the Yilgarn line. If the doubt expressed as to the permanency of the goldfields was the real reason for the excess rate being charged, then the earnings of that line should be ear-marked, and set aside for the payment of all liabilities in connection with that line before the decay of the mines, and consequent loss of traffic, took place. At the rate of its present earnings the Yilgarn line was the most profitable one in the colony, and, because it was the most profitable, the Department took advantage of the circumstances of the people who used it, to charge them more than was necessary to provide interest on construction account, working expenses, and a sinking fund, which were the only legitimate charges that could be made on any railway. Well, if the position of the Railway Department was satisfactory, when injustice of this kind had to be done in order to show a good balance-sheet, all he could say was that the Government were very easily satisfied. At the same time, he was willing to say that, apart from the unequal adjustment of rates, the West Australian lines were, in his opinion, the best managed railways in Australia. But, in saying that, he spoke with the full knowledge that there was any amount of room for alteration and improvement. The Government must be prepared for attack from the Opposition in regard to the railways and other portions of their administration; and

the country was all the better for the work of the Opposition, as any one who had watched the course of events would admit. The Government were prone to take a great deal of credit for much that was inspired from the Opposition side of the House.

THE PREMIER: You never originate anything.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Did they not? What about the suggestion that unremunerative public works should be provided for out of the credit balance of the revenue, instead of out of loans? What of the amended Electoral Bill and the amended Goldfields Bill? Who would ever have heard of an amended education system, if the matter had not been pressed upon the Government by the Opposition? But to return to the question of the penal rates on the Yilgarn line. It was a new doctrine that, because the trains came back from the fields nearly empty of freight therefore, the charges should be made excessive. In the other colonies, in the grain and wool season, thousands of trucks were run empty to the places at which they were to receive their loading, but, nevertheless, only fair rates were charged. The cry of the farming districts was "Reduce the rates," and the cry obtained a good deal of support? Why should the goldfields be treated differently?

AN HON. MEMBER: Because they may not be permanent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Not as permanent as produce? Why as soon as the local demand was overtaken, the prices for all the produce in the colony would be reduced to export prices, and that might mean a great falling off in production, because production was, at present, stimulated by the excellent prices now ruling. The rule was that the lowering of freights increased production. The greatest producers of the colony were the goldfields, and their freight rates should be lowered.

MR. LOTON said the system of giving the Minister funds to pay the public creditor out of the Advance Account was one that should be done away with as soon as possible.

THE PREMIER: It has been. There is no Advance Account now.

MR. LOTON was very glad to hear it, but he did not think the House had been aware of that fact up to that time. He desired to draw the attention of hon. members to the figures in the valuable report of the Engineer-in-Chief, showing the earnings of the various lines for the year ending the 30th June. The Eastern

Railway returned 1·04 per cent., the Northern 2·12 per cent., the South-Western 4·20 per cent., and the Yilgarn 12·66 per cent. The last quoted return was very satisfactory, and showed that, if the rates had been lowered to the normal tariff, the department would have had to provide £28,000 towards the interest on the construction account, working expenses, and the sinking fund of other lines, as well as the £16,000 deficit that would be made in the general railway revenue, making a loss of over £40,000 in the balance-sheet. In other words, if all the lines were permitted to be non-paying, West Australia could not go on building more railways for the development of the country; for this could only be done out of taxation, which the colony was not prepared to face. The Government would only be justified in making extra lines so long as those lines paid their way. He was in favor of cutting down the Yilgarn tariff rates as soon as it could be done without throwing too great a burden on the colony.

THE PREMIER: It has been done.

MR. LOTON: Then the railway revenue would be less this year than it was last, unless the traffic increased, and further reductions should not be made at present. It seemed to him, that, with the amount of traffic carried by the Eastern Railway, had that line been worked in the most economical and practical way, the returns from that line should be better than those it was credited with in the report of the Engineer-in-Chief. On the whole, the result of the year's work in the Railway Department should be a cause for congratulation on the part of members. The position of the Department was better than the most sanguine member could have expected it to be at the present time; and he thought that the Government should not be in a hurry to reduce the rates on the goldfields line, at all events until the railway system showed profitable results as a whole.

