

HON. G. RANDELL moved that this clause be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu thereof :—

An owner who works or uses or permits or allows to be worked or used any boiler in respect of which a certificate has not been granted, or is not in force, shall be liable to a fine not exceeding fifty pounds. An owner who works or permits or allows to be worked or used a boiler at a higher pressure than is authorised by this Act; or does not cause a certificate notice, as required by this Act, to be exhibited, and continue exhibited as required by this Act; or allows such certificate or notice to continue exhibited contrary to this Act, shall be liable, for each offence, to a fine not exceeding Twenty pounds. But if, during the contravention of this section by the owner in respect of any boiler, there shall be an explosion of such boiler causing injury to person or property, the owner shall be deemed guilty of a misdemeanour, punishable by fine, not exceeding One hundred pounds, and by imprisonment with or without hard labour for not exceeding two years: Provided that nothing in this section contained shall exempt any other person from any punishment or fine or the owner from any action or suit to which either may be liable.

Clause (as printed) struck out.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment to the new clause, that all the words after "owner," in the last line, be struck out, and the following words be inserted in lieu thereof: "or any other person from any action or suit to which he may be liable."

Amendment put and passed.

New clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 29 and 30—agreed to.

Clause 31—Owner to report boiler explosion to inspector:

HON. G. RANDELL moved, as an amendment, that the words "or remove the dead" be inserted between "injured" and "until," in the ninth line.

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

Clauses 32 to 36—agreed to.

Clause 37—Fees for inspection:

HON. G. RANDELL moved, as an amendment, that the words after "certificate," in the seventh line, be struck out, and that the words "one set of fees only shall be payable for one or more inspections in any one year," be inserted in lieu thereof.

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

Clauses 38 to 44—agreed to.

Clause 45—Act not to affect boilers used on Government railways:

HON. G. RANDELL moved, as an amendment, that the words "and used for travelling with any locomotive engine," in the first and second lines, be struck out and that the following be inserted in lieu thereof: "any locomotive engine, and used on the Government railways."

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

Clause 46—agreed to.

Schedules 1 to 5—agreed to.

Schedule 6:

HON. G. RANDELL moved the following amendments to this schedule:—In line 7, strike out "under," and insert "up to," and in line 10 strike out "under 8 horse-power," and insert "8 horse-power and under."

Amendments put and passed, and the schedule as amended agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported with further amendments, and report adopted.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER OF MINES: Report of Government Storekeeper for 1896-7.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council adjourned at 9.45 p.m. till the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 2nd December, 1897.

Question: Fremantle - Rottnest Cable—Imported Labour Registry Bill: third reading—Annual Estimates: Debate on Financial Policy (conclusion); in Committee of Supply—Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Auctioneers Act Further Amendment Bill: first reading—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—FREMANTLE-ROTTNEST CABLE.

Mr. HIGHAM, in accordance with notice, asked the Minister of Education what was the estimated cost of the proposed cable between Fremantle and Rottne; when it was proposed to construct the same as promised; if not to be constructed, why not?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) replied: The estimated cost is £4,700. It will be constructed as soon as funds are provided, and it is hoped that this will be done before the end of 1898.

IMPORTED LABOUR REGISTRY BILL.

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

ANNUAL ESTIMATES—DEBATE ON FINANCIAL POLICY.

[The financial statement having been made by the Premier and Treasurer upon introducing the annual Estimates on Tuesday, 16th November, and the first item having been moved, the debate was now resumed.]

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

MR. CONOLLY (Dundas): In speaking on the Estimates that are before the House, I think we shall do well to look not only to the future expenditure of money, but to how it is at present being expended, and also how it has been expended in the past. I do not think it is the desire of anybody, certainly it is not of myself, in any way to depreciate the prospects of this colony at this stage. We fully recognise how this young country of Western Australia has grown, but it cannot possibly continue the rapid course of progress it has undergone during the last two or three years without making progressive, and at times retrogressive steps. Progressive steps naturally on certain occasions, and sometimes possibly quicker than the progress has fully justified, and, as a natural course, the reaction will at times set in. Still, I think it advisable for everybody to look at the condition of this colony as it is to-day. Look at things fairly in the face—and I do not think it is desirable to look at things from a roseate standpoint, or how they might be and how they should be, but as they are, and as they will be. When

we look at the condition of this colony, comparing this year with last, we find that there has not been altogether that satisfactory influx of population which many people anticipated, and more hoped to see. This change has not been—as some people asserted—the results of the Christmas exemptions alone. It has been a steady and gradual change taking place for the last five or six months. At the beginning of this year, the population was flowing into Western Australia in very large numbers, and certainly, for the last six months, this population has been steadily and gradually on the decline, until the last month, when we were unfortunately confronted with a larger number of departures than arrivals. I would say, look at this indication as we may, we have also another aspect to take into consideration, the expenditure of public money, which depends largely on our revenue, and which is equally based on our population. The expenditure of last year has undoubtedly been a great one, and, to a great extent, it has been well directed. There have been many excellent works carried out throughout the colony; works which will undoubtedly be an immense benefit to the great industry on which we depend for our prosperity and progress. Still, I think we can look back on a few works which were carried out, and which were undoubtedly not very necessary, and which, in my opinion and in the opinion of many people, the country could have got on well without, not for this year only, but for many years to come. I consider the problem before us should be how we should maintain an increase in our population, and continue the good work of opening up and developing our industries, and, at the same time, reduce the debt of the colony. I am disposed to think that the works which were carried out and sanctioned were works which do not have that important bearing on the progress of the colony which they should have had, and which we expected. For instance, we are confronted here with a magnificent building in the form of a Mint. It is to be presumed that this Mint was built for the special benefit of the goldfields and the gold producers, to prevent them sending their gold to be minted outside the colony, in Melbourne. I doubt whether the gold producers of this colony asked for this Mint, or that it

is fully appreciated by them. The money which has been spent on this Mint could have been spent to the benefit of the goldfields in an infinitely greater degree. As the matter now stands it is this, that the gold is sent away under the old conditions to the other colonies to be minted. Certainly there is a cost in doing this—2s. 6d. an ounce, or possibly more; but this cost was so well distributed over the goldfields that very few people troubled their heads about it. I should say that the cost of minting the gold will now come directly on the shoulders of the people of the colony, and not, as it originally did, on the shoulders of those actually producing the gold, and who were capable of paying the cost, and did not mind paying it. The point I wish to bring out is this, that this colony has quite enough important and absolutely necessary public works on which to expend its money, without spending it on works which are not urgently required.

THE PREMIER: You should have made these observations two or three years ago.

MR. CONOLLY: And I should have made them if I had been here.

THE PREMIER: It is no use talking about these works; they are now in hand.

A MEMBER: This Mint is built for the goldfields.

MR. CONOLLY: The fact remains that the money could have been spent to better advantage, and benefited the goldfields far better than being spent on a Mint. I would also point out that we have a very magnificent and pleasing building in the form of an Observatory.

THE PREMIER: This is all ancient history.

MR. CONOLLY: I do not know whether this building has been completed.

THE PREMIER: It is nearly finished. Do you want to stop it now?

MR. CONOLLY: I consider an Observatory undoubtedly necessary for a colony, but for a colony infinitely more advanced than Western Australia is today. We went on many years without an Observatory, but we have one now, and, no doubt, many are pleased to see it; but I cannot look at it without feeling that the money could have been spent to better advantage and more wisely and beneficially to the country. With regard to the expenditure of money during the

present year, I think certainly we can look forward, not only as the Premier himself has said, to an expenditure equal to last year, but to an expenditure even greater than last year. Taking into consideration that our population is not increasing quite as rapidly as we anticipated, I think it is an enormous burden that we—a colony such as this, with a population of only 150,000 people—are asked to carry on our shoulders. I think it is absolutely impracticable. I do not think it right that large and important public works should be retained in the hands of the Government alone, when the Government, as we know, have not as much money as they would like to have to carry out these public works. Would it be better for the country to still further mortgage its credit, or to encourage the assistance of private enterprise in the great work of development?

MR. A. FORREST: We have had private enterprise, and we do not want any more.

MR. CONOLLY: The hon. member says we have had enough of private enterprise. I cannot understand that. Private enterprise has carried out some of the best and biggest works in other countries. Take railways: we, in this country, tried private enterprise, and it proved a failure; but in the countries in which the best and cheapest travelling exists, the railways are in the hands of private enterprise. I refer both to England and America. There they have the best equipped railways in the world. Taking this into consideration, I cannot see why, with proper deliberation and agreement, private enterprise should not very materially assist the Government of Western Australia in the huge work of development. Under certain conditions it could be done, and under those conditions it would be beneficial. The worst that can be said of private enterprise in this colony is that it has influenced the alienation of land from the people. I do not consider the alienation of these large areas of land a desirable thing. I maintain—and I think I am right in doing so—that our railways in this colony could be constructed by private enterprise, with the sanction of the Government, without any alienation of our Crown Lands, but with a reservation giving the Government the

right to re-purchase within a reasonable time. I do not think it would be right for the Government to allow railways to be constructed by private enterprise with land grants, and without the right of re-purchase when the Government think fit. But, if the Government were to allow railways to be constructed by private enterprise with the right of re-purchase within a certain time, there would be no risk at all. The risk is taken by the people who carry out the line, and that is the best guarantee, I consider, that a line will be payable, to know that private enterprise will carry it out. Looking at the future expenditure, as compared with the past, I think we shall see that a great deal of money has been expended, ignoring the facilities with which nature has endowed this country. I allude to the various harbours which in Western Australia are being opened up. If you go to the North, the first illustration of this is at Cossack. Here we have a place which I do not think anyone who has seen it would say is desirable for a harbour. That work is in hand, and the money is being spent on it, when, at Port Hedland, a few miles distant, we have a good harbour without any money being spent on it. Come to the harbour at the place represented by the Premier—and I may state that whatever I say about Bunbury I do not say it because the Premier represents the place, but say it because I believe in what I state—I have been down to Bunbury, and I have seen the work going on there. I have seen the country that surrounds Bunbury, and I may say that I was very much gratified to see the country that does surround it. During my trip down there, I fully realised, and I was convinced, that this colony was capable of producing what is necessary for the present population, and a much larger one. But I could not see that the country around justified the expenditure of £100,000 on a harbour.

THE PREMIER: There is a million pounds worth of timber there. What are you going to do with that?

MR. CONOLLY: That is what I am coming to. The harbour at Bunbury is, no doubt, a very fair harbour for small traffic; but if people wish to take into consideration the possibility of a large trade from the district, there is a better

natural harbour, a harbour better worth developing than exists at Bunbury, close to it, and that is at the Vasse. If the advantages of nature had been properly utilised and made the best of, instead of endeavouring to model artificial harbours by means of public moneys, not only would this country have exercised immense economy, but would have the gratification of knowing that it had made the best use of what nature had given. I have also a little to say about a harbour which I represent (Esperance), and I am going to say it, too. With reference to that harbour, I should like to make a comparison with the harbour at Bunbury, which has received a large amount of public money, and I wish it to be distinctly understood that I do not make this comparison between Esperance and Bunbury merely because Bunbury happens to be in the electorate of the Premier. I do so because I consider that the harbour works at Bunbury should not have been undertaken at all, when there is a natural harbour at the Vasse for that portion of the colony.

THE PREMIER: You are a great authority on that, no doubt.

MR. CONOLLY: I have seen both places.

THE PREMIER: Once, perhaps.

MR. CONOLLY: Once may be better than a great many times.

THE PREMIER: You are very rash in committing yourself.

MR. CONOLLY: There are many people who say that Bunbury is the place from which a large amount of shipment is expected to take place. I will only say that, taking the shipping returns of the port of Bunbury as it is now, and comparing them with the shipping returns of the Vasse, while allowing that Bunbury has received some benefit from the works already done, I find that only three vessels loaded left Bunbury harbour last year, whilst eighteen vessels left the Vasse.

MR. A. FORREST: They could not get in at Bunbury.

MR. LEAKE: When they do go into Bunbury they get on the sandhills.

MR. CONOLLY: Vasse, and not Bunbury, is intended by nature to be the harbour of that district.

THE PREMIER: It is Hamlin Harbour you mean that the eighteen ships went from.

MR. CONOLLY: It is marked on the shipping returns as Vasse.

THE PREMIER: That shows how little you know about it.

MR. CONOLLY: I can only take the Government records.

MR. A. FORREST: You ought to locally know it.

MR. CONOLLY: The Government records are supposed to be authentic. In the expenditure of this money on the harbour works, I think it is the duty of the colony to see how long it will take for these works to pay a percentage of interest on the expenditure; and while Bunbury receives many of her dutiable goods through Fremantle, the amount of shipping revenue actually paid at Bunbury, as shown in the Customs returns last year, was only £8,566, while Esperance returned no less than £34,000 last year. That is the difference in the amount of shipping at the two places, and it is very marked. In conclusion, I say that so far as the district I represent is concerned, I hope that the expenditure of public money in the country will be done with a little more equality and justice; and if any harbour in this colony, whether the harbour I represent or any other, contributes a certain amount to the revenue, I hope that harbour will be allowed to have some small portion of the revenue back again.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): That the Financial Statement made by the Premier is an interesting one, there can be no two opinions; but many matters were mentioned, dealing with the immediate past and the immediate future, which should give us serious consideration. Judging from the recent departures of people from the colony, and from various agitations, as well as from the applications which are constantly being made by people out of employment, having been dismissed from the Government service, it appears there is serious cause for alarm in the near future; and, if this state of things continues, no doubt we shall have our towns inundated with the unemployed, and that is a serious possibility to keep in view. That men are going away, and that the population is decreasing, there can be no doubt; but whether the decrease is in that class of men which we cannot afford to keep here is a question. My own opinion is that those who have a little money, and are unable to obtain

employment, are going away to other colonies; and that those who cannot go, and are unable to obtain work, will be left as paupers on the State. Although it may be said that the increase of departures is owing to the time of year, yet we must consider that this has been going on for something like three months; and I think that if people are going to the other side, they will not require three months for the purpose of spending a few days at their old homes during the Christmas holidays. Those who do go away, having the means for so doing, are the very people we want to keep here, so that they may spend in this colony the money they have made here, instead of running away to spend it elsewhere.

MR. A. FORREST: How are you to stop them?

MR. SOLOMON: That is a matter for serious consideration. Although many persons scoff at the idea, yet there is no doubt the cause of many going away is the high cost of living; but whether the high cost results from excessive rents, or from excessive duties on food and other necessities, the fact remains that people find these accumulated charges very hard to bear. We ought to try to reduce in some way the high cost of living in this colony; and if we cannot induce property owners to lower their rents, we ought to reduce the Customs duties as affording some means of relief. There are some matters of expenditure which the Government might have given their attention to. One matter which I consider very urgent is that, with the certainty of hot weather, there is a serious necessity for providing some place for the treatment of contagious fever patients. In Fremantle, during the last few months, we have had some fever cases, such as scarlatina; and in the case of one female patient, there was no public hospital or place where she could be treated, and she was sent to the Town Hall, so that the health officer had to find some asylum for her at a heavy expense to the Health Board. We appealed to the Government, and were told it was the duty of the Health Board to provide an asylum for such cases. The Health Board in Fremantle do not receive any subsidy from the Government, and the money they spend is obtained from the ratepayers for providing a sanitary

service in the town, and we find it is as much as the Health Board can possibly do to make ends meet. I do not see why a town should be saddled with expenses of that kind, which should be borne by the State. I ask the Government to consider at an early date the necessity for erecting fever hospitals where required; and, in regard to the Fremantle hospital, I was told only this morning by the medical officer that there are four cases of typhoid fever, the patients living in tents because they cannot be taken in at the hospital. I am informed by the medical officer that, if they remain there, the chances are they will die.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We have spent £7,000 on the hospital at Fremantle.

MR. SOLOMON: We have no convenience for isolating fever cases. We tried to obtain the use of the hospital at Subiaco, formerly used by the Perth Council for fever patients; but we were told by the Perth Council that we could not have the use of it for Fremantle patients. The Government should erect a place between Perth and Fremantle for contagious fever cases. Considering the large number of vessels coming close to the wharves, almost in the centre of the town of Fremantle, I think that sooner or later we shall be visited there with some epidemic of a contagious nature. Diseases of some kind do break out in various places, and the sooner we are prepared to deal with such a contingency the better. Another matter is with regard to the harbour works at Fremantle. I regret to see that the Government have reappropriated some £70,000 from the vote for the dry dock, and applied it to the harbour works generally. In my opinion, the dry dock and the harbour works should be completed together, as soon as possible; and now that the German Lloyds Company are arranging to send large steamers to Fremantle, if we do not provide dock facilities those steamers will have to spend the money somewhere else, and we shall not reap any benefit from that source. I trust the Government will try to do what is possible in this matter.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We cannot possibly do it this year.