MR. LEAKE said he had been very pleased to notice the marked alteration in the methods adopted by the members of the Government that evening in replying to statements made by the members of the Opposition. Instead of the usual bandying of words, hon. members had been supplied with explanations by the Commissioner of Railways, which he (Mr. Leake), in opening the debate, had asked for as to certain matters concerning the management of the Railway Department, and parti-

cularly in regard to what had been referred to as to the "old minute." Had that explanation been given before—and really it might have been given two years ago—a good deal of discussion might have been avoided on the present occasion. Although the explanation of that minute, written by the Commissioner of Railways, was satisfactory, so far as that gentleman was concerned, yet no justification had been given for the Premier's minute of July 2, 1893. In his endeavors to correct what appeared to him to be some particular abuse in his Department, the Commissioner of Railways did not receive from the Premier that generous support which he had a right to expect. At any rate, there was nothing to justify the Hon. the Premier writing in reply to the minute of the Hon. the Commissioner of Railways in the following terms:—"THE HON. THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.—I recommend the Under-Treasurer's clear and concise memorandum to the careful study of the officers of your Department. I also request that you will instruct your officers to follow the advice of the Under-Treasurer in regard to all accounts for payment, and, if they do this and follow the regulations, the responsibility will then rest with the Treasury, if things do not work well. 2. As Premier and Treasurer, I am most concerned in taking care that discredit does not come upon the Government; and I am convinced that if your Department had worked with the Treasury in the loyal and proper manner it should have, the difficulties that have arisen, and which have culminated in the Auditor-General reporting your Department to the Legislature, would not have arisen. 3. As head of the Government, and as Treasurer, I will not allow this obstruction to continue any longer; and I insist on your Department, and all other Departments, carrying out loyally and faithfully the wishes of the Treasury and Audit Departments. 4. Every Department can arrange its internal accounts as it pleases, so long as efficiency is attained; but for any Department to attempt to dictate to the Treasury and Audit Departments, and to oppose their wishes, in the way that has been done, is past endurance, and will not be tolerated. 5. I hope, therefore, you will issue instructions that will terminate, once and for all, any opposition whatever to my wishes in regard to the Estimates, and the form and manner of rendering the public accounts. 6. I am very

"sorry to write in this way, but I am now determined on this subject; and I feel sure you will use your best endeavor to have my wishes complied with willingly and faithfully.—" JOHN FORREST, Premier and Treasurer." He thought that, after having read that minute of the Hon. the Premier's, they had heard the last of the matter, but he was glad indeed to think that the Hon. the Commissioner had now been able to clear away matters, so far as he was concerned. He (Mr. Leake) did not hesitate to assert that, so long as that minute of the Hon. the Premier remained unexplained, it certainly left the Commissioner of Railways in a false position.

THE PREMIER: It was not a bad minute.

MR. LEAKE: It was, because it showed that the Hon. the Premier was hardly generous to his colleague. It also showed that he (Mr. Leake) was not far wrong when he made the assertion that there was friction in the Cabinet with regard to the management of the Railway Department. Evidence that that friction existed and continued was also supplied by the subsequent correspondence. Now, however, they were told that the Ministry was a "happy family"—to use a phrase which had been used before,—and he hoped that that condition of affairs would long continue. The Hon. the Director of Public Works had hardly replied satisfactorily to the attack—for such he might call it—made by the hon. member for Geraldton, in regard to the requests for further railway facilities made by the General Traffic Manager, and the complaints made by that official when he found that his requests were not complied with. Although Mr. Davies, the General Traffic Manager, did complain that such and such a recommendation he had made had not been adopted, the Commissioner of Railways had practically admitted that the matters referred to had been under the consideration of the Government for a long time before, but that the Government had delayed in carrying the works out which the General Traffic Manager considered were necessary to be done. He did not, however, propose to go over the same ground again; but he wished to express his satisfaction that the debate had taken place, and that a little more information had been given by the Commissioner of Railways as to the working of the department under his control, than hon. members were possessed of before. There was but little need for him to refer to the question of the £50,000 alleged