MR. SOLOMON: The money has been voted for the dry dock. With regard

to one or two matters of injustice, there is the new asylum for lunatics at the Whitby Falls estate: and with regard to the appointment of officers there, we have had officers in the asylum at Fremantle who have been there for the last 20 years, and three years ago they were promised a rise of £5 per annum in their salaries, but have not received any increase yet. Lately a temporary asylum has been built at Whitby Falls, and some entire stranger has been appointed there, over the heads of those men who have so long been engaged in the same kind of work at Fremantle; and this was done without even asking them whether they would go to the Whitby asylum or not. These men have been receiving small salaries during many years; and yet, when there is an opportunity of improving the position of some of them, a complete stranger coming here without local knowledge is appointed over their heads at a salary of £130 a year. That is an injustice to men who have been long in the service of the country. There is a matter in regard to salaries paid to resident magistrates. I observe in the Estimates that the resident magistrate at Perth is to have his salary increased to £700 a year, and the resident magistrate for the Perth Local Court is also increased to £700, while our resident magistrate at Fremantle, who does as much work as the two put together, gets only £600 a year. Taking into consideration the nature of the work he has to do, he should be placed at least on an equal footing with any magistrate in Perth. These are matters to which I have thought it necessary to call attention; but there are other points which I may deal with when we consider the Estimates of the departments.

MR. RASON (South Murchison): I had not intended to speak in this preliminary debate on the Estimates, but feel bound to protest on my own part against a few of the statements which have been made. In my opinion, advantage has been taken of the scope afforded by these Estimates to make a most unwarranted charge against the Director of Public Works. He has been accused by two or three members with having a desire to grab all the money he can, so that he may indulge in reckless and extravagant

expenditure. In the opinion of many members of this House, and certainly in the opinion of the vast majority of people outside, the Director of Public Works has shown a considerable amount of energy and talent in the discharge of his duties; and, to my certain knowledge, his desire has been rather to curtail expenditure, instead of increasing it. Bearing in mind that whatever he has done has been simply carrying out the instructions of this House, to a great extent, I say that to accuse the hon. gentleman of reckless and extravagant expenditure is most unfair and ungenerous. We have been told that an attempt will be made to take something like half a million of money from public works, and transfer that sum to the Lands Department. The hon. member (Mr. Leake) who is responsible for outlining that plan of action stated his desire that some assistance should be given to the farmer, and some encouragement given to the pastoralist. That is a very refreshing statement to come from the hon. gentleman, who but a short time ago assured us the farmer was such an utterly worthless individual that he did not deserve any encouragement; and as to the pastoralist, the hon. member said it did not matter to the colony if he was wiped off the face of the earth altogether.

MR. LEAKE: Who said that? I did not say it. I think it was the member for the Swan.

THE PREMIER: You said the farmer was no good, and was lazy.

MR. RASON: I suppose the member for Albany, who leads the Opposition, has no desire to separate the member for the Swan from his party.

MR. LEAKE: No more than I have a desire to gain you.

MR. RASON: Thank you. The desire is mutual; but it is a refreshing statement that the member for Albany has so considerably altered his views in such a short time, that now his desire is to benefit the agriculturist and the pastoralist by transferring half a million of money from items of public works. There is one other matter, and I am sorry the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) is not in his seat to hear my remarks; and if he had been here I should have had more to say on a subject he brought before the House than I shall say in his absence. The hon. member

thought proper to bring a lengthy list of grave charges against certain heads of departments in the public service. I have no doubt the hon. member was actuated by a desire to remedy what he considered to be an injustice: but I should like to ask him whether—I am glad to observe he has now entered the Chamber—in his desire to remedy an injustice to men employed in a department, he has not unwittingly done an injustice to the head of that department. The hon. member said he would be satisfied so long as he got these charges placed on the *Hansard* record. Now, if the charges were true, that was a praiseworthy effort, and I am glad the hon. member succeeded in it so far; but supposing the charges are untrue, can the hon. member show me any possible course by which the refutation of those charges can also be placed on the records of *Hansard*?

MR. VOSPER: Certainly; by an inquiry.

MR. RASON: We must remember that he brought forward charges, but did not mention the names of men who made those charges to him: and from the very nature of the charges it would be impossible, in the way the charges were put before this House, for the Minister to give them a denial. One charge was that some employees in the postal service had been refused sick leave. That is quite possible, in a large service such as that; but if the head of the department could lay his hands on the particular cases, he might be able to prove that there was no injustice and no hardship done. If the Minister in charge of that department accepted those names under the conditions named by the hon. member, that is a guarantee that the men named should not suffer as a consequence of what they had done, then those men would practically have a lease for life in the public service; because if the Minister were to guarantee that those men should not suffer in consequence of having made these charges, I submit that if the men's names were accepted under that condition it would be impossible to discharge them at any future time, without having it stated that they were discharged in consequence of having brought forward these charges. I will refer now to one statement made by the leader of the

Opposition himself. He said it appeared to him we had reached an era of log-rolling, and that the Premier appeared to say to members on the Government side of the House, "Support me, and I will give you something for your district." I am surprised at members on the other side of the House having the audacity to make such an accusation against members on this side.

THE PREMIER: Name them.

MR. RASON: I am glad to have this opportunity of stating to the Premier, as head of the Government, what perhaps he may not know, that a considerable amount of dissatisfaction is felt among members who may safely claim to be his supporters, and I suppose I may be recognised as one, whatever my support may be worth; and I am not ashamed of it, though there is a considerable difference in shame, and the reasons for shame. I assure the right hon. gentleman that we on this side feel that, in the Premier's desire to be just to members of the Opposition, or to members of the House generally, he is more than just and more than generous to members on the Opposition side, and is by no means so to members who sit on this side of the House. If benefits are to be derived for a particular district, then I know full well that the best course to pursue in order to gain those benefits would be to sit on the Opposition side of the House. I am glad I have had the opportunity of calling the attention of the right hon. gentleman to this fact; and I can assure him a great deal more satisfaction will be felt by his supporters, if he is less generous to the members of the Opposition, and that he should consider his friends to a greater extent, instead of giving so much to those members of the Opposition who would, on the very first opportunity, turn round and bite the hand that fed them,

MR. LEAKE: A bribe.

MR. RASON: You accepted it.

MR. MORAN: Every time.

MR. LEAKE: You (Mr. Rason) have done very well in your district—£2,700.

MR. RASON: That is a lot, among seven goldfields!

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): I am glad the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) is present, because I was desirous that, when I rose to speak on this

question, he should be present. In the speech with which he favoured the House a week ago, of about one and a half hours' duration, the outpourings of his eloquence were devoted chiefly to an attack on the Postmaster-General; and, if he did not express it, he implied that the Minister in control was merely a nonentity. The hon. gentleman posed as a great reformer of grievances; but, unless he can prove to the House that these grievances are correct, I am afraid he will not, in the future or the present, have much influence with hon. members. In bringing forward the statements the hon. gentlemen did a few evenings ago, I am willing to believe they were entirely intended for the redress of grievances, but I fear there may possibly be some motive behind them. Some few weeks ago the hon. member asked me certain questions, and although it is not possible for him from his place in the House to state that the answers were false, he produces and reads to the House anonymous letters which state that, in the opinions of the writers, these replies were false and not straightforward. These replies were made by me in answer to the hon. gentleman, and it is for this House to judge between us as to whether these answers were correct or not. I do not think my worst enemy, at any rate, will give me credit for not being straightforward. The hon. gentleman recites two cases, and at the time he mentioned the names, I think. These cases were well known to me—that Ministerial nonentity who knows nothing of what goes on under his control. One was a case in which the hon. member stated the officer in charge of a certain office on the goldfields, Kanowna, was refused sick leave after four years service, and the man had to retire before he could get the leave. I believe I am correctly stating what the hon. gentleman said. I would like to know whether I am correct in understanding the hon. member, and I will mention it again. The hon. member stated that a certain officer, postmaster at Kanowna, was refused sick leave after four years' service.

MR. VOSPER: I said a certain officer.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: The man's name is Knight. This officer received instructions to be in readiness to remove to another office. I consider that every officer in the public service, particu-

larly in a large department like the Postal Department, should be ready at a moment's notice to go where he is ordered. How is the service of the country to be carried on if an officer says "I will not go," and his wish is to be considered? How is the service to be carried on if a man can go anywhere he wishes to, and not obey the instructions of his superior officer. This officer distinctly refused to go. He telegraphed saying he would not go, and he gave as a reason that he was going to ask for leave to visit his friends in another colony; not for a few weeks, as the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie stated, but for ten weeks. I have that in the officer's own hand-writing, and can produce it. He asked for ten weeks' holiday, and said, at the same time, that if the holidays were not granted he would leave the service, and that he would only go to the office to which he was told to remove conditionally on being granted the leave of absence. I would like to know what position any Minister, or any person controlling a business, would take in a matter of this kind. What position would any member of this House take up? Would he say "All right; go and take your leave?" Certainly not; he would have to reply, "The exigencies of the service require that you should go, and, after you have removed to your new office, if leave can be granted it shall be so granted."

MR. VOSPER: Was that his first and only application for leave?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: The only application I have heard of, and this officer never stated in his application that he had applied for leave before. He tried to get leave at the point of the bayonet, and he further stated in his letter that if he did not get the leave, he was going to resign, as he had an offer of employment in another colony that he could go to. These are the sort of matters the hon. member brings before the House. These are the sort of questions he brings up as grievances, and upon which he classes the Postmaster General as a despot and tyrant, and says the Minister at the head of the department is a nonentity. This officer was allowed leave after a time, and the whole thing ended amicably; and I am quite certain the officer in question never wished this matter brought up in the

House in the way it was brought up; yet these things are brought forward in the House as grievances.

MR. VOSPER: I only quoted it as one instance of many.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: I pity the hon. gentleman that he could not get a better instance to support his case. The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie knows very little about the civil service of the colony. Although he poses as an authority on matters of history and constitution, and other things, he seems to know very little about the foundation and basis of the British Constitution. He should know that no man can be dismissed at once from the civil service.

MR. LEAKE: That is just what can be done.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: No officer can be dismissed, unless with the approval of the Minister.

MR. LEAKE: Oh!

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: And the Governor and Executive Council. I do not wish the House to go away with the idea that the Government of the country is carried on in the manner in which the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie suggested. I know of every case of dismissal in the Postal Department since I have been there. I regret to say there have been a great many dismissals in that department, and the cases have been very bad ones. I have adjudicated on the cases thoroughly, and I do not care who follows me in the administration of the department, it will be found that the cases have been thoroughly considered. We hear of all sorts of cases in the Postal Department. Men on the goldfields have been known to play billiards and spend £5 and £10 in a night.

MR. VOSPER: How can a man spend £5 a night on £150 a year?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: It is other people's money, sometimes.

MR. LEAKE: Through carelessness.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: Through no officer's carelessness. Through the carelessness of the public.

MR. LEAKE: Incompetent officials who leave the cash-box open.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: You do not know anything about it. If a man goes into a telegraph office and asks the officer to send him a telegraphic

money order, and the officer pockets the money, how is anyone to prevent it?

MR. LEAKE: How many thousands were you robbed of the other day?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: How many people have been robbed at different times? I do not think the Government service is robbed any more than private individuals are. The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie has stated that the Post Office is under the control of a despot who has the right to dismiss anyone he pleases. The Postmaster General has no right: I deny that he has the right, and every hon. member knows it. The member for North-East Coolgardie knows nothing about the public service. Every case of dismissal has to be submitted to the Minister, and I go further and tell the committee that all the papers in connection with the cases are sent to me before the dismissal is approved of. In another case the hon. member brought forward, he mentioned the name—it is well known to me—of some officer at Coolgardie: it was mentioned in the wonderful letter which the hon. member read. The letter stated that a brother officer informed on the line this morning of another cruel and disgraceful case, and so on.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Did he pay for the wire?

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: That is another way in which the time of the service is employed. I wish those who have grievances would put forward a better champion than the hon. gentleman, and produce facts that will go to prove something. The other case stated was that of an officer in ill health, and the Postmaster General replied that he could not give the man leave because he did not think that the officer was in ill-health, but that he was only shamming. That is what the hon. gentleman stated. I know the case, and it was nothing of the sort. This officer had been in the employment of the Post Office at a certain goldfields town, and he asked for a month or six weeks' holiday. He had been at this place for two years, and in the letter of application he stated that some relation was very ill and he required to go and see him. The hon. gentleman mentioned the name the other night.

MR. VOSPER: I mentioned no names.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: The hon. gentleman mentioned the name, and I put it down at the time. He gave the name of Miller.

MR. VOSPER: That is another case altogether.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: It is a strange coincidence that so many officers get ill at this time of the year.

MR. VOSPER: I never mentioned the case of Miller at all.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: The Postmaster-General did reply to this officer that so many relatives of officers happened to be ill about Christmas time, and it is a curious thing and an extraordinary thing that, just at this time of the year, so many officers in the service get telegrams from the other colonies stating that near relatives or friends are ill.

MR. VOSPER: Miller's father has since died. That is another coincidence.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: I am not saying that this case is not true. I sympathise with these people in their demand, and I admit that, if it were possible to give these men their leave once a year, I would do so. I should like to see every man in the service get leave for a fortnight once a year. I think it would be better to take every officer by the back of the neck and say, "You must go for a fortnight's leave," and I am sure the officer would come back a better man. At the present time in the service it must be understood that everything is at high pressure, and it is difficult to take off all the hands at a certain time of the year. I think a good many ask for their leave the very moment they want it. I believe they do it in ignorance, though every employer wants to know some time before that a man desires his leave; but instead of coming a month before the leave is required, the officers come and say, "I want to go on a certain day." That shows want of consideration on the part of these officers, and it is impossible to grant leave under those conditions. Whenever leave is required and the exigencies of the service allow it, that leave is granted. This officer I spoke of just now went away. He saw the Postmaster General, and everything was arranged most amicably. He expressed himself as sorry that he had done what he did, and there was no ill-feeling between the Postmaster General

and the man. But this matter is now dragged up by those who always want to be raking up things, and making bad blood between employers and employed when there is no necessity for it. In the service the men are considered in every way, but it is impossible for every man to get his leave at the same time, especially in the Post and Telegraph Department. No employer would allow it in his own business. I may say that all these applications for leave are well considered, and I cannot find out any case of favouritism such as the member for North-East Coolgardie spoke of. With regard to a Civil Service Act and regulations allowing for annual leave after a certain period of service, that is not a matter for me to consider alone, but for the Government to consider as a whole. These charges have been levelled at one department alone.

MR. VOSPER : No. Three departments.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION : I am not here to voice the views of the Government as a whole—that is the duty of the leader of the Government—but I am here to voice the views of my own department, and to answer charges levelled against me. I think I have shown to the House that there is really no ground for these charges that have been levelled at the Post and Telegraph Department by the hon. member. If the hon. member had levelled charges that the work was not being carried out satisfactorily, that would have been a different thing; but he does not bring charges about the way in which the work is carried out, because that would mean levelling charges against the officers, but he is willing to bring forward anything that reflects discredit on the heads of departments. He has not brought forward one charge against an employee, but he does all he can to damage the Postmaster General in the eyes of those who serve under him. There may be errors of administration, and it would be the duty of the hon. member to bring these forward.

MR. VOSPER : That is what I am trying to do.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION : If the hon. gentleman stated that telegrams were delayed in transmission, or that letters had been delayed in delivery, then one would know what the hon. gentleman wanted; but when he produces

anonymous letters and reads them, all I can say is that they cannot carry much weight with hon. members. The hon. gentleman who sits directly opposite to me (Mr. Oldham) tried to discover a mare's nest. He informed us of a most extraordinary thing. He thought it very extravagant that we should pay £360 for a school site at Dougara. I believe it does look as if it were an extravagant purchase; but I shall satisfy the hon. gentleman when I say that there is a two-storey house on the land, and this house is being used as a teacher's residence. It was a very good bargain indeed, and the house has proved to be good quarters for the teacher. I do not think I have anything further to answer for with regard to matters that have been levelled against the Postal Department, but I think the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie should make himself a little more certain of his premises before he brings charges in future. I sympathise with him if he thinks that a reign of despotism and tyranny is going on, to try and remedy these things; but he does not do any good by bringing unfounded charges: he only does harm to the service and those connected with it. There are no grounds for the charges made by the hon. gentleman, and I regret that he felt it his duty to make the statements he did.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie) : I rise simply to object to the term "anonymous letters" used by the Minister in reference to my remarks. I offered on certain conditions to give the letters to the Minister, and I also have an offer from the signatories to give evidence in any inquiry into the working of the department. The letters were not quoted. One of them was read, the first one I received, merely as an instance. As to the remark that I made no charges against the officials of the department, I may say that when the Address-in-Reply was being debated in the House, I called the attention of the House to certain matters in the Postal Department, and I produced a letter addressed to the Hon. H. G. Parsons which was returned to me two months after it had been posted. The officials of the department could not find a member of the other Chamber to deliver a letter to when he resided at Kalgoorlie.

MR. MORAN : He was not there at the time, though.

MR. VOSPER : I express my strong objection to being misrepresented.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie) : I wish to draw attention to one item on the Estimates—£30,000 for public batteries. This question of public batteries has been before the country for some time, and the Government stated some time ago that they believed in the principle thoroughly. The prospectors on the northern fields were given to understand that this system of public batteries was going to be adopted. Inspectors were sent round looking for suitable places, and the public were told by the Ministry that £40,000 or £50,000 would be spent on this work. The £30,000 placed on the Estimates is almost useless for work of this description; it will only provide something like six batteries of 10 heads each. Six batteries on the goldfields would be almost useless. They would only supply six fields, and, in my constituency, there are over ten places which are worthy of public batteries. I am not asking for ten batteries, but I only say that a larger sum of money should be placed on the Estimates for the purpose of supplying these batteries. These six batteries will be useless for the purpose for which they are intended.

THE PREMIER : They will not be useless: they will not be sufficient, you mean.

MR. GREGORY : They will be anything but sufficient, and I should like to get a promise from the Premier that he will increase the vote if possible. I do not think we have been treated fairly in this matter, and I am going to show the committee the large amount that is to be expended in one small part of the country in comparison with the amount to be spent in other portions. I do not like doing this, because the Premier represents that portion of the country; but if hon. members will look on the Estimates they will see that, for the ensuing year, there is to be spent on the Bumbury Road £2,500,

THE PREMIER : I wonder where that is? Not in my district.

MR. GREGORY : Well, we may excise that item. There are the Jetty Extension £2,200, Harbour Works £30,000, Artesian Boring £1,000, Race-

course £2,000, Hospital £5,000, Police Officer's Quarters £1,600.

THE PREMIER : All those were voted last year.

MR. GREGORY : Then there are Police Quarters, £1,250; Post Office Additions, £830; Infant School, £1,450. The total that we are asked to vote out of this year's revenue is £47,800. I want the Premier to let us have out of that amount the sum of £10,000 more for public batteries. I want to save £4,000 which is to be voted for the Zoological Gardens. That item might be struck out, and something which would be a good asset to the country voted in its place. The statement has been made by the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake), and several others, that we are losing our population. But what are the facts? A little while ago an advertisement appeared in one of the Menzies papers asking for 30 workmen, wages £4 per week and water, and the next day there appeared a notice in the same paper to the effect that there had not been a single applicant for the work. This shows that things are not so very bad in those districts, and that men are not running away from this colony because they cannot find work. The Savings Bank returns show that the men who are here must be prosperous; and I think it is a great mistake for any member of this House to try to injure the credit of the country by stating that our population is leaving us. At Christmas time, and at the Melbourne Cup season, a great number of people leave this colony; but by far the larger portion of them do so with a determination to return; and the best proof that the people who come to this colony have made up their minds to stay here is the fact that so many of them have brought their families over. I hope the Premier will do something in regard to this battery question, because I can assure him that, if we cannot get some promise in regard to it, I will divide the House on the subject. The introduction of these machines will create a new source of mining revenue, and will bring to the country hundreds and thousands of prospectors to share in the benefits which will accrue from their erection.

MR. WOOD (West Perth) : I was unfortunately absent from the House last week, and I was therefore unable to hear

the eloquence of the hon. members for Albany (Mr. Leake) and North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) and others who addressed themselves to the Estimates. It occurs to me that this is a time when we require to exercise great caution. We cannot hide from ourselves the fact that the country is not in the same booming condition it was a year ago, and we must admit, with regard to many things which we would have been justified in doing last year, that this year we must curtail our projects and endeavour to cut our coat according to the cloth. The proof of the necessity for much more caution is to be found in the fact that only a few nights ago the Government had to bring in a Reappropriation Bill. I think that is a very serious thing indeed for the country as a whole. Such a thing is only a last resource, and I am certain the Government think so too; and I sympathise with them. Having that fact before us, we should be very cautious indeed, and if there are any works in these Estimates which we can do without, then not only the Government, but everybody else, should try to do without them. Of course, so far as unnecessary works are concerned, we can deal with them when we come to discuss the different departments. I hope all hon. members will make up their minds to assist the Government to enable this country to live within its means.

A MEMBER: Hear, hear. No more Excess Bills.

MR. WOOD: No more, if possible; but hon. members know as well as I do that the last three or four years have been very exceptional indeed. As the Minister of Education has said, his department and the others have been run at very high pressure. The railways this year, in spite of all adverse criticism, have paid the interest on the whole of our loans. I do not think there is very much cause for despair in that. I think there is cause for congratulation, and that the Commissioner of Railways ought to pride himself upon the fact that he has done it. I must say that I think the expenditure on some of our suburban stations has been too lavish altogether. If the Government, instead of spending so much money at Guildford, Karrakatta, and Bayswater, and places such as these, had given more accommodation

and better facilities for passenger traffic, they would have been taking a step in the right direction. If they gave us more frequent communication, say between Perth and the Canning, it would open up a vast area for settlement; it would ease the railway system to a great extent; it would lessen the exorbitant rents people have to pay in Perth; and it would also bring revenue to the department. A man living, say, in Hay Street, at a convenient distance from the centre of the city, is not of much use to the railways; but the department might try to increase its revenue by creating new suburbs, and having a constant traffic to and fro between them and the city. Nearly everybody wants to get out of the city if he possibly can, especially when the summer is coming in. There is an amount on the Estimates to assist the City Council with their surface drainage. Now, I think that the Council has a very good sanitary service now; at any rate, some portions of it are very fair indeed; and, if we can get these surface drains into good working order, and get sufficient water to flush them, a very good step will have been made in advance as regards the sanitation and drainage of the city of Perth. I could quote several authorities on this subject. Dr. Jameson says that by the time the deep drainage scheme of Perth is completed other parts of the world will have found that deep drainage is out of date. Whether that is so I am not prepared to say, but I should be rather inclined to accept it.

MR. SIMPSON: The Works Department only say "delay."

MR. WOOD: An expert was brought over here to report on this drainage system, and according to him it will require an enormous sum of money, which must be raised by a special loan. I think everyone in this House would oppose any more borrowing, and I cannot see anything else for it but that the Government must come down with a loan of a million.

MR. SIMPSON: Twelve millions already!

MR. WOOD: Never mind; we cannot help it. I think next session will see another loan of a million. Some hon. members seem to delight in running down the country, and in trying to show that our population is leaving us; but it is all nonsense to say that the expenditure should be regulated by population.

MR. LEAKE: That was the Premier's argument.

MR. WOOD: I do not think it was. The right hon. the Premier only stated some facts with regard to that point, but I consider the expenditure of this country is not to be governed by population but by the necessities of the colony—the extreme exigencies which have arisen in all directions. From our goldfields and from all other parts of the country demands for money have come in, and, if that money had not been granted, what would be the case to-day? We should have all these hon. members rising up here against the Government, complaining most bitterly, and saying that the place was stagnant, that the Government were out of date and had no sense of responsibility to the country; yet, because they have done it, other members cry out that the Government have been extravagant, and have not regulated the expenditure in proportion to the population. I say that the expenditure must be made according to the necessities of this country, and on no other basis. If we do not spend money, we might just as well shut up the place and put a large notice on Rottneest to say that the country is to let.

THE PREMIER: We are between two fires.

MR. WOOD: Undoubtedly. I sympathise entirely with the Government; but, at the same time, we must consider the position very seriously indeed. I hope that when we come to the different departments, hon. members will not make separate speeches with regard to each of them.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): I am not going to pretend to criticise the financial affairs of the Government at any great length; but there are a few things I wish to touch upon, with the permission of the right. hon. gentleman and his colleagues. One is by what means we should endeavour to retain in this colony the very desirable class of people at present employed on the goldfields. There has been a great deal said here with regard to the exodus of these people to the other colonies; and I think we have heard of it from both sides of the House. But we have not yet heard a suggestion as to the best means of keeping them here. Now I think that if some of the money expended in procuring domestic servants

from the old country were set apart for the purpose of assisting the wives and families of diggers settled on our goldfields to come to this colony, it would be money well spent. I am pretty well acquainted with the subject, and am thoroughly convinced of the advantage that would accrue to the country from the adoption of such a step. In my constituency there are some hundreds of hard-working miners, whose wives and families are in the Eastern colonies; and I am in a position to state that the only reason why they have not brought them here is that they are not able to get together sufficient money to pay their passages.

THE PREMIER: The passage money is only £2.

MR. KENNY: I was just about to say so; and, as the ships are now carrying passengers at such very low rates, the Government could not do better than avail themselves of this splendid opportunity of allowing the wives and families of our goldfields population to join their husbands. Another set of immigrants who might be brought from the Eastern colonies are domestic servants. What we hear of the domestic servants we get from England is not always to their advantage. One cannot help thinking that we are not always happy in our choice of the servant girls we are bringing from home. They do not turn out as we would like. But in the other colonies we have, as it were, our own people. There are many there who would gladly accept the same facilities that are now offered to the girls of England; and I think that if we, as an experiment, brought over 50 girls from the other colonies, they would be in every way equal, if not superior, to those imported from the old country. As another means of advertising our goldfields, we cannot too frequently impress upon the Government the advisability of increasing the amount already on the Estimates for public batteries; and even if they cannot see their way to increase it, they should expend the money as quickly as possible in erecting them at mining centres where, as the goldfields members will assure them, they can get very respectable returns.

THE PREMIER: We will do that.

MR. KENNY: One goldfields member says he only requires 11 batteries;

another wants nine, another seven, and another five. Well, sir, if you will see your way to place two to commence with on my portion of the Murchison, I shall be contented.

MR. GREGORY: So would I.

MR. KENNY: There is Tuckannura.

THE PREMIER: There are two claimants for that.

MR. KENNY: If you had four or five claimants, they would be equally strong; for I can assure the Government that the benefit to be derived is undoubted. There is another centre in the district—the Horse Shoe—where there have lately been some very rich discoveries. A battery erected there would certainly give splendid returns. One of my colleagues, the hon. member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason), rather astonished me by paying a very high compliment to this side of the House—a thing which the hon. gentleman is very fond of doing to the Opposition benches; but I was rather surprised at the very strong expressions used by the hon. member. If I rightly recollect, the words “log-rolling” and something like “bribery” were used.

THE PREMIER: That was from your side.

MR. KENNY: While prepared to hear this side accused of using these very strong expressions, I think the Government benches can boast of one or two past-masters in the art of using them. For my own part, I like to confine myself to facts, as much as possible. When we hear such expressions as “log rolling” and “bribery,” we naturally look round to see where these spring from; and when we hear a man boasting of his honesty, we generally look upon him with a certain amount of suspicion. When the member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) talked so strongly about the Opposition benches getting all the plums, I took the trouble to run through the items of expenditure laid on the table; for it occurred to me that, when a gentleman protested so much, he was slightly overdoing it, and as he suggested that everyone had his price, I was wondering what was the price of the hon. gentleman.

MR. RASON: I suggested nothing of the sort.

MR. KENNY: The result of my inquiry is that I find the price of the

support of the hon. gentleman is £10,410.

MR. RASON: I would ask, sir, whether the hon. gentleman is in order in stating that I said things that I never said and never suggested.

MR. KENNY: I have no desire to make use of expressions in any way offensive to others; but hon. members are not quite so careful of my feelings as I have been of theirs, and they must excuse me if, now and then, I pay them back in their own coin. I think I have a pretty good memory, and the expressions used by my hon. friend, as near as I can recollect, were certainly as I have stated. I heard the words “log rolling” and “bribery” plainly and distinctly. I think they were very strong expressions; but nothing appears to be too strong for that side of the House to hurl at us, and I think I am quite justified in replying. I have looked through the list, and I find that the hon. member has received the small sum of £10,410 for his constituency. Compare that with the way in which the goldfields members on the Opposition benches are treated. I made application for the small amount of £500 for Nannine, and I did not get one farthing.

THE PREMIER: What for?

MR. KENNY: For sanitary arrangements.

THE PREMIER: How much had you had before?

MR. KENNY: Some four years ago there was a like amount granted.

THE PREMIER: Not so long ago as that.

MR. KENNY: There is one thing to be said, that I never asked for my district what I did not see others receiving. There was no question about it when I saw money was lavished out to other portions of the colony and I felt I was being left out in the cold, particularly when I went to so much trouble to explain what I required it for. The right hon. gentleman then informed me he had reason to believe there were only about 50 people at Nannine. I therefore wrote to the secretary of the municipality and informed him of the refusal of the Government to grant £500. The Premier had rather surprised me when he said there were only 50 people in Nannine, and I thought the town must have gone down very considerably of late;

but I received a letter yesterday morning from Nannine to the effect that, at a public meeting called there the other evening, no less than 300 men attended at the Miners' Institute to bring the requirements of the district before the Government.

THE PREMIER: How many lived in the town? My remark was merely a casual one. I do not know the numbers, but I said I thought there were not many people living in the town.

MR. KENNY: All I asked for Nannine was £500, and there is not a farthing on the Estimates for that portion of my constituency. I also asked for £500 for Peak Hill, and £250 for a Miners' Institute which has recently been granted; but there is not one farthing on the Estimates for Peak Hill. The total amount I asked for was £1,250; and out of that I got £250, while a Government supporter on the cross benches, who accuses this side of the House of receiving all the plums, comes out with the small amount of £10,410. This shows on what side of the House the Government are spreading their favours.

THE PREMIER: They got a lot of it for water supply.

MR. KENNY: I say that what is sauce for the Mount Magnet goose is sauce for the Peak Hill gander. I have to thank the House for listening to my remarks, and trust that they have not fallen on barren ground.

At 6:30 p.m. the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30 p.m. the CHAIRMAN resumed the Chair.

MR. HIGHAM (Fremantle): It is not my intention to prolong the debate for any length of time, because I recognise that we should get to practical work as soon as we can, and bring the session to an end as soon as possible. After hearing the budget speech delivered by the Treasurer, and seeing the Reappropriation Bill, which was subsequently introduced, I think it must be evident to every one that it is necessary, so far as financial matters are concerned, for this House to go slowly. I do not think that, even in the last session, we can accuse ourselves of being unduly extravagant. I say that

we cannot deal with finances in a more liberal manner than we are disposed to do at the present time. In view of that we must all make up our minds to see that our little pet schemes for the benefit of our own constituencies shall stand aside for the present, and, speaking on behalf of my constituency, I am willing that my electorate shall put aside the many little things we desired, and which we thought were absolutely necessary. But there are one or two matters that have been omitted from the Estimates that I feel called upon to make some remarks about. Dealing with the Reappropriation Bill the other night, we were compelled to reduce the amount allotted to the deep drainage of Fremantle and Perth. So far as Fremantle is concerned, I think it is essential that we should have some *quid pro quo* for the putting off of the drainage scheme. Perth has had a fair amount allotted to it for surface drainage, pending the bringing in of the deep drainage scheme, and I think Fremantle should have an amount placed on the Estimates for the surface drainage. I do not say we require £20,000, the same as was granted to Perth; but an amount should be placed on the Estimates to make the surface drainage system for Fremantle more perfect. I think the Government might meet us in another respect. The Government might provide the municipality of Fremantle with water for the purposes of flushing and for drainage purposes. I am well aware that it may be argued that the water costs the Government 4d. per thousand gallons to pump, but, if you go into the question of cost, it will be seen that it does not actually cost 4d. per thousand gallons to pump, but for supplying, pumping and maintenance, it does cost that amount. But the Government could pump three times the amount of water for park and sanitary arrangements at the cost of 1d. per thousand gallons. It would only be an act of grace on the part of the Government to allow the municipality all the water they require for the parks and for the flushing of their drains free of cost. If the municipality uses it to the fullest extent it does not mean more than £2,000 a year.

A MEMBER: What about Coolgardie? Would you give them water free?

Mr. HIGHAM: I would not mind giving the municipality the water for nothing, but not the general public.

Mr. SIMPSON: But Fremantle has never paid for water.

Mr. HIGHAM: Yes, it has.

Mr. SIMPSON: I thought they had dropped into a new system there.

Mr. HIGHAM: Some time ago the Government had an officer in charge there who shamefully neglected his work and made a muddle of the accounts, and while he did so nobody paid for the water. There is a better system in vogue now, and the collector has no difficulty in collecting the rates. It will be in the recollection of many members that a special grant was made to the Fremantle Municipality for the extension of High Street, with the object of forming a street to the new cemetery: the amount was £2,000, and this sum has been spent, and spent well. Some little time ago a deputation from Fremantle met the Acting Premier and requested that an additional amount should be put on the Estimates for this year for the completion of the work of fencing the cemetery, for clearing and making a small additional road required for the connection of High Street with the Canning Road, so that the North Fremantle people should have the benefit of this new cemetery. This is a matter which should be treated with liberality, and an amount for this purpose should be found somewhere or another. Hon. members, in looking through the Estimates, will find many amounts that might be cut down. The extravagant grant for Defence should be pruned down to the amount of last year, if not below it.

Mr. SIMPSON: Why?

Mr. HIGHAM: I do not like to deprive the hon. member for Geraldton of what he may regard as a toy, but the increase from £16,000 to £26,000 is more than we can afford.

Mr. SIMPSON: Some enemy might come and take Fremantle.

Mr. HIGHAM: We do not mind. We will risk that. The people of Fremantle have to thank the Government for meeting us on several matters. I think the Government have shown wisdom in commencing the Owen's Anchorage railway. It is necessary for the stock traffic and the explosives traffic, and for many

other things, and it will prove itself a useful line. It is a work that was absolutely required, and I am glad to see provision has been made for it. It is a matter of great regret at Fremantle that the Government have thought fit to withdraw the item for the Rottnest cable, which would only cost £4,600, which to some may seem rather a large amount for the work. Most hon. members cannot see any particular use for this cable, but it will be of great use. Many vessels will call at Rottnest for orders, and then if necessary come up to the port of Fremantle. This cable is also necessary in cases of accident happening on Rottnest Island, which unfortunately has occurred.