to have been spent by the Commissioner of Railways, without the knowledge of his colleagues, for the development of the goldfields, as the hon. gentleman had explained his position in regard to it. But he had (as he had anticipated he would) shifted the responsibility for the action on to the Hon. the Premier. He was sorry to think that the Commissioner of Railways had had to bear the burden of the attack which was made on that action last session; but, if he chose to accept the responsibility for that or any other action, he must bear the consequences. As there was a thin House, he did not propose to test the feeling of hon. members, on the first item of the Estimates now under discussion, and he would reserve to himself the right of referring to items which were lower down on the list.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he was very pleased indeed to find the hon. member for Albany in such a conciliatory mood that evening, and to have heard him say that he was satisfied with the result of the debate. He could only say that the Government were satisfied also. He would not have risen to speak at all except that he desired to say a word or two in defence of those who were not able to defend themselves against an attack that had been made upon them: he referred to the officers of the Treasury Department. The Treasury officials were not responsible for the Advance Account of the Works Department having grown to the enormous amount mentioned by the Minister controlling the Department. In fact, he would not like to throw the responsibility for it upon anyone. But the affairs of the colony, especially in regard to the public works on the goldfields, grew to such enormous dimensions that the money that was intended for small payments had to be used, by reason of the existing circumstances, for a purpose for which it was never intended to be used. The Under Treasurer called his attention to that fact time after time, and it became necessary to arrange a different system altogether. It was found to be by no means an easy matter to arrange a system by which payments to persons employed in the Works Department could be made at all times; but a system had been arranged by which the Commissioner of Railways had only a small Advance Account, and also by which payments were made by the Treasury to a paymaster, in the case of day wages; and that officer distributed the

amounts to the persons entitled to them. With regard to what had been said about the delay which creditors experienced in getting their money from the Treasury, he could only say that if the accounts were presented promptly there was never any delay in paying them; as the system which was in vogue in the other colonies (that of monthly payments) had been adopted here; and he defied anyone in the House, or out of it, to say that he was not able to get his money from the Treasury when he had properly rendered his account. The delay occurred in getting the accounts rendered.

MR. GEORGE: No; we complain that the delay occurs in getting them passed for payment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the employees on the Harbor Works, and in the Workshops, and on other Public Works at Fremantle, were paid fortnightly by the paymaster; and that system had given complete satisfaction. He did not profess to be an expert accountant, but he would say that, as far as he was able to judge, the quarterly accounts which were published by the Treasury, showed that all the operations of the Department were carried out in a simple and easily understood manner; and he wished in justice to the Under-Treasurer, to state that a more earnest, zealous, and loyal officer could scarcely, in his opinion, be found in this, or in any other colony. He would like, in conclusion, to express his pleasure that the end of this debate was approaching, and that it had taken such a pleasant turn. The Commissioner of Railways had, he thought, given a good reply to everything that had been said against his administration of the Department, and he was glad to see that the triumvirate in Opposition—the hon. members for Albany, Geraldton, and Nannine—were not quite united in their opposition for once; for, speaking in regard to the Administration of the Railway Department, the hon. member for Albany and the hon. member for Geraldton had attacked the Minister in charge of the Department, while the hon. member for Nannine had affirmed that the railways of the colony were, in his opinion, better managed than those of any of the other colonies.

MR. SIMPSON said he did not think it was necessary for the Hon. the Premier to make any defence of the work of the Treasury officials, because the good character which those gentlemen bore was well known. With regard to the progress and the result of the

debate, he was very pleased with it, and everyone else seemed to be pleased with it also. He imagined that the Hon. the Commissioner of Railways must have been extremely satisfied in having had an opportunity of publicly vindicating his action in connection with that well known document which had been described as "the old minute," by being enabled to read his own minute on the matter. So far as he (Mr. Simpson) was concerned, he thought he could reasonably say that the result of the debate had entirely vindicated his own action, in suggesting that it was absolutely necessary that hon. members should express their views in regard to the administration of the Railway Department. It was suggested on the previous evening by the Hon. the Premier that his action on that occasion in ventilating certain facts in connection with the management of that department was unconstitutional, if that word would apply. But he had taken the trouble to look into the matter, and he had not found any constitutional authority that would prove that the statement of the Hon. the Premier was correct. He was not entirely satisfied with the statement of the Commissioner of Railways, that great delay had not occurred in affording the General Traffic Manager facilities, which he had stated were so necessary for the successful working of the railways, and for the safety of the travelling public. To his mind, the Premier had made very light of the grave importance that should attach to the minutes of the General Traffic Manager, and he thought it was desirable that next year the House and the country should be furnished with a report from that official, because he could not in any other way explain to the House the manner in which his department had failed to receive the support it should have received from headquarters. The report on the railways, which had been submitted to Parliament, was the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, and, according to the Premier's own statement, the requirements which the General Traffic Manager had urged as being absolutely requisite were not regarded in the same light by the Engineer-in-Chief.

THE PREMIER: I did not say that.

MR. SIMPSON: That was what he gathered was the meaning of the Commissioner of Railways's statement. With regard to the estimates for works and buildings, they possessed a further feature that would occur to hon. members as being somewhat extraordinary, and that was

the huge and disproportionate expenditure that was incurred in the erection of public buildings, as compared with the cost of similar buildings erected by private individuals. He ventured to think that a return—and he proposed moving for one—showing the comparative cost incurred in connection with the erection of buildings for the Government, as against the cost incurred in connection with the erection of buildings by private individuals, would show a vast difference. The expenditure incurred on private buildings might be represented by 5 per cent., as against 16 or 17 per cent. for Government buildings. Then he wished to refer to the delay of the Works Department in carrying out works for which the House had voted money for their construction. In support of this statement he would remind hon. members that, last year, a sum of money was voted for the construction of a telegraph line to Yalgoo and Mount Magnet, and that it was not until June last that an officer was sent up to determine what route the line should take.

THE PREMIER: The material for the line is not yet to hand.

MR. SIMPSON: He hoped that, in the future, no delay would occur in carrying out those public works which Parliament had sanctioned, more especially those embodying the extension of the telegraph service on the goldfields of the colony. With regard to the progress of the railway system of the colony, it proved that the Railway Department should be in a position to meet the growing requirements of the colony. He would, in this connection, move, later on, for a return showing how the different lines of railway were paying, on their own account. He congratulated the House on the satisfactory trend which the debate had taken.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he thought he should reply to some of the statements which several hon. members had made since he last spoke, but he would, seeing that the hour was late, be as brief as possible. The hon. member for Murray had referred to the question of carrying out public works departmentally, as against calling for public tenders for them. He might inform the hon. member that the desire of the Government was always (as far as it was practicable to do so) to carry out all public works by contract. The hon. member had laid great stress upon the necessity of having the Fremantle harbor works con-

structed by contract, instead of being done departmentally. He was astonished that the hon. member had advocated that the Government should have adopted such a course, because he must know, from his knowledge of that particular class of work, that the specifications could not be clearly enough defined to enable such a work to be let by contract.