THE PREMIER: We hope to put that right by-and-by.

Mr. HIGHAM: I hope so, because I look on the work as a necessary one, but those who have no particular knowledge of the subject may not see the necessity of it.

THE PREMIER: We think it is necessary.

Mr. HIGHAM: I am glad to hear it. There is only one general principle that I think we ought to bear in mind in discussing the Estimates, and that is the question of salaries. We find that men receiving good salaries have been granted a substantial increase, and, on the other hand, many minor officials who are receiving what might be called starvation wages, either receive no increase at all or a beggarly increase of £5 or £10. The lower-grade officers should have received some attention, and as the Estimates go through the House I hope many of the salaries will be increased on a fixed principle, and that the officers will receive what they deserve.

Mr. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): As I propose to place before the committee some figures of importance, I would like, if it were possible, that the Premier, who was not present this afternoon when the hon. member (Mr. Leake) asked his question about the Treasury bonds, that an answer should be given now.

THE PREMIER: To give you my opinion, I do not think it is wise for members of the House to ask these questions; at the same time I have no desire to keep anything back. I do not think it will

injure the colony to give the information, because it is good information; at the same time our advisers in London do not like every little thing we do in regard to financing to be made public.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not wish you to break confidence with them.

THE PREMIER: There is no breaking confidence. I am at liberty to make the information public if I like, but I do not know what good it will do: at any rate, it will do no harm, and I will tell you what has been done. It is a temporary matter. I may say that I expect members of the House to move by motion for information of this kind, as I am not bound to reply to questions when asked. Curiosity, among other reasons, actuates members at times, and I am quite sure that the action of the leader of the Opposition is induced more to annoy the Government than to gain the information. I am quite sure of that. I may say that the information that came to the colony was not altogether accurate. The fact of the matter is that the bills have been sold in London to the extent of half a million pounds, at a premium of one per cent. for two years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: At what percentage.

THE PREMIER: Four per cent., equal to $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the two years. I think that is very satisfactory for short-dated bills. We shall be able to get 101 for them without any trouble. At the same time I must here give my opinion that information of this sort ought not to be forced from the Government.

MR. LEAKE: What was the date?

THE PREMIER: 1st December. The responsibility rests with the Government to finance the colony, and these things are published in due course every quarter. Nothing is ever kept back; it cannot be kept back. Our advisers in London agree for us to publish to the world everything we are doing with regard to financing for short dates—for a couple of years or so. A matter of this kind will not do any good by being discussed in the House; at the same time the facts I stated to-night are absolutely satisfactory to me, but I do not think they are quite so satisfactory to the leader of the Opposition. He would rather have heard that the bills had been sold for 95 or something of that sort.

MR. LEAKE: It is evidence of the muddle you have got into.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member says it is evidence of the muddle the Government have got into; but I am not prepared to accept his judgment on the matter. If it rested with the hon. member, we should be in a terrible muddle. If there is one thing the hon. member does not understand, it is his duty to the colony. Patriotic feeling he has none, and the one thing he does not understand is finance. The hon. member can take what change he likes out of that. I only say this: the hon. member has forced from me this information. I am not going to be charged with keeping back anything, but I say the information will do the colony more harm than the hon. member will do good all his life. I give the information to the hon. member gratuitously.

MR. SIMPSON: You offered him a position in your Ministry.

THE PREMIER: But I will never do it again. The leader of the Opposition I think is a very bad man for me to be associated with. I wish to say here at once that the information has been dragged out of me by the persistency of the hon. member, and I am not going to stand up before this country, in my position, as one who is keeping back anything. The responsibility of the statement must rest with the leader of the Opposition.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): Never in my political life did I rise to address the House with a greater sense of responsibility than I do on the present occasion, because there are some things it becomes our duty to say, certainly which are not to our personal advantage. It may not apparently be to the advantage of the country at the moment, and yet the truth must be spoken, and no one will ever suffer materially in the end by the truth being spoken. I hope that in anything I say to-night I shall not give way to exaggeration, and I will endeavour to moderate the views I hold, from a sense of responsibility of the consequences which accrue thereto.

THE PREMIER: The Government did not require any more money than that. We could have got more if we had wanted it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: One reason why I wish to get this information is that the Government have undertaken a kind of finance which requires the serious attention of members to the Estimates before us. The Government have started on a system of finance which I am bound to condemn. I have condemned it on every occasion when it has been necessary for me to speak; and I condemn it again now, and, not to waste time on this point, I will ask the earnest attention of the Government, and especially the Premier, to one or two important facts. I hold in my hand an actuarial statement by one of the most reliable officers in the Government service, on the question of the relations of loan moneys at certain given prices. We are informed that the Government have sold over half a million pounds worth of bonds, bearing interest at 4 per cent., and that they have sold them for the sum of £101 per £100 bond. The market value of our inscribed stock is between £110 and £112, according to the varying market; but the Government have sold for two years the identical bonds at £101.

THE PREMIER: Those are bonds running for 40 years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am making a correct statement, and know the responsibility I am taking upon myself. The inscribed stock at 40 years is salable to-day at from £110 to £112 per £100 bond, according to the varying market. The Government have assured this House, over and over again, that they could sell 3 per cent. bonds in the London market if they were prepared to take the price. To ascertain the exact relation which the 3 per cent. bonds at £93 bear to the 4 per cent., I put this question to the actuary: What amount should be paid for a 4 per cent. loan of 40 years' currency in order to make it equal, from an investor's point of view, to the investment of a 3 per cent. loan of equal currency issued at £93, each loan being repayable at par on maturity? I will stop here to comment, and say I have not the slightest hesitation in believing that the Government can raise all they require at over 93 to-day.

THE PREMIER: They are 98 in the London market now.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is only confirming what I say, and I ask, what have the Government done? They have sold

a 4 per cent. bond, worth £110 in the market with a two-years currency, when they could sell a 3 per cent. bond for £93, or perhaps as high as £96. Supposing the exigencies of the case required that the Government should sell their bonds at 93 net in the London market to-day, the 4 per cent. bonds they have sold are equivalent in market value to £114 19s. 4½d.; so that the purchaser has made a profit of £13 19s. 4½d. on every £100 bond he has purchased having a two-years currency.

THE PREMIER: You cannot get them at such dates as that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have here an actuarial statement.

THE PREMIER: It won't work out.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am prepared to think the Premier would look upon it as absolutely wrong if any gentleman but himself occupied the Treasury; but, with the capable advice of London financiers who act on behalf of the Government, it should be possible to sell our bonds, at any rate over 93; and, if that be so, we have the answer in this statement. I understand the interest is payable half yearly in each case.

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That being so, the rate will be equivalent to 3·3173 per cent., or £3 6s. 4½d., and the price to the 4 per cent. loan will be £115·0595, or £115 1s. 2½d. What does this bring us to? That in order to get £500,000 of money for present purposes, the Government could have floated a loan at 93; and they have absolutely given away, for the present accommodation, £14 1s. 1½d. for the whole of this amount. The proper course for the Government was to have floated a loan at 3 per cent., even though they got no more than £93; still, if they can borrow in the way they have borrowed £500,000 at 4 per cent. at 101, they could have floated a 3 per cent. loan at 93.

THE PREMIER: Would we not have lost £7 difference between £93 and £100, because we have to pay the loan back at par?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If it is a question of relative interest. The 4 per cent. bond would be worth £125.

THE PREMIER: You say you can sell for £125 a bond for £100 at 4 per cent. in the London market now?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I say if you can sell a 3 per cent. bond at £93, the difference to this country would be an absolute loss of £14 ls. 1½d.

MR. A. FORREST: You are misleading the House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I try to be as careful as I can when I speak; and, feeling the responsibility that is pressing on me, I want to be accurate.

THE PREMIER: I am glad to hear your argument, because it shows we are in a fine position.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is no use for the Government to simply try to refute these actuarial figures, by saying that if this is true they are in an awful position.

THE PREMIER: I said a fine position.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If these actuarial figures are correct, you have done one of the maddest things it is possible to do.

THE PREMIER: There must be a lot of other mad people in London acting with me in this matter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course the financiers at home would want to get the bonds—we all understand that. There will, however, be another opportunity of speaking on this phase of finance. When are we to take the Treasurer seriously? He has made a statement to-night that he can get more than 93 for a 3 per cent. bond.

THE PREMIER: Certainly.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: All I have to say is that if you had sold your bonds to the amount of £500,000 at 3 per cent. for a currency of 40 years, you would have saved for the country £14 ls. 1½d. on every £100 bond you sold, as compared with the price you have realised.

THE PREMIER: You would not like to go beyond half a million, I think, at present.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The next matter I want to mention has reference to the Financial Statement. For three years in succession I have had, in this House, to deal with the figures of the Treasurer; and for three years I have had to tell him, and had some degree of pleasure in telling him, that he had very materially underrated his revenue. In every case I have been very closely accurate as to the actual figures that the Treasurer realised at the end of the

year. One year I was within £9,000 of the amount actually received. Last year I told the Treasurer he had underrated his income by £300,000, and that amount has been realised; and inasmuch as he has got the money, that shows that the Treasurer did not not accurately estimate his probable revenue. Now while a Treasurer may, not only with safety but with advantage to the colony, overrate his revenue, it is a most dangerous thing for a country, and one which can only lead to calamity, if he first underrates his revenue and then proposes to spend the full amount of his estimate. I affirm, without fear, and with very great regret, that the Treasurer will not get £3,080,000 of revenue for this year, and I say it is the wildest of speculations to suppose that he will. Last year he brought to book a revenue larger than the revenue of South Australia, with our population of only 160,000 people; and this year the Treasurer has estimated that he will pass the £3,000,000, which means that he will receive something over that amount. But on what grounds does he base his estimate? There is not a continuing increase of population and there is not a continuous condition of prosperity. Our condition is good, I admit.

MR. A. FORREST: The Premier knows what five months of his revenue have produced already.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There is no possible doubt that unless we have got the full estimate of revenue for five months up to date, the full amount for the year cannot be realised. But the revenue shows a decrease, although I admit the decrease may be but temporary. I say the Government will not bring to book £3,080,000 for this financial year; yet they propose to spend every shilling of the estimated revenue, within £4,000. What must follow? Either the Government must be relying on a very large number of underdrafts, or they must end the year with an absolute deficiency. There can be nothing more calamitous to this country than that. After the years of prosperity we have gone through, the Treasurer should come before Parliament next year with a deficit, not because the country has gone back, but because the Treasurer has wildly over-estimated his revenue. I say we shall do splendidly, we shall do more

than we have a right to expect, if we realise the same amount of revenue that we actually received last year; and every shilling we pass over that amount will only show our steadily increasing prosperity. To go beyond that, and ask the country to spend money to the extent of £3,000,000 on a population of 160,000, is wild finance, which can lead only to disaster in the end.

THE PREMIER: You wanted us to do it last year, and you urged us to put £400,000 or £500,000 more on our expenditure. If it was not wild finance last year, why is it this?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The difference is that when a man estimates the profits of his business and expects to make £5,000 and makes only £4,000, while arranging his plans to spend £5,000, some disaster is likely to happen to that man, unless he has got a pretty good banker to deal with.

MR. A. FORREST: If your banker is not good, change him.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: My banker is not so accommodating as that. The Government are asking us to pass these Estimates, and also to authorise certain expenditure; and I say we cannot possibly authorise the spending of three millions of money, and we are not going to do it. If the Government spend all they propose to spend, there will be a deficiency at the end of the year. I am sufficiently acquainted with the finances of the country to know that, if the revenue be not realised, there will be a very large amount of underdrafts, and these may to a certain extent reduce the difficulty without bringing us to absolute disaster; but that does not alter the inaccuracy of the financial estimate. It only shows the Government are trusting to the happy-go-lucky policy to which we have had to make reference on former occasions. This notion of spending all the revenue they estimate to receive, but will not get, is foolish. The Government have this year passed a Bill which practically draws upon next year's revenue to the extent of £395,000, and they will not only have to make up their deficiency on the year, but they will also have to provide for the £395,000, or else the works contemplated or begun must stop. There is one other thing I desire to call attention to with the greatest earnestness. Papers

will be laid upon the table, or are there already, which show at this moment the stores account is in this position, that we had stores to the estimated value of £703,703 on the 30th June last. The Government have told us that they had a surplus at the end of last year, amounting to £315,000, but as a matter of fact they had no surplus, but really a deficiency of £300,000. As a matter of fact, they had in the Government stores of this colony £700,000 worth of goods which appeared as an asset, and which, to a certain extent, were an asset: but I want to call attention to the fact that £700,000 of stock, a good deal of which is going to waste, is not necessarily a good asset, and I say that any commercial man who had to deal with such a quantity of stuff as was lying there would, in all honesty to his balance-sheet, take off 20 per cent. for wear and tear and waste. I have been in the hardware trade, and I say that, what with the exposure to weather, the condition in which these goods are stored, and the new patterns of material coming into vogue and throwing out the old, large quantities of these stores will never be used. Therefore, it would only be a fair thing to write off a considerable amount from the stock account to put it upon a fair commercial basis. Supposing we wrote off £100,000, we would then have an asset of nearly £600,000, and even that asset is not cash. When you come to pay your civil servants, you cannot pay them with railway trucks. When you come to pay interest in London, you cannot send back some of the stuff in the stores. Stock is not money.

THE PREMIER: That is only a balance-sheet.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have not been trained to imagine that goods in stock are equivalent to cash at my banker's.

THE PREMIER: Every accountant does the same thing.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have already said that I am not going to make a statement which I cannot verify. I say those stores are a good asset, *minus* the depreciation.

THE PREMIER: Is not every balance-sheet in the world made up in the same way? The banks take credit for buildings.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No, they do not. There is no banking institution in the world that will say its bank buildings are cash. They will write them up or down, as the case may be; but they will show them as buildings. I say that, in fairness to this House, the Government should have shown this amount as stock in hand.

THE PREMIER: I have done this for the last seven years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If you have been doing wrong for seven years, that is all the more reason why you should get right now. I say that in any other colony the figures would be shown as goods in stock, and they are so shown in the general balance-sheet; but for the Treasurer of this colony to say we had at the end of last year £315,000 at our banker's, and that we did not owe a shilling to any public institution—that was the statement officially made—when he knew that £700,000 of his credit balance was lying about Fremantle and other places in the shape of stores, that statement was not just to this country. While it is a good asset—I will admit the asset, *minus* the depreciation—yet it is not available cash which can be expended upon those public buildings which appear in these Estimates.

MR. HUBBLE: The same argument will apply to any stock, on those lines.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If these goods can be brought into the account for this year, and I know that a quantity of them will be brought into use and be debited to these votes which are before the House, then to that extent I am conscious that they will be as good as cash. I want to admit all I possibly can and to put the position in the best possible light; therefore, suppose stores to the value of £200,000 will go into consumption for the public works here referred to, railways and other works, that amount will be available for this year. But just so much stock as lies over till next year will represent the deficiency as regards the cash that is necessary for carrying out these public works.

MR. HUBBLE: The other day you were growling because you did not get enough rolling stock.

THE PREMIER: Every balance-sheet in the world is prepared in that way.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They are not prepared in that way. For every ten you can show me that are prepared in that way, I will find you a hundred in which it is not attempted to treat stock in hand as cash.

THE PREMIER: How would you treat the money we have lent from the Savings Bank on mortgages in this city?

MR. SIMPSON: What are the mortgages?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Will the committee allow me call attention to the question asked by the Premier? He says the mortgages held by the Savings Bank are good money. Will they pay the depositors' accounts, should there be a run on the Savings Bank? Answer that. Will the Premier answer the question? Will the mortgages which he has in respect of Savings Bank money pay back the depositors, if there is a run on the Savings Bank in this city?

THE PREMIER: Certainly.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They will not. What concentrated nonsense it is to say that a mortgage having seven years to run will be available to pay Savings Bank accounts.

THE PREMIER: But it is not a seven-years mortgage. We do not reckon it in that way.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am not going to be drawn off the track. I shall do my duty to this country, if it costs me my seat in this House. It is all very well to sneer and cheer, but the facts are plain.

THE PREMIER: Why can you not quote the balance-sheet of some other colony?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: When we had the pleasure of hearing the Premier for two-and-a-quarter hours, we listened to him quietly; and I claim the same right to treat this balance-sheet with the same sincerity and earnestness as he exhibited in submitting it, and I claim that I ought to be permitted to do so. The leader of the Opposition has pressed upon the attention of the House the fact that the increase in immigration is not in the ratio which the Government estimated. That statement is correct. We know there has been something in the nature of a little exodus. I quite agree with the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), when he said that this is only a temporary matter, that the people will come back,

and that times of prosperity lie before this country in consequence of the well-established condition of our goldfields. I admit all that, but what I say is that the prosperity that will accrue from the return of these people will not take place within the period of the balance-sheet we have to deal with. I know, as a fact, that nearly every importing House in Western Australia has very materially reduced its orders for this year, and consequently the Customs will suffer. I know this reduction in stocks will materially affect the Railway Department, and it is on that department and on the Customs that the Treasurer mainly depends for his supplies of money.