MR. GEORGE: Yes, it could be.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said it could not be, because it would be practically impossible for the Government to instruct a contractor as to what class of material should be put into the middle, or upon the outside, of a mole. That very question had been raised by the Engineer-in-Chief, time after time, when he had conversed with him on the subject. He assured hon. members that it would be more convenient to the Government to have to deal with contractors for that class of public works, if it were possible to do so, than to have the whole responsibility of its construction thrust upon the Works Department. The hon. member also said that a large amount of machinery which the department had had to secure, and which was being used in the construction of the harbor works, would fall into disuse when the work was completed. But, surely, the hon. member knew that the machinery would have to be paid for by the Government, whether it was used by them or by a contractor.

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

MR. MORAN: It could be used elsewhere.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he thought, at any rate, that hon. members would accept the statement, that wherever it was possible to do so, the Government would call for tenders for public works. The hon. member for the Murray had also said—and he would have to reply very carefully to the statement—that he (Mr. Venn) had endeavored to direct the Civil Service Commission as to what they should do when they wished to call an officer of the Works or the Railway Department to give evidence. He would at once say that he had never done so, nor would he ever dream of attempting to direct any action of that or any other Commission, because such an action would be liable to be misinterpreted. The hon. member had also spoken as to the necessity for the erection of an over-way bridge at the William-street railway crossing, in order to secure the public from the danger

of accidents. He could assure the hon. member that, although the erection of such a bridge was a large undertaking, and one which would entail considerable cost in its construction, the Government would not shirk their duty in regard to it. Further, he would promise the hon. member that when he was in possession of the probable cost of the work, he would recommend to his colleagues the construction of this bridge. There was another matter upon which he desired to give the hon. member for the Murray some information, and that was in regard to the Stores Department. In addition to the Government Stores Department, it was proposed to have a Stores Issue Department, which was necessary for the Railway Department, because it was not convenient to have a large general store to supply the small daily requirements of such a department as the Works Department. Therefore, the hon. member's statements in regard to that subject were unnecessarily alarming.

MR. GEORGE: I rise to explain, Sir, that the Engineer-in-Chief's report on the matter is the justification for the remarks I made.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: (Hon. H. W. Venn) said that with regard to what the hon. member for Yilgarn had said regarding the alleged excessive rates charged on the Southern Cross railway, he would say that if the hon. member, and those who agreed with him, were satisfied with the Eastern Railway mileage rates, they should be more than satisfied with the rates which were charged on the Yilgarn Railway, because they were really five per cent. less than those which prevailed on the Eastern Railway.

MR. MORAN: That is not the argument.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said it was, because the trains which travelled the distance to Southern Cross with a load, were run at double the cost per mile, inasmuch as the trucks returned from Southern Cross empty, and produced no revenue to cover the expense of returning them, whereas, on the Eastern line, the trains were laden on each journey to and from their destinations, and thus contributed to the cost of running them both ways. There was this to be said, however, in regard to the Yilgarn railway—and he did not intend to withdraw from the position which he took up when a deputation waited upon him some time ago with reference to the rates prevailing on the line—that the Government would consider

the question of reducing these rates, when it could be clearly shown that that, or any other railway in fact, was paying its working expenses and the interest on the capital expended upon its construction. He would have liked to have discussed the question more fully, as he was always willing to argue the point; but, as the hour was getting late, he would no longer dwell upon the subject. He desired to thank the hon. member for the Swan for the friendly remarks he had made in regard to himself, and to the administration for the department under his control generally. He quite agreed with the hon. member that there would be, during the next twelve months, a marked increase in the profits of the Eastern Railway, inasmuch as the deviations recently made would enable the steep grades to be avoided, and would consequently cause a marked decrease in the necessary haulage power. He also thanked the hon. member for West Perth for the kindly remarks he had made regarding him; and, altogether, he felt that he had good reasons to be satisfied and elated at the course which the debate had taken that evening, after the severe and heated remarks which were indulged in by one or two hon. members the previous evening, concerning his administration of his department. He had endeavored to reply to those statements in the proper spirit, because discourtesy to either man or woman was foreign to his nature. But any hon. member who wilfully offended him without cause, by attacking his official or personal character, would find that, although he would always defend himself, he would never be guilty of a lack of generosity or consideration for his accusers.