THE PREMIER: The Customs receipts are much more this month than last month.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But they are not equal to the same month of last year. I am arguing that, if we get last year's revenue, we ought to be not only thankful but proud. Some people think that, because we criticise the financial policy of the Government, the country is going down; but I say that it is an unequalled and unparalleled fact that a population of 160,000 people should yield a revenue to the country of £2,800,000, as it did last year; and it is altogether unreasonable to suppose the people can pay further taxation—they simply cannot do so. I will deal with the question of taxation on the Government's own figures, presently. I come now to the question of this Excess Bill laid upon the table, which shows £600,000 expended over Estimates last year, *minus* of course the underdrafts. No Government has been able, or at any rate this Government has never yet been able, to go through a year without exceeding its spending authority; and we thus have reason to suppose that this year will be no exception to the rule, that this year the Government will spend more than the amount of these Estimates. I would call attention to the fact that the Government have estimated to spend £3,080,000 which they are not going to get; and, according to the evidence of the Excess Bills for the last two or three years, they will want to spend more money than they have actually estimated; consequently the overdrafts will, in all human probability, exceed the underdrafts. I said just now that it

would be impossible to make ends meet unless there were considerable underdrafts; but, in the ordinary process of Government after the style of the present Ministry, there will be another Excess Bill, and it will swallow up all the underdrafts. So I calmly and seriously say to this House that I see no prospect whatever of the Treasurer ending the year 1897-8 without a deficit. I think he will not be able to do it; and, in view of that, I want to impress a few things, not only upon the committee, but upon the country. I want to impress upon the committee the absolute necessity of economy; that we cannot have every town hall and every miners' institute and agricultural hall we like to ask for; and that the country must be prepared to bring its requirements within the limits of its income, for no sound finance can be established upon any other basis.

THE PREMIER: We have always done that, hitherto.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But you have not done it this time. We are asked to pass a vast amount of expenditure for public works. I am not going to attack the Minister of Public Works, nor am I going to attack particularly the Works Department. I am prepared to admit that the Minister has done his best, and that the department has pretty satisfactorily expended about half the money which it has spent. By that I mean that buildings have been erected which have cost fully twice as much as they ought to have cost, and I will give one small illustration to show what I mean. There is the East Perth post-office, which cost, I think, £1,800, and the needs of East Perth could have been supplied for about £300. In the West Perth post-office we have another example of the same thing, and all over this country the wild waste of the architectural branch of this great spending department is bringing this colony to its knees. What do we want with all those expensive roofs, and all those angle gables, and all this waste? Why, there is nothing in the roofs of those buildings that can accommodate the public.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: You are speaking of a past age.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It may be a past age, but it is a present waste. There is no cure that I know of for these things; but what we have to say is with a view of

prevention. We want to prevent this utter and hopeless waste which for seven years has been going on in the Works Department. I heartily agree with the statement which has already been made, that the Lands Department has been starved for the benefit of the Works Department; and I do not know anything that has given me greater surprise than to see Ministers, who are kept in office by the great agricultural industry of this country, starving the industry which they are always boasting about and which retains them in power. I say they are seriously injuring the Lands Department, in their Estimates, and they have done so in order to waste money in the Works Department. I do not say these works are not needed, in a sense. I am prepared to make up a list of necessary and good work, of profitable work, that the country ought to have, to a total value of ten millions of money; but the question which this Parliament and this country have to consider is not, what do we want, but what can we afford? Not whether it is profitable to build a railway here or there, but whether we can afford to build the railway; not whether we want an agricultural hall, or jetty, or harbour, but whether we can afford to construct those works; not whether it is nice to have a museum on the top of yonder hill, but whether we can afford to have that museum; and that is where the Government have utterly failed. They have satisfied themselves by answering two questions: is the work necessary, and will it pay? I can point to ten million pounds' worth of work that is necessary and will pay, but which this country cannot possibly afford to undertake. We can take a railway from Esperance to Norseman, and it will pay; we can build a railway to Lawlers, and it will pay; and so on with a hundred other works we can mention that would pay. But we have to deal with the State's money as we deal with our own. I could go into many a venture in my business that would pay; I could spend £500,000 during the next month on a project that would pay, and bring in good profits; but I have not got the money, and I am not able to do it. What is true of the individual—I want to impress this upon the committee—is true of the State. You can say, it would be a good

thing to do this, and it would be very profitable to do something else; but your limitations for spending are within two and a half millions of money, and your population is only 160,000: and if you do not exceed your income, you ought to be thankful. I want to put before the committee accurate figures taken from the Government statements—they are only to the end of last year, because the statements are not published further; and I have taken the trouble to put the returns and the figures of this country into a shape differing from that in which the Premier puts them, and I would be glad if he would follow the very excellent example of Victoria in this respect and give us the figures, instead of in a cash-book form, in a ledger form. What do these figures disclose? I have taken all my figures from the Government papers, so I hope Ministers will not interrupt me. The total revenue from January 1st to December 31st was £2,440,390. The amount we received from trading concerns was £1,083,863. The expenditure was £2,362,003; and that expenditure equals £19 4s. 8d. per head. I ask the committee to consider the allocation of this expenditure. The cost of government, of which I will give particulars in a moment, amounts to £4 13s. 8d. per head. The expenses of working the trading concerns are £5 16s. 5d. per head. The amount for interest and sinking fund is £2 4s. 8d. per head. The amount expended on public works is £6 10s. 4d. per head—an amount equivalent to the whole revenue of Victoria. The average population of the colony is 123,000, as given by the Registrar General.

THE PREMIER: You know all this is ancient history.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I know it is ancient history, but we cannot give anything but ancient history when we find that documents which ought to have been issued months ago are not laid before hon. members. The figures must be ancient history, if departments are worked in this way. I say the Government only give figures which suit their own particular purposes.

THE PREMIER: I do not think that is fair.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I will withdraw the statement, and say the Govern-

ment necessarily give to the House figures which, from their standpoint, they think correct.

THE PREMIER: They give all the figures.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I want to point out that in New South Wales the revenue from customs for the period to June 30, 1896, was £1,825,000, and from excise £500,000, making a total of £2,325,000, which amounts to less than £2 per head of the population of 1,200,000. Without wearying the committee by going into details, I will say that everyone of the other colonies, and I have figures here to show it, gives the cost of government at or under £2 per head, whilst the cost here is £4 18s. 3d. Coming to details, I ask attention to these facts. Here our trading concerns—railways, tramways, and special works—brought in £714,326; the expenses of working them being £371,724. The profits which they yielded—and this is to the credit of the Railway Department and to the Public Works—the total profit amounted to £342,602. From mining we received £215,213; the expenses being £68,000, leaving a profit of £147,203. Lands: rents and sales of land yielded £160,001; expenses £40,001, leaving a profit of £120,000. Lands Titles office, amount received £52,056, the cost being £32,136, and the profit £19,920. Woods and forests, receipts £9,135, expenses £2,760; profit £6,375. Fees and licenses (various) yielded £19,665. The trading concerns showed a total profit of £655,765. Posts and telegraphs and telephones brought in only £186,141, while the expenditure was £269,000, so that there was a loss of £82,859. It is fair to explain, and I do not want to be unfair, that the Post Office Department during that year took over a portion of its works to the extent of £40,000 to £50,000. The exact figures I cannot give, but £40,000 to £50,000 has been expended in this department on works.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION: And some on telegraph lines too.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Deducting the interest and sinking fund, amounting to £204,269, we made a net profit out of trading concerns of £368,637. That is something the Government should be proud of, for there is no such record in

all Australia as a clear profit of £3 per head out of trading concerns. After paying interest and sinking fund, and adding the amount of loss from the Post Office, there is a clear profit of £368,000, which has gone into the coffers of the State. This is a satisfactory state of things. So far from our finances being depressing, they are exactly the opposite. I want to point out that, in criticising the Government policy, I am not putting in figures and facts that will injure the country. I am only disputing the manner of the Government financing. The amounts derivable from direct taxation are—Customs receipts, £996,812; licenses, £16,424; stamps, £70,627; making a total of £1,083,863. That was what the Government had available; and adding this direct taxation to the profit made from trading concerns, there is a total of £1,452,500. That is the amount of the cash the Government of this country have taken out of the pockets of the people to expend, and we have a right to ask what they have done with it. While we boast, and rightly boast, that we have made a profit of £360,000 on our trading concerns, we must remember that this sum has been made out of the people; although, of course, they have had good service for the money. In ordinary government it would come to this, that whenever the public departments and trading concerns show large profits, the country should demand that the railway rates and other charges should be brought down within a margin to clear interest and sinking fund. It is not advisable to do that at the present time, and I am glad the Government are maintaining a stand, and making a profit on their trading concerns.

THE PREMIER: We are spending it, too.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am objecting to the wasteful expenditure of the Government. I suppose the Government say, "The public have got this money;" but the contractor gets it to a large extent. I will tell you who gets it, by and by. The Premier wants to know what has been done with it. I will tell him. We have expended this money on the Governor, on Parliament, on the judges, and on the Registrar General, to the amount of £42,907, equal to 5s. 4d. per head of population. I would like to

call the attention of those people who say that the cost of Parliament and the Government is so much, by showing that the cost is only 5s. 4d. per head, and I think it cheap at that price. Then we come to the question of law and order, the police, Rottenest establishment, and the Crown Law Department, which cost £170,597, or £1 7s. 9d. per head. For education we had a very low rate last term, but we shall have to spend more this. The cost of education was £32,751, or 5s. 6d. per head. Literary and scientific establishments, the libraries of Parliament, and the local public institutes, have cost £27,888, or 4s. 6d. per head. One large charge I would like to call attention to is that of medical. I think it was wisely and well spent for the sick of the people all over the country. The expenses under the head of "medical" were £80,991; charitable, £14,230; making a total of £95,221, being equal to 15s. 9d. per head. The printing account of the country amounted to £18,986, equal to 3s. 1d. per head. The expenses of the Custom-house and Government Stores amounted to £52,274, or 8s. 6d. per head. There is a special item here which will not occur again in our history. It is educational and ecclesiastical grants and aborigines, which amounted to £60,635, or 9s. 2d. per head. Then there is that mysterious thing called "miscellaneous," £82,266, or 13s. 6d. per head. Taking all the items as the necessary cost of the conduct of the country, they amount to £4 13s. 3d. per head, while in every other country the total amount shows from £1 17s. to £2 3s. per head. I do not complain of that cost. There are many things which we must have in this country which are not required in other countries. Adding to the £4 13s. 3d. the public works other than railways, which amount to £6 10s. 4d. per head, we have a total of £11 3s. 7d. per head. When we take the whole cost of government, working and trading concerns, interest and sinking fund, and public works, it amounts to £19 4s. 8d. per head. But the actual money taken from the pockets of the people, and the profits of the railways and trading concerns and direct taxation, amount to £11 3s. 7d. per head. Before I started to give these figures I was discussing the point, not whether cer-

tain things on the Estimates were wanted, but whether we could afford them, and I say these figures prove conclusively that our population cannot bear to be taxed £11 3s. 7d. per head, and I say the taxation and the expenditure of the country must be brought within bounds. The time has come for the Government to wisely consider the question whether they cannot reduce the expenditure of the country. Other countries manage to exist on £6 per head, that being the total taxation, and our total taxation is £19 per head. It is only reasonable to suppose that the population of this country cannot stand this perpetual strain, which is unseen, but which is constantly pressing on the people of the country. It is depressing the prosperity of the country, and it is responsible for the depression that we see around us. Although the Government say "We have plenty of money," they must remember that the people they have taken the money from are the losers, and the people will demand that the Government will so conduct the expenditure that it will not be excessive and a burden on the people. I think when the heavily taxed and depressed Victoria existed by taxing the people to the amount of £6 3s. 4d. per head, the Western Australian Government cannot ask to increase the tax above £19 per head.

THE PREMIER: We are better off than they are, so it seems.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, but the question is, what about the other fellow? I come to the vote in connection with the civil servants, and I wish hon. members to take notice of this point. We have in the railway service of the country 5,051 servants, and we have in the other departments of the State 3,290. We have in this country civil servants to the number of 8,341, and I ask the committee to take into consideration what that means. It means that one in every twenty of the population is a civil servant. If that is not appalling, I do not know what is. When one in every twenty of the population of the country—counting every man, woman, and child—is a civil servant, obtaining money from the State, I ask you what is the influence which any Government can wield with such an army of civil servants behind it? because the

majority of the civil servants are as a rule on the side of the Government. In Victoria the colony went down, and the civil service itself broke down under the weight of one civil servant in thirty-five of the population, and this country has one in twenty. I make this statement on these figures, and I say the Government are going on the straight way to a "black Wednesday." They are loading their departments immensely. There are more public servants than are required, and more than the country can afford to pay. While the civil service is in this condition, some servants are not properly paid, and year after year hon. members on this side have stood here and called the attention of the Government to this, and pressed on them to get good men, pay them well, and reduce the number of civil servants. What did we hear from an hon. member on the Ministerial bench to-night. That in his department there were servants of a bad sort. Of course, there must be black sheep in every flock, but these figures which I have quoted show that the Government are over-manning and over-loading their departments. This new country cannot possibly continue to be successful and prosperous when it has one in twenty of the population in the civil service, unless the country is going in for socialism altogether. I call the attention of the Government particularly to this.

THE PREMIER: We are doing an immense number of works by day labour.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: These are not day labourers. The day labourer does not affect the question, because he may be put on to-day and put off to-morrow. The amount of salaries for the regular servants is 3,021, and there are 5,021 recorded in the report of the Minister of Works; so that, if we desire to exaggerate, we could do so easily. I want to make the best of the case, and not the worst; and I want to put the condition of the country fairly and squarely before the committee. Another thing I want to call attention to is the steady increase in the salaries of the more highly paid officers. Will the Minister of Education please to take note—and I use this illustration because these are not such items as might possibly be taken exception to—I am going to speak of the Inspector General

of Schools, and I do so with the highest respect, because I believe him to be a most capable officer; and, in referring to his salary, I wish not to be thought to be attacking any individual or his position. The Chief Inspector of Schools in Victoria has a salary of £500 a year, and the Government there spends on its schools £600,000 a year, whereas the Government in this colony spend £49,945 a year, and they propose to pay their Chief Inspector £500 a year. That is atrocious. You are taking away a pultry sixpence a day off the small men, and you are overloading your higher paid men with large salaries. I say you cannot continue to raise these salaries. The responsible Ministers of the Crown, receiving £1,000 a year, are doing more work than the heads of departments, and yet we find the heads of departments are approaching very nearly to the amount of the Ministerial salaries. I do not say the men are not worth the money; but I say 160,000 people cannot pay one man in twenty at this high rate of salary; consequently, the thing must come to a stop or we shall come to a stop. I much regret that the suggestion made by myself, and supported by other members on this (the Opposition) side of the House, has not been carried out by the Government; that is, when there should be a sixth Minister appointed, the departments of Works and Railways should be divided. It is to me a matter of great regret that the Government did not see fit to carry out that proposal. Here are two departments combined under one Ministerial head, and spending nearly twice as much as all the other departments put together; for, while others are spending £4 13s. 1d. a head per annum, this great department is spending at the rate of £6 10s. 4d. per head out of revenue; and I say this House and the country will not be satisfied till the Commissioner of Railways and the Director of Public Works are separate individuals, controlling separate departments. The change that ought to have been made recently was not the appointment of a Minister of Education, however much we may respect the individual who has been appointed; but the change should have been a distribution of those offices which would have placed a Minister over the Public Works

and another Minister over the Railways. This has been our trouble, and is a trouble still, and it is one that is calculated to ruin this country if you do not watch it. This perpetual expenditure of two or three hundred pounds here, and a few hundred there, for all sorts of works all over the country, which works are good and desirable enough if we could afford them, needs a closer consideration by hon. members, but I am afraid that, when we deal with these works separately, the answer we shall get almost invariably will be that the work has been done, or that it has been commenced and must be completed. The Premier has already intimated to us that certain works in these Estimates have been begun, and it looks as if, during the last election, promises were made all over the country for works to be undertaken, and that these works have been commenced, and cannot now be stopped. If that is the case—[THE PREMIER: It is not the case]—if it be the answer that these public works, amounting to half a million of money spread all over the country for necessary and unnecessary things have been commenced, then there is another serious matter for members to contemplate in dealing with these Estimates. We will wait and see whether that be so or not. I come now to a question to which I have recently called the attention of the House, because of its vast importance. We have already taken off, and transferred to other votes, a certain sum of money from the Perth drainage. I do urge on the Government to endeavour to find out whether deep drainage has not seen its last days. I have urged in this House before that the true scientific principle of draining a city is that of the Liernur system; and it would be a wise expenditure if the Government were to send an expert to report on this system in those cities of the continent of Europe where it is in operation, by which means they might obtain absolutely correct and reliable information as to the results of the system as seen on the spot. I assure the Government that the system is absolutely effective, and infinitely superior to deep drainage, and that it can be carried out for one half the cost of a deep-drainage system. Such a statement as I have made is, I submit, worthy of some consideration. I regret the member

for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) is not in his place, because he made some statements I feel bound to refer to. He said the Government were practically giving a larger proportion of the public expenditure to members sitting on the Opposition side of the House, as compared with the amounts given to districts represented by members who sit on the Government side. My objection to the Government in this particular is not so much that they give to this member and that member, but that they have been making a wild attempt to please everybody, and therefore pleasing nobody. I want to see this Government, or any Government in office, show some backbone in dealing with public works, by resisting the pressure which members may bring to bear for obtaining works required in their several districts; and, whether it is myself or any other member, we expect the Government to be able to say "No," if "No" is requisite to be said. Money is to be expended, and we have the right to expect our share of the expenditure, and we have also our duty to perform to our several constituencies; but I deny *in toto* that the Government have acted on this principle. They have given money all round, and I am glad to say they have given me what I have asked for my constituency, when I put a good case before them. What I want to say is that Ministers have got to say "No," a good many times, and have to refuse expenditure in order to keep it within reasonable bounds, for this country cannot continue to pay to the revenue so large a sum as £19 14s. 8d. per head. It cannot be done. In the seasons of prosperity we have had the people have not perhaps felt the taxation so much, and have not complained, while a large amount of money has been coming from the old country for investment in mining properties here, and when there has been a large amount of general prosperity, which naturally leads to consequent depression; but now we are in for a time when we have to depend on our natural resources, and I say no country—not even our country with all its prosperity and wealth—is able to stand this perpetual drain of money, amounting to £3,080,000 for the current year. I hope the Government will be ready, when these items are before us in detail, to listen to suggestions which will be made for

reducing some of the items, so as to have the expenditure within the revenue which the Treasurer is likely to obtain.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) : It is not my intention to detain the committee long, for the reason that I shall have to reserve all my energies for the separate items when they come under discussion. If I am to take any notice of the assertion which has been made about taking away from the Public Works Department such a large sum of money, and transferring it to other departments, it should be remembered that, after all, the items of expenditure set down in the Public Works estimates are really the instructions of this House and this Parliament, which have to be carried out by the Director of Works ; and when these items are under discussion, it will be for hon. members to deal with them in such manner as they think best. It is not my intention to touch upon many subjects to-night. I would like principally to deal with the remarks made by the member for Albany a few evenings ago, when criticising the Financial Statement. We have heard many speeches from the hon. member, and although he has frequently said, both inside and outside this House, and other hon. members have used the same expressions, that they would like to "draw" the Minister of Works, it really means that, by bringing me out, you may possibly expect to have a little satisfaction yourselves. I would like to point out, however, that in endeavouring to place me in a position which possibly may cause me a little trouble and annoyance, I shall perhaps be able to place my case the more effectually before this House. In dealing with the remarks of the member for Albany, he touched first on population, and of course he based on that all his arguments against the Premier's financial proposals as to the way the expenditure should be made, and the amount of revenue expected to be received ; and there is no doubt that population is the proper basis for such an argument ; but when he said that a diminution in the population was *prima facie* evidence of retrogression, he no doubt wished to infer that the diminution was taking place in a way which hon. members do not wish to see take place. The hon. member did not

put before this House and the country the true facts of the case ; because he well knows, as other members know, that at this time of the year a large number of people usually visit their homes in the eastern colonies ; and I have noticed that, during this year, a great number are travelling to those colonies earlier than has been the case in previous years, so we may expect to see a large number go through in December, and we know that in past years there has been a large number leaving the colony about the same time of year ; but, as has been pointed out, most of these people are taking return tickets, and numbers of them will return here again. With regard to the population, I notice the member for Albany, in all his remarks on subjects of this kind, is doing more harm than good to the country by placing before the people our position in an untrue light. I am sure it is not a fact when he states we are retrograding, or that the reduction of population is a sign of actual retrogression. It would be a sign of retrogression if that process were to continue, and if there were real cause for diminution in our population. We all know there was a very large influx of people during the early part of the present year, and this influx began to fall off on account of the labour market becoming overstocked, and through the cessation of some public works throughout the country. We all know the high wages ruling in the early part of the year caused an abnormal influx of population ; but I must point out to those who, from time to time, urged me to increase the public works, that those members, by using such pressure, were only bringing about one result, that, owing to the high wages ruling, there were a large number of the artisan class coming here, and possibly we would not be able to find sufficient employment for them ; consequently, many of those who are able to return will go back, but there are a great number who have decided to stay here. There will be a continual increase of the population, not abnormal but regular, and that will continue for some time to come, and I hope for all time. The great number of people who came here were induced to come by the high rates of wages ruling in the early part of this year, and some of those people, not

finding sufficient work here, may deem it necessary to return to their own homes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about the 3,000 a month increase?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I will leave the Premier to deal with that question. I think he has proved, by the figures given, that the population did increase by that amount per month. I consider the member for Albany is not a friend of this country, when he tries to damage it in the way he attempted to do a few nights ago.

MR. LEAKE: I told the truth.

MR. SIMPSON: It was simply unpalatable.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I do not say the hon. member was not telling the truth. It may be that the hon. member simply stretched a point or exaggerated in a great degree. We know the member for Albany is not noted for his practicability; that although he possesses ability, he lacks application. There is one thing about it, that if a few other members, who are filling positions on this (the Ministerial) side of the House, had only had the opportunities that the member for Albany had in his past career, they would have made better use of them than he has done. I can assure the House I have known the hon. member for many years, and personally I have always looked upon him as my friend, and I know that friendship has not lessened in a great degree; but I would like to point out that the hon. member is most critical, in this House, with regard to everything that is carried out by me as Director of Public Works, and even with regard to things which were done long before I took up that position. During the time I have been in this position, he has taken every opportunity of attacking me in a way which I think is quite uncalled for.

MR. LEAKE: It is quite fair. I am going to do it again.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: He attacks the right hon. the Premier in the same way. To-night he attempted to drag from the Premier a statement with regard to the sale of bonds at home.

MR. LEAKE: And succeeded.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: You may have succeeded; but, although the Premier gave you that in-

formation, I do not think it is much to your credit to gloat over it, and look at your friends in the manner you did, and say, "I dragged that from him." I would much rather have been in the position of the Premier than in your (Mr. Leake's) position; because I should have preferred to do what the right hon. gentleman did, rather than have gloated as you did over his statement. I have not, perhaps, had the opportunities which many men have had of studying political life in all its aspects; but I am going to be prophetic too, because the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) has drawn our attention to the "writing on the wall," and professes to be the Daniel of this day who can interpret that writing; but he is possibly just as far out as can well be imagined when he tells us that certain things are going to happen. I will tell him that it will be a long day before the country will ever get a Government, and a gentleman at the head of the Government, who will be as fair and straightforward to this House as is the right hon. the Premier. From what I know of him, I can say that nothing is withheld from this House; and, in endeavouring to press upon the right hon. gentleman, and upon the Government, such questions as these, I think the Opposition are working in a most unfair way. There is one thing about it which I wish to say. I do not look upon the remarks of the member for Albany as honest criticism: I look upon them as misrepresentation. I consider that, in the remarks he made the other evening, he misrepresented the facts altogether. Perhaps the question might be asked, what justification have I for the expenditure which he says I am guilty of, the great expenditure which he pointed to a few nights ago, when he said I had a million pounds given me to play with, and which had been expended in a manner not expected by this country? What justification have I? The Estimates are my justification. They were passed by the Parliament of this country.

MR. LEAKE: They are not passed yet.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I mean the Estimates of last year. The hon. member was alluding to past expenditure—to what you yourselves and Parliament as a whole—passed.

You had the Estimates of this expenditure placed in your hands, and knew that the money was to be spent upon those works and buildings.

MR. LEAKE: Pardon me; you are wrong. The million that you have to play with was that detailed in the Estimates now before the House.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Well, I take it that if you are afraid of my playing with that million, it is evident that in alluding to it you also alluded to that which was already expended.

MR. LEAKE: I told the House that you had spent all but £62,000 of that money.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Well, we will take the future. The member for Albany said I was responsible for all this expenditure. He forgets that the land purchase items, and in fact everything else included in those Estimates, are not my doings as an individual. After all, I am merely a means to the end, and my duty is to spend this money to the best of my ability in carrying out the different requirements of the country. It is placed in my hands by the Parliament of the country, with a view of my expending it in the best manner possible. I do not put these amounts on the Estimates. It is the Parliament of the country which places them there. The Government come down with a programme, which it is for Parliament to adopt or not, as it pleases; and we are not doing this of our own will, but are simply carrying out the wishes of the House. Of course I know that the member for Albany can take a brief for any side, because that is his business; but there is one thing to be said, that if he and I were to start as level as possible, and if it came to practical work, I hope I should be able to outstrip him in the race in practical work, though I am, perhaps, unable to debate here with as much facility as the hon. member, whose great command of language is due, no doubt, to the position in life which he fills. We all know it is easy for a man, who fills such a position in his profession as the hon. member, to hold a brief for any side. But I would like, if it were possible, to start level with the hon. member in the practical work of this department, and we would see where he would be then.

MR. LEAKE: You might ruin my business.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: With regard to the salaries and other matters which have been brought up here, I do not intend to deal with them to-night; but I do not care to let the debate pass without reference to one or two of the items touched upon. I am prepared to defend all the items which appear on these Estimates, if necessity arises for my defending them; and when the time does come for me to defend them, I will do all that is possible to give members whatever information they may ask for upon the different items, and I will have pleasure in doing so. With regard to the suggestion, also made by the hon. member for Albany, to take away half a million of money from the Works Department and transfer it to the Lands Department, I may say it does not matter one jot to me whether he takes that away or not.

MR. LEAKE: We intend to take something.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: If you take it away, we will throw the responsibility of doing so on your shoulders. Of course, you mean you are going to attempt to do it.

MR. LEAKE: We are going to take it away from you.

THE PREMIER: If you can; but you cannot do it.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I do not begrudge the Lands Department the half million, because I think they could make good use of it; but, if you want the public works of this country to be carried out, then you must find the money for them. Setting aside all attacks which we may make on each other, I will say that, in my endeavours to carry out these works, I have tried my best to do so in the interests of the country; and although so much has been said with regard to the way in which the Public Works Department has grown, I say again the responsibility is cast on the Parliament of the country, because, owing to the abnormal state of things which has obtained, and owing to the great demands made upon us from different parts of the colony, we were bound to increase the staff to keep pace with the work. You must remember, also, that you are dealing with the state of affairs as if it was five

months ago. If you were to ask to-day for a report on the different departments, you would find they are reducing their staffs in every possible way, with a view to lessening the expenditure; and, if hon. members will only take an opportunity of looking through the Estimates, they will find, in a great many instances, that provision is made for only six months. I regret that we have had to adopt this course, because I quite understand that a number of people will have to be thrown out of employment; but it is owing to the cessation of works which have been completed, and with a view of showing that the Government are desirous of reducing expenditure as soon as it can be reduced, that this course is being taken.

A MEMBER: They are the small fry who have been slaughtered.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member well knows that if he had to cut down his business expenses, he would first reduce the numbers of the subordinate members of the staff, and gradually dispense with heads of departments afterwards. You cannot allow large bodies of men to rule themselves: you must have heads to rule them. The time will come when the lessening will have to take place with regard to the heads also; and if members will only look at the list of the staff, they will find that a great number are temporary hands only, and, unfortunately, this is necessary in view of the uncertainty of the amount of business which will have to be done in the future. When the necessity arises for dispensing with the services of these men—which I should very much regret, and which I hope will not take place, and that it will not be necessary to reduce the staff more than we can help—still, if it does come, we shall do it. With regard to the land resumptions, the member for Albany mentioned that he would call for a return showing what had been paid for land. If he will look at the Public Works Report, pages 143-7, now before hon. members, he will find a full and detailed statement of the way in which that amount was dealt with; and it is much to the credit of the department that the best business done in connection with those land resumptions was done by our own departmental officers; and, had it not been for the Act under which we were

working, we could have saved the country some thousands of pounds by settling claims without going into arbitration.

MR. GEORGE: There was too much haggling.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Every one will admit that, in dealing with the Public Works Department, we have much difficulty in keeping down expenses, owing to the decentralisation of the department, which is spread all over the place. That is not the fault of the administration, but is owing to circumstances over which I have no control. My endeavour has been to centralise the staff as far as possible; and, if it could possibly be done at an earlier date, I would endeavour to bring about a change very quickly by centralising as far as possible the whole of the staff, thus doing away with a great number of men and increasing the efficiency of the department in a way that can be brought about only by a system of centralisation. There are one or two other speakers to whom I would like to allude. The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) spoke with regard to expenditure in connection with the Boulder township. While dealing with this subject, I think the hon. member lost sight of the fact that the township came into existence only eight or ten months ago; and, had he visited that locality on the 26th January last with a view of looking into the requirements of the place, as I did on that date, he would have found that what is now a rising township had then only just sprung into existence. At that time there were only a few iron structures in the township, and what could be done for the place was taken in hand at once by the Government. We did all in our power to meet the requirements of the times. Of course, the place has grown abnormally since that time; and I have assured the hon. member that everything in reason that could be done to meet the wishes of the people there would be taken in hand. As he knows, a railway to the Boulder has been constructed, and a tramway to the Boulder has been built—of course, owing to the great demand upon us, without authority from this House. It was one of those cases where it was better to do the work without authority than to let private

enterprise take it up. The Government took it in hand, and to-day we have there one of the busiest spots in the whole colony. For the first week, the number of passengers carried upon that line was 6,000, for the second week 9,000, and the number is gradually increasing. As soon as we can get it in proper order, we shall be carrying something like 10,000 people a week over the lines in that neighbourhood, and by this means we hope to take some 10,000 tons of traffic per month for the mines. In fact, I received a telegram yesterday to the effect that one mine alone is ready to send down 4,000 tons of material as soon as we can push forward this line to the mines, which we are doing as fast as possible. I am sure the hon. member will recognise that, in asking for the erection of a goods station there, and for other conveniences, he must give us a little time to put the work in hand. On the one hand we are abused for going too fast, and, on the other we are urged to go ahead faster. The fact of the matter is that this is the cause of all the trouble. If it had not been for the way in which we were urged to go forward and push ahead, as we have been by the demands made on the Government, possibly we should not have had such a large Excess Bill, and, no doubt, we would not have had to come here to ask for so much money to-day as we are asking for. The House and all the people of the country are responsible for all this increase, the people being responsible through the members who represent them. We, of course, can afterwards take the responsibility for the carrying out of these works. I am sure that everything is justified; that all the works spoken of as being so costly, when they are compared with works carried on in other places, will be found to have been done for a moderate expenditure, considering the extremely high rates which were ruling at the time they were constructed. I think that, compared with works in other places, they were not so costly, after all. With regard to the costly railway stations which have been alluded to, I must ask, have hon. members gone through the list to see what those stations have really cost the country? Take Bayswater, or Karrakatta, or any of the places mentioned, and you will find that the expenditure has not been very great. The cost of

Karrakatta station is about £1,300 altogether, and provision had to be made there to work those sections; so that, taking the duplication as it is now, we all know that to run a large service such as we have there we had to have the sections about equidistant, for if we had one section of line twice as long as another, there would be undue and unnecessary delay at places beyond that section, between the starting point and the point where the long section commenced. These stations are absolutely necessary for the working of that railway, and I think that, after the stations are completed and hon. members have had an opportunity of visiting them, they will find that there has been no extravagance in their construction.

MR. SIMPSON: That criticism came from your own side of the House.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; you were very magnanimous on that occasion, and I know the reason why.

MR. SIMPSON: I said nothing about it.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That is all right. If you had dealt as fairly with everything as you did with that subject, there would be little for us to complain about. It is really useless for me to stand talking here, because, when all is said and done, we know we have the power, and I think we shall keep it. I do not know of anything else to refer to, except to thank those hon. members who so kindly defended my action, and for the kind expressions they used with regard to the works carried out both in the Railways and Public Works Departments. In some instances, perhaps, the expenditure of money might have been avoided, but hon. members must recognise the fact that, in their own business, they do not go through life without making some mistakes, and it is the same with public departments. During the time I have been in control of this department, there has been a great increase in the work, and it has been impossible for one Minister to exercise a control over the whole of it with satisfaction.

A MEMBER: The departments should be divided.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: There should be no swopping of horses when crossing a stream, to use

an old expression, and there are reasons why this could not be done. There has been a large amount of work to do in the departments, and I say that the work has been done as well as possible. To give the committee some indication of the increase that has been made, I will point to the port of Fremantle, where the import business has increased from 80,000 tons in 1895 to 500,000 tons to the end of last month. There has been an enormous increase of business during the last year or two, and so with regard to the public works there has also been a great increase. But we have now come to a time when the business will lessen, and when this large programme of public works is gone through and other works of necessity come in, which will probably not be so great, then I think we shall be able to get our departments in better order than they have been. I do not wish to throw discredit on those who have administered this department in the past, but some of the divisions of this department, I think, have improved, and I hope in time to see some branches of the department in a better position than they are to-day; and the only way to do that is by receiving the support of hon. members, and by members not being too critical. A little encouragement from time to time is better than undue criticism.