MR. RANDELL said he did not wish to prolong the debate to any greater length than was necessary, but, reference having been made to the necessity of erecting an overway bridge at the William-street crossing, he wished to express the hope that the Government would carefully consider what they were about to do, before undertaking such a large work. In the meantime, he hoped that the Works Department would recognise that the possibility of accidents occurring at that crossing did exist, and would, therefore, place two reliable and intelligent men at the crossing to regulate the traffic and to prevent any accidents occurring.

MR. LOTON referring to the item "Under-Secretary, £500," asked the Commissioner of

Railways to explain, as the appointment of an Under-Secretary for Railways appeared to be a new one.

THE COMMISSIONER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he desired that the Works Department and the Railways Department should each have an Under-Secretary, and he proposed that Mr Alpin Thomson, the present Under-Secretary for Works should be made Under-Secretary for Railways, and that another gentleman should be appointed to fill the position of Under-Secretary for Works. He believed that the separation of the work of the two departments concerned, by having a separate Under-Secretary for each, would result beneficially to both the departments.

MR. LEAKE moved that progress be reported, and leave given to sit again.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at two minutes past 11 o'clock, p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 12th September, 1895.

Donnybrook Land Resumptions—Footbridge at North Fremantle—Stationmaster's residence, North Fremantle—Station accommodation, North Fremantle—Gold-mining Leases, difficulty of obtaining—Trustee Ordinance Amendment Bill: third reading—Duties on Estate of Deceased Persons Bill: third reading—Crown Suits Bill: second reading; Committee—Associations Incorporation Bill: Committee—Loan Act 1894 Amendment Bill: second reading; Committee; third reading—Ecclesiastical Grant Abolition Bill: second reading; Committee; third reading—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

DONNYBROOK LAND RESUMPTIONS.

THE HON. J. C. FOULKES: I find that all the papers I called for have not been placed on the Table. The return asked for was for all the papers. I find that certain correspondence, consisting principally of two letters written by Mr. Mitchell and Mr. Turner, offering their land, one at 15s. per acre, and another at £1 per acre, are missing, although reference is made to them in some other part of the cor-

respondence. I have therefore to ask that these letters be sent here. I cannot see why there should be this delay. It took three weeks to get what is here now, and that after a question had been put in another place. I do not blame the Minister for Mines, or the Commissioner of Railways, but some persons in the Works Department, who, no doubt, are trying to keep things back until their salaries are passed on the Estimates, so that they may escape a wiggling.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom): I have only to say that I was under the impression that all the papers had been laid upon the Table. The reason they were not laid upon the Table before was that they had been mislaid and could not be found. The fact that a question was asked in the Legislative Assembly had nothing to do with the matter. I shall endeavor to get the further letters the hon. member requires.

FOOTBRIDGE AT NORTH FREMANTLE.

THE HON. D. K. CONGDON asked the Minister for Mines, when the tenders for the footbridge at North Fremantle, promised by the Government, would be called for.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied as follows:—The work cannot be done till the telephone wires have been removed from the railway bridge, 20 of which belong to the Postal Department and five to the Railway Department. The Postal Department are running a new line of poles to take its wires, and the Railway Department have in hand the driving of piles to carry its telephones. This work will take about two months, when the footbridge will be commenced.

STATIONMASTER'S RESIDENCE AT NORTH FREMANTLE.

THE HON. D. K. CONGDON asked the Minister for Mines, when the Government intended to call for tenders for the stationmaster's residence, so long promised, at North Fremantle.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. E. H. Wittenoom) replied that tenders would be called for the work next week.

STATION ACCOMMODATION AT NORTH FREMANTLE.

THE HON. D. K. CONGDON asked the Minister for Mines, whether the Government intended to afford the necessary station ac-