MR. WILSON (the Canning): After the eloquent speech of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), not much has been left for me to touch upon; but I would not like the debate to finish without mentioning one or two matters which struck me as important. The finances of any institution, whether those of the country or of the individual, are of vital importance. The success of the individual and the prosperity of the nation, and indeed the very existence of all, depend on the wise and cautious administration of the finances of the country. I take it that it is our duty to consider this question well, and see that we, the Parliament of the country, have the finances under proper control. It is a very easy matter for anyone to go through these Estimates and find fault. It is easy to turn up item after item, and find fault and criticise; but I do not propose to do that. I do not wish to be carping or fault-finding unnecessarily. I wish to take a broad

view of this matter, to consider the finances from a national standpoint, and see whether we have the control of the finances as we ought to have in the interests of the country. Granting that sound administration of the finances is essential for the well-being of the individual and the community, it behoves us to see that we have them under proper control. The first thing that strikes me is the Excess Bill that was brought down to the House some days ago. I may say personally—it may be my ignorance or my want of experience in Parliamentary matters—but personally I was appalled to think that the Government could spend £619,000 out of the consolidated revenue, and £92,000 out of loan money, and then bring in a Reappropriation Bill to cover £360,000, or altogether close upon a million of money, without the authority of Parliament. It seems to me that any Government that will expend a sum of money equal to a third of the total revenue without the authority of Parliament is doing what is absolutely wrong, and which I can only characterise as a scandal and a disgrace. Take the British Parliament, if such a thing occurred there, what would it mean? It would mean that the Government would expend thirty million pounds in the year without authority, and would that be suffered for a moment? Has this Parliament got the control of the finances? I say emphatically “No,” under these circumstances. I know that the Treasurer will tell us that if anything is wrong in the finances, the Government are responsible for it. The country will not be satisfied with that position. If anything goes wrong, the people look to Parliament, and we, as Parliament, shall not be exonerated if we are lax in our duty in that respect. Another matter I would like to touch upon is the question of the Auditor General’s report. I do not know why it is that this House has not seen the Auditor General’s report before this. But as the Auditor General is an officer appointed by Parliament to keep the accounts in check, and as the report is necessary to inform hon. members with regard to the finances of the country, that report should be here. I throw out the suggestion to the Government that it would be well if they could

possibly close the financial year at the end of December, so that the accounts put before the House would not be from twelve to fifteen months old when hon. members see them. That would be an advantage.

THE PREMIER: We used to have that, but Parliament changed it.

MR. WILSON: The sooner we go back to the system the better. I throw out the suggestion to the Government for them to consider. The matter of salaries has been mentioned, and I do not propose to take up the cudgels on any individual's behalf; but to think 8,000 individuals are employed in the civil service is sufficient in itself to justify some reform. There are too many men employed in our civil service to-day, and that is the reason why so many of our able men are underpaid. My idea is this, that if the hours of labour were increased to a reasonable time, to what mercantile houses and commercial houses bind their servants down to, from 9 o'clock to 5 o'clock, and pay men better salaries, the Government might do away with perhaps 20 per cent. of the men now employed. It is wonderful how the Government manage to get men in the service at all to do the work at such small salaries. At present perhaps the majority of men are not fit to be there, and that may explain it. I strongly suggest to the Government that the sooner a Civil Service Board is appointed to deal with appointments and salaries, the better for the country. The Premier stated that few increases in salaries could be made this year, owing to the large demand for public works. I think it a great pity that such a remark had to be made. Because the Government intend to carry out a large programme of public works, is that any reason why men who are entitled to increases of salaries should not get them? Is that any reason why men in the Lands Department, for instance, should not have increases which they are entitled to? It is unjust to the civil servants to take such a stand. I think it would be better to cut down the works, and treat our civil servants as they should be treated. The Agent General's office is one which, I think, might be put on a much better footing. This Parliament has little or no control over the expenditure for that department. We hear little or nothing about it. We

never know where the orders are placed, or who get the commissions. I would suggest here that we should do in this colony what has been done in the other colonies. Let us call for tenders within the colony for everything required, and let the local merchants have a show, and I think the goods will be obtained cheaper, and the Government be served better and more expeditiously. The hon. member for Central Murchison referred, and rightly too, to the balance brought forward in the national balance-sheet, which was swallowed up in items of stores to the amount of £700,000. The hon. member was perfectly right in his objection to it. The balance-sheet is an ordinary balance-sheet, such as is drawn out by ordinary firms. It is a cash balance-sheet, and should deal with cash only.

THE PREMIER: It is not a cash balance-sheet, because there are many items there which are not cash.

MR. WILSON: Every penny of cash in hand ought to be shown. I say this statement is not an accurate one. If the balance is brought forward, and swallowed up in a lot of stores, it ought not to be shown as a cash balance. There is only one other matter I think it is necessary to touch upon, and that is the question of the public works being done by day labour. I can quite understand the Premier's interjection that so many day labourers were employed that it swelled the army of civil servants. The best thing to do in any country is to let the works by contract. I do not believe in day labour, as more money is wasted, and there are more dire results accruing therefrom when the Government have to discharge their army of servants after the work is completed. Better let the work go by contract, and then there will be no difficulties. There is one other matter which has been mentioned by the Commissioner of Railways, and that is in regard to some of the remarks made by the hon. member for Albany. He stated that the people who were leaving the colony intended to return. That is possibly correct; but why are they leaving the colony? It is because their wives and families are not living here. If they were here, the men would not leave. I would again impress upon the Government that it is necessary for us to do everything in our power to induce the

wives and families of the people here to come over and settle in this country. To my mind the argument adduced by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), to the effect that the Estimates must be based upon the population, is perfectly sound. It is deplorable to think that in any one month the departures from our shores should exceed the arrivals; and I do not see how the keeping back of information of this sort is going to help the country. I think the hon. member should be commended for endeavouring to convince this House that it is necessary to take steps to improve our prospects for the future. I may also say, with regard to the information the right hon. gentleman gave us to-night with reference to the Treasury bonds, that I do not think he was justified in being so severe on the members of the House who wished for this information. Why, his first utterance, when he got up, was that the information would do no harm to the colony; and I, as a sensible man, cannot see what harm can result from any information the Premier has given us to-night. I think we were justified in getting that information. If Parliament is to control the public purse and the public expenditure of this colony, then we are always entitled, at the very earliest opportunity, to have any information which we require in order to understand the financial position.

MR. SIMPSON (Geraldton) : I expect the House is weary of this financial debate, but I think the delay, which has been unavoidable so far as I am able to see, has been amply compensated for by the long and valuable speech contributed by the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) to-night on the present aspect of the financial affairs of this country. He pointed out our exact position. We are neither richer nor poorer for knowing exactly where we are.

THE PREMIER : But where are we?

MR. SIMPSON : The breezy optimism with which the Premier opened out his subject to the House would lead one to imagine that things were all right. The right hon. gentleman preaches peace; but I would point out to him that he is very little in touch with the commercial affairs of this country, and that all his life he has occupied a position in the civil service, where the ills of fortune very rarely come. I am little inclined, in

speaking on this subject, to go into the question of £10 per annum to this man, or £15 to the other man; but even taking the Premier's own remarks in his opening speech, he almost hints that we have gone through our seven fat years, and that possibly we are entering upon the seven lean years of our existence; and I am sure the committee will excuse me for using a Scriptural illustration, because hon. members have lately got into a regular habit of quoting Scripture, and I believe I am catching the same complaint. Referring to the references made to the population and its increase or decrease, the Premier used the term "ancient history." It is very largely ancient history, for the ratio of increase has not been maintained; and in addition to that there was another feature well worthy of consideration, namely, that the sources of that immigration from the East have been very nearly exhausted. We have very nearly got all the additions to our population which we are likely to receive from the East. We know that the conditions of life, both in Victoria and in New South Wales, have improved very considerably; and, speaking without any reference to party politics, but as a practical man having a knowledge of the circumstances, I say we must recognise that we have no great advantages to offer immigrants to this country, if business continues brisk in the other colonies. Of course the local increase in population is very precarious; and possibly now that the Government have entirely abandoned the proposal to inaugurate any system of sewerage for Perth and Fremantle, the local increase of population is likely to become still more precarious. I cannot help referring to this question again; for I look upon it as an absolute and complete calamity that the necessities of the financial condition of this country should have compelled our Treasurer to divert to other sources the money which was placed on the Estimates for that purpose. Of course our revenue for last year was enormous; but, as was pointed out by the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), this enormous amount of money was taken out of the pockets of the people, and the results must be disastrous. No people on earth could possibly stand it. I admit that our circumstances are abnormal, but I challenge the Premier to pro-

duce a parallel from the history of any country in the world for such abstractions from the people's pockets, in order to build such places as a gaol at Wyndham in which to keep a few natives. With regard to the underdrafts in connection with the expenditure of the Postal and Education Departments, I may say there are no departments in which I would more readily excuse an excess than in those which are engaged in furnishing the community with postal and telegraphic facilities and educational opportunities. With regard to the Agricultural Bank, the Premier adopted heroics, but I would suggest to him that this course is not quite timely. This institution has only been in existence for about two years, and the agriculturist is at present getting enormous prices for his produce as well as loans from the Bank, and the Premier said at Bunbury—where he says so many peculiar things, and where a short time ago they very nearly killed a gentleman who is greatly respected and holds a very high position in this community—in speaking of this Agricultural Bank, that if the people would not settle on the land, the Government would themselves go farming. Well, I believe that very possibly they soon will have an opportunity of doing so. I should not be surprised if that is part of the future history of the Agricultural Bank. Certainly, I must admit that I cannot speak too highly of Mr. Paterson, the gentleman in charge of that institution. He is the right man in the right place; and I am sure he is a very valuable public servant, who tries to safeguard the operations of the Bank in every possible way. But the Premier, in alluding to the matter of land settlement, adopted a tone very different from that which he usually takes in addressing this side of the House. He suggested it by way of advice; and he said: "Our great aim must be—I am sure I am giving good advice in this matter—to try and fix a settled population upon the lands of the colony." "We must try and do everything we can to alter this state of affairs, and to settle the people upon the lands of the colony. We must be more liberal than we have ever been before, more liberal than any other country, in regard to the alienation of land, so long as we can get it utilised." I suppose the Premier gave exact expres-

sion to the wishes, instincts, and desires of every public-spirited man in this land. Such were the words which fell from him, and this House welcomed them; but when we turn to the Estimates, what has he done? He has taken his pen and struck out the request made by the Lands Department to enable that settlement to go on.

THE PREMIER: That is not true.

MR. SIMPSON: If ever there was a juggle in compiling the Estimates of a country, it is to be found in the way in which the Lands Department has been juggled out of its legitimate demands for the benefit of the Works Department.

THE PREMIER: To what extent?

MR. SIMPSON: Some thousands of pounds for extinction of rabbits on the lands of the country and for services in connection with additional lands handed over to the department. I know, sir, that the Minister of Lands is a man who has the confidence of the country, and it was a terrible calamity to endeavour to damp this confidence by permitting the Minister of Works to ladle out some sops to the country, instead of enabling the Minister of Lands to settle the people on the soil. Whenever I have an opportunity, I shall always resent the utterances of such commonplaces as these in a budget speech, when the Government, by the action they take immediately afterwards, show that they utterly disbelieve in them. If the Director of Public Works will permit me to say so, I am not one of those critics who in any way wish to deprecate the energy and enthusiasm which he has thrown into his work, or the respect in which he is held throughout the land; but I would like that gentleman, though in office, to recognise that he has a duty to perform; and, that, if Ministers treat with contempt any suggestions coming from this side of the House, that contempt is ill based if it is only founded on abuse, and is altogether incompatible with the duty they owe to the country.

THE PREMIER: You must not be rude.

MR. SIMPSON: I can only speak for myself; and I endeavour to conform to the rules of debate. Should I ever find myself dropping into intentional rudeness, I am sure I would not trespass on the patience of hon. members of this House by my presence in the Chamber. The Pre-

mier, too, refers again to the question of pastoral occupation. What has he done for that? Simply introduced the tick. I want to know how the pastoral supporters of the Government are going to continue to support them. The Premier must not try to laugh away a plague which the colony of Queensland looks upon as the terror of its pastoral industry. He is introducing it to Perth and Fremantle. If the Government Resident over at Rottnest experiments in connection with this insect which has pretty well ruined the pastoral industry of Queensland, I am sure the agriculturalists and pastoralists will be gratified with the Premier's method of dealing with the pest question. Had I the power of divination possessed by some hon. members, I might draw some very happy sketches of the two inspectors mounted on camels and going after the rabbits. As to the railway revenue, I am sure the Commissioner would not submit returns which he thought were not correct.

THE PREMIER: Why then question the returns?

MR. SIMPSON: Because I question the source from which the Commissioner gets his information.

THE PREMIER: Oh, I see.

MR. SIMPSON: I do not put opinions before the committee without giving reasons for those opinions. I believe that the revenue is inflated, and that the balance sheet of the Railway Department is got up for a special purpose.

THE PREMIER: Well, this is very nice!

MR. SIMPSON: I do not say that is done by the Commissioner. But I would remind the committee that there is "a lot of humanity about man." For instance, we are told there is £45,000 from wharfrage; but we have no information as to the cost of the wharves and the interest on that cost. Would it not be reasonable and legitimate to debit the Railway Department with the cost of the wharves, out of which the Railway Department makes an income? Then the Railway Department receives about £890,000 from the general public. I would like to know how much of that is for carrying contractors' material.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: £47,000.

MR. SIMPSON: That is for the carriage of material, for which contractors have to pay freight?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is included. We have to give delivery at a base.

MR. SIMPSON: For Coolgardie you deliver at Northam?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: For the Menzies line we deliver at Kalgoorlie.

MR. SIMPSON: Is that the rule in all contracts?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes, always.

MR. SIMPSON: I was informed, on what I regarded as unimpeachable authority, that it was not so. The country would be neither richer nor poorer for knowing what the Railway Department receives from the general public. We are told that the income from the railways is more than sufficient to pay the whole interest on our national debt, and it would be acting wisely if in the future the railway accounts were dissected, so as to show the proportion of revenue received in each particular way. I regret very much to learn that the condition of the Government tanks between the coast and the goldfields is so unsatisfactory. None more than the Opposition would welcome a rainfall which would fill all those tanks. A large proportion of the success of the Railways administration depends on a permanent water supply, and for that supply the country is entirely dependent on Providence. I should like to inquire whether the Railway Department has been debited with the cost of all the tanks from which the locomotives are supplied with water.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes.

MR. SIMPSON: Then I should like to inquire the date from which interest and sinking fund in connection with public works are charged. Are the charges made from the date when the works are taken over from the contractor, or is it usual to wait three years from that date before charging interest and sinking fund?

THE PREMIER: The Treasury does not keep an account against each work, but deals with the charges as a whole.

MR. SIMPSON: Is it a fact that interest is not charged for three years?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We must charge it before three years.

THE PREMIER: We charge interest against consolidated revenue every six months.

MR. SIMPSON: I know you charge interest against consolidated revenue because you have to pay it. Do you charge interest to the particular work?

THE PREMIER: In the Treasury we do not do that.

MR. SIMPSON: Is it done in the Railway Department?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Interest is charged from the date of the taking over of the works, as is shown by the Railways and Tramways annual Report. The total amount spent on construction and equipment in 1890 was £833,083; in 1896, the amount was £2,316,824; and in 1897, £3,784,477.

MR. SIMPSON: If it is not done, we are living in a fool's paradise. We are telling the public that the income from the railways would pay the interest on the whole of our national debt.

THE PREMIER: I told you all about that the other night.

MR. SIMPSON: The Premier tells us a lot of things we do not want to know; but the way in which he replied to a question on this point is unparalleled in the Parliaments of Australia. The idea of begrudging information to members of Parliament, who are responsible to the people for the conduct of public business!

THE PREMIER: The information is for the public.

MR. SIMPSON: The inquiry was made in the interests of the public; and the only object I can imagine for withholding the information is to conceal the names of the people who get the plunder. The Premier knows to what I refer.

THE PREMIER: I am quite innocent, I assure you.

MR. SIMPSON: So far as I am informed, the trip of the Premier to London was an eye-opener for him, especially in the matter of the Great Southern Railway bonds. No one accuses the Government of any ill-intention in connection with this matter, but the subsequent tremendous fall in the value of the colony's securities showed what an appalling mistake was the issue of those bonds. The Government accepted a

verbal promise that £1,100,000 worth of bonds would be put on the market under Government auspices only. The gentleman who made the promise took the bonds, and realised as quickly as he could.

THE PREMIER: He lost by it.

MR. SIMPSON: The Government ought to have known that those with whom they were dealing owed the colony a grudge. If there were any people against whom precautions should have been taken, these were the Great Southern Railway people.

THE PREMIER: You helped to pass the Bill, and did not say anything then.

MR. SIMPSON: I helped to pass the Bill, imagining the Premier had used some of that caution he is always trying to inculcate in this House.

THE PREMIER: We all have to learn.

MR. SIMPSON: When I find I have been wrong, the Premier cannot blame me for taking extra care in the future.

THE PREMIER: I hope you will.

MR. SIMPSON: The blunder cost the country thousands. South Australia has had some great public men who have done wonders with a very poor country. That colony floated a loan, the success of which rendered disgraceful and ridiculous the reception given to Western Australia on the market a few months later.

THE PREMIER: The market was better when the South Australian loan was raised than it was when we asked for a loan.

MR. SIMPSON: The market was reduced from $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. to 2 per cent. We got the hint we were over-borrowing, and a wise hint it was to give us. I emulate the Premier in his magnificent belief in this country, but he was over-running the constable.

THE PREMIER: You had better come over to the Government side and help us.

MR. SIMPSON: I was glad to hear the Premier give a little warning to people who are everlastingly running to the Treasury. The self-help of the community is being sapped. We cannot imagine the Premier refusing £200 or £500 for this or that public work, and it is to be hoped the pinch of poverty will teach him caution. I promised I never would hamper the Premier, and I have never been a mendicant at the door of the Treasury. As representatives of the people, we are the trustees of the welfare

of this country, and our desire should be to build our political reputation on something greater and sounder than the mere distribution of "loaves and fishes." When one considers that the hon. member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason), who has only been a few months in Parliament, has succeeded in filching over £10,000 from the Treasury, it is seen what a capacious maw Government supporters have. We know what log-rolling has done for Victoria. That is a colony I admire immensely, and pity in her misfortunes. But while there is much that we can learn from Victoria as to methods of developing a country, we can learn more from her mistakes, in view of the terrible disasters which have followed log-rolling there. As to the question of salaries, raised by the Estimates, I never interfere with £10 or £15 increases. One would have thought that the Premier, with all his experience of the troubles which arise under this head, would, before now, have brought in a Civil Service Bill.

THE PREMIER: We shall have to do that soon.

MR. SIMPSON: The Premier has unpleasant duties to perform in connection with public service salaries. It is a matter I do not care to have anything to do with. My idea is that the ablest men, and men of the best character in the land, should be drawn to the public service, and receive remuneration sufficient to satisfy their present needs, and leave their future in no way imperilled. I am glad to notice that there is an item of a quarter of a million sterling down on the Estimates for water supply on our goldfields. We are not yet out of the difficulty in connection with that, and I hope that that sum will be spent with celerity, as summer is approaching, and whether we recognise it or not, the summer is king. I hope more benefit will be secured from the expenditure of this money than has accrued from the expenditure of money in the past. I believe the Mint will prove of unalloyed advantage to this colony. Although it will entail some small expense, it will prove an enormous saving to the goldfields, where people have been hitherto charged extortionate rates for sending their gold away to Victoria. I would, however, suggest a further alteration in the plans. Our exports do

not assume the dimensions I would like them to. Gold is answering splendidly for all our requirements, but I am sorry the pastoral industry does not keep up with it. I hope that, when the Land Bill is introduced into this House, it will be framed on proper lines. The basis of land tenure should be "improvement with residence." So long as a man improves his land, he should be allowed to have it for nothing.

THE PREMIER: You must get revenue from somewhere.

MR. SIMPSON: It is better to give a man land, provided you can get him to settle on it, and trust to your railways and other sources for your revenue, than to saddle him with rent. The Premier has told us that everything is sound. I am a sanguine man, but the Premier's experience does not put him in a position of realising the stress and strain that this community is going through at the present time. I can assure the right hon. gentleman, without wishing in any sense to be a croaker, that I speak with exact knowledge—and I refer to the commercial and mining men in the House to support me—when I say that there is as near a commercial panic in Perth and Fremantle as possible. I appeal to the member for the Canning. [MR. WILSON: Hear, hear.] I go further than that, and say we are on the verge of an unemployed difficulty. No less than 56 applications were received before 7 o'clock in the morning, the other day in this city, for an appointment of a not very high grade. It is no use living in a fool's paradise. We should "face the music." The extreme tension in our financial circles, and the panic—

THE PREMIER: What is causing any panic? Not the expenditure of the Government.

MR. SIMPSON: I am not giving any explanation nor assigning any cause, but I consider that something may be due to the policy of the Government in connection with the public works and buildings. The Government would have been much wiser if they had not gone into competition with private enterprise; raising the price of bricks, raising the price of timber, and raising the price of labour. I am informed that the Director of Public Works paid 10s. a day to one man for ordinary labour.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : I paid 8s. a day, and refused to pay more. I can prove it.

MR. SIMPSON : A railway contractor asked me how he could compete with the Government when they were paying 10s. a day for ordinary labour. There is no doubt the position of things is very serious.

THE PREMIER : What is the reason? What has it to do with the Government?

MR. SIMPSON : I am not an alarmist. Our mining developments have lately been the admiration of the world, and the possibilities in connection with the expansion of our timber industry are immense; agricultural settlement is going on in a way that is making us become hopeful about the future; but the Government are hard up. [THE PREMIER : No.] The Director of Public Works informed us to-night, as also in his report, which reached us the same night as the Premier's speech, that we were on the verge of big dismissals. What does that mean here? In the other colonies men can trump across the border when they lose their employment, and try to get work there; but here it is not so. The Premier has always been in the receipt of public money. He has lived on jam all his life, and he does not know the stress and the strain that men have to undergo in fighting for existence. I am not speaking of the instincts of his heart. I know they are good, but he does not realise the position of things here to-day. The one advantage of the goldfields is that round about there we have areas for the employment of hundreds of men. It is a great estate in this colony. With regard to the Government policy for the future, I hope the Minister in charge of the Post and Telegraph Department, will realise that this House will always be generous in regard to any extensions he may make. We should place our settlers in the back blocks in close touch with the world. I do not think the committee would be parsimonious in doing anything in this direction. But I think the time has come for the abandonment of that miserable urgent telegram system which is in force here. It is an injury to the business of the country. People in Melbourne and Sydney say, "We cannot do business with Western Australia; we have no system of urgent telegrams here,

and South Australia gets the information before us." What is the wretched income from the system? Is it so much that the system should be continued? If I am a poor man and want to wire to some relations to come to me, being in trouble and distress, and I go into the telegraph office with my shilling, I have to stand aside for the man who comes along and can afford to pay 2s. for his message. I cannot be attended to until the man who can afford to pay has had his wants supplied. The system is unjust from the very beginning. In connection with the Education Department, I hope the Minister will become enthusiastic. The educational system of the country has no friend in the Premier: no opportunity does he miss to decry it. I hope the Minister will remember that the people of the country endow him with the means to establish a national system of education, which should become a credit to every man who lives in Western Australia. My confidence in the country grows every year, but when things are not too bright I do not say they are bright; I do not preach peace when there is no peace. But I will repeat, my confidence in the country grows year by year, but my confidence in the methods of the Ministry grows less. When we realise that there was an excess expenditure last year of £619,000, we are wont to remember that it is only a few years ago that the Colonial Treasurer in a timid, apologetic kind of way came down to the House and introduced a wretched little Excess Bill for £5,000: now he comes boldly before the House with an Excess Bill of £619,000. I have no hesitation in saying, after looking through that Bill, that the Treasury chest was largely used to debauch the electors at the last elections.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell) : I had no intention of speaking in this debate; but, after the remarks of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson), I consider it my duty to put members right in regard to certain statements relating to my department. I am sure hon. members will appreciate my motives when I say that I cannot allow myself to pose as a martyr at the expense of my respected chief (the Premier). The hon. member who has just sat down spoke of me with

great kindness—although I sometimes hardly recognise whether he is speaking in jest or earnest—and has stated that my department had been juggled out of its estimates. I want to point out that this is not correct. Any mistake made in that matter was entirely due to my own inexperience, and to my interpreting the Premier's request too literally. I can promise hon. members that I will not so offend in the future. Reference has been made to the Lands Department being starved and it has been said the work will not be carried out properly. I want to disabuse the minds of hon. members on this point, that although these Estimates will not give us as much money as we would like, yet the work of the department will be carried on by myself and my officers as well as possible. After the kind expressions of hon. members, and the disapproval some have expressed in regard to the scanty allowance placed upon the Estimates for the work of the Lands Department, I feel justified in the expectation that the House will, as a consequence, welcome a very liberal Excess Bill when presented next session. I hope to have the pleasure next year of bringing it forward, in regard to excesses in my department. I do ask hon. members to be a little more generous; and I feel it my duty to make these remarks, when you consider the life the Premier has lately led. If time had permitted to go thoroughly into all these matters, there would doubtless have been a much larger amount of money allotted to my department; and I can promise that all the money that is absolutely required for it will be expended. I object very strongly to being made to pose as a martyr, against my will; and though I quite recognise that some of the criticism is prompted by a kindly feeling towards me and my department, yet I cannot help seeing that, with some members, the real object is to make political capital out of this incident.

MR. LEAKE: We admire your loyalty.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: As has been said by the last speaker, we have not enough money to satisfactorily deal with the rabbit question; but I believe we have enough money, at any rate, to investigate the evil; so that if the question becomes as serious as some members seem to expect, a remedy

will have to be found for it. I want to say that I recognise, and the Government recognise, the great danger attendant on an incursion of rabbits, though I believe it would not be attended with such dire consequences in Western Australia as have followed in other colonies. Still, it is too serious a matter to trifle with; and I want to assure the committee that I and other Ministers are imbued with an earnest desire to deal with this danger in the most practical fashion that is possible. While I had no intention of speaking on this occasion, yet I could not keep silence whilst the hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) was making such statements as that my department had been juggled out of its rights. I wish, in conclusion, to thank hon. members for the kind sentiments they have expressed towards me, and I only hope that next year they will find further opportunities for praising the Lands Department. It is pleasing to feel that they understand me and appreciate my motives; but do not let us land one at the expense of another. I have pleasure in saying a few honest and earnest words in defence, if defence were needed, of the right hon. the Treasurer.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): My first duty is to thank hon. members for the way in which they have dealt with the Financial Statement which I had the pleasure of introducing to the House a short time ago. I may say that I do not intend my thanks to apply to everyone in the House, for before I sit down I shall have to say some things that will not be quite consistent with that; but, generally, I think the Government have no cause to be dissatisfied with the reception the House has given to the statement of the financial position of the colony, as placed before them by myself on the 16th of last month. Of course it will be understood that, in taking up the time of the committee, my object is to review those observations adverse to the Government, which have been made in this debate. For those which have been made in support of the Government, we are, of course, very grateful, and we thoroughly appreciate them; and the only reason why I intrude on the committee, at the present time, is to refute the criticisms and rebut the observ-

ations made by those hon. members—very few, I am glad to say—who have taken up a position antagonistic to the Government. I may state that with the exception perhaps of some few remarks on the subject by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), who, I am sorry to see, is not in his place to hear what I have to say about his observations, and with the exception also of some observations made by the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), which I am much obliged for, I must say there has been no real review of the Financial Statement placed before hon. members. If the time ever arrives, as I have no doubt it will, when I occupy a position on the Opposition benches, and when some other Government brings forward a budget speech such as I delivered last month, if I am then as much opposed to the financial policy of the Government as are the two members opposite, I shall have something more to say on the subject from that side than they have said concerning this Financial Statement. It comes to this, that hon. members on that side of the House, while setting themselves out to criticise the Government, have not taken the trouble—I do not deny them the ability, but they have not taken the trouble—to investigate the matter so as to deal with it in a broad and reasonable way.

MR. LEAKE: You gave us only a week.

THE PREMIER: A few petty details and personal observations seem to be the sum-total of what the leader of the Opposition thought fit to address to hon. members when dealing with the financial position of this great country. I do not know what his reason is for adopting that course. I put it down to his taking no trouble to deal with the financial question, although it is a question presenting ample room for difference of opinion and argument. It may, however, be incompetence, arising from his lack of experience in public finances.

MR. SIMPSON: It is lack of brains.

THE PREMIER: I would not like to say that. I believe the hon. member for Albany has brains, if he would only apply them. Certainly, in dealing with the financial position of the colony, he, from my point of view, made but a sorry exhibition.

MR. LEAKE: It has had a singular effect on you.

THE PREMIER: I am not going to deal flippantly with the financial question. I am in a responsible position as trustee for the public finances, and I am determined, as heretofore, to approach the question in all seriousness. The leader of the Opposition tried to show that my calculation as to the increase in the population had not been realised. But I cannot look into the future and tell what is going to happen in years to come. I can only give an opinion, based on surrounding circumstances and my own judgment. Up to the end of June last year, at any rate, I was not far out, if out at all, in regard to the population of the colony. That is the period I was speaking of, though my calculations come up to the 30th September. In some speech, a year or fifteen months ago, I said the population was likely to increase at the rate of 3,000 persons a month. In my Financial Statement on 16th November, I showed that the population had so increased during the financial year ending June, 1897. I also showed that the increase in the first three months of the current year was 4,000 or 5,000. That, of course, is not such an increase as I had estimated; but the year is not closed yet. There are many reasons why population does not increase so quickly in one part of the year as in another; and it will be time to twit me with being wrong when the year 1897-8 expires. Until that time, I shall live in hope that the population of the country will go on increasing at a reasonable rate.

MR. SIMPSON: Three thousand a month?

THE PREMIER: I hope there will be as great an increase of population in 1897-8 as there was in 1896-7. I am not going to say that such an increase will come to pass. I cannot catch people by the throat and say, "You shall come here and shall stay here." I have not the gift of prophecy, but must rely on facts as they exist. I can only estimate, and, if I should prove wrong, I cannot help it. The leader of the Opposition seems to take a delight in the fact that I was out in my calculations. If he were really patriotic and honest, he would express great regret that what was foretold by the Government has not been realised.

MR. SIMPSON : We get enough of that from Government supporters.

THE PREMIER : The object of the leader of the Opposition is to show that I was out in my calculations. That, however, he cannot do until the financial year expires. If I should prove to be wrong, I shall regret it, as will every man in the country. It would be a fact the Opposition ought to regret, and not one they should gloat over, as the leader of the Opposition seemed inclined to gloat over it in his address the other night.

MR. LEAKE : We can both regret and gloat.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member says he will do both. I have no doubt he will, but I am not afraid of the hon. member. The hon. member seemed to direct all his attention to attacking the Director of Public Works and Commissioner of Railways. Because my hon. colleague spent a lot of money last year, the hon. member seemed to think that he spent it without authority from the House, whereas, as a matter of fact, both in regard to loan expenditure and in regard to the consolidated expenditure, he was within his estimate.

MR. LEAKE : I rise in explanation.

THE PREMIER : I do not think the hon. member is in order in interrupting me.

MR. LEAKE : What I said was not against the expenditure of last year, but against the estimate of the hon. gentleman's expenditure for the coming year, for the year ending 1898.

THE PREMIER : My memory does not serve in the direction the hon. gentleman states. He referred to the expenditure of the past year and the coming year, and also to the Excess Bill. He seemed to think that my colleague was spending money without the authority of this House. As a matter of fact, the total expenditure did not exceed the amount on the Appropriation Act ; and the Commissioner of Railways spent less out of the consolidated revenue and also out of loan than he was authorised by the Appropriation Act to spend. In regard to the Excess Bill, it may be said of us, in the words of the Prayer Book, that "we have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." That is about it.

We have not done some things which the House authorised us to do, and we have done other things in their place which we were not authorised to do. We are responsible for that, and, when the Excess Bill is before the House, if we cannot justify ourselves for the way in which we have spent the money, it will be for the House to deal with us. I think we can justify everything. I see nothing that will cause any grave censure from hon. members. I think the exceptional conditions of the colony and the exigencies of our position will prove our justification. It seems to be an unfortunate thing that the district of Bunbury should have as its member the Premier of the colony, because, if there is an opportunity, hon. members seem to sneer and laugh whenever the name of Bunbury is mentioned. I think it is a matter to be regretted that hon. members, in advocating the claims of their own district, should refer to mine. I do not think that is the way we ought to act. I never sneer or laugh when the name of the principal town of any hon. member's electorate is mentioned, and I fail to see why, when the little town which I am so proud to represent is named, there should be any derisive laughter. There is no doubt that this little village, as it is called, is an important outlet for the produce of a large district, and its natural position gives it a considerable claim for attention. Years ago it was not thought much of, but everyone now acknowledges that it is a natural outlet for a large and important district. I was informed to-night that not many miles from Bunbury—40 miles—there are, my informant said, 3,000 men engaged in the timber trade; and when you put down for each adult man two persons dependent on him, it will be seen that there are several thousands of people living on the timber industry within a short distance of the town of Bunbury. Are these people not entitled to some consideration? Are they not entitled to as much consideration as any other body of people. These men at Bunbury represent a producing industry of the country. Anyone who likes to do down to Bunbury, whether opponent or supporter, will, when he comes back, be satisfied with the work that is being done in the harbour. The expenditure on the work is only small: £27,000 was expended last year and

£30,000 is set down for this year, and everyone who sees the work will be satisfied that we are trying to make a harbour, with the prospect of certain success. If the House by its vote this session, or during any other session, says the work is not justified, then I will at once stop the work, and let the responsibility rest upon hon. members. The Bunbury harbour work has not been agreed upon to-day: last year money was voted for it, and I want to know why the matter is brought up again. The Parliament committed itself to an expenditure of £100,000 for the carrying out of the work, and I believe it is one of the best works from a self-supporting point of view ever undertaken in the colony.

MR. GREGORY: You expended £27,000 on the work last year. Why can you not do with £20,000 this year?

THE PREMIER: I do not think the hon. member is going the right way to work. I am his best friend, and I have been his best friend, and I do not think it is well for him to attack a little work I have a large interest in. This work will do a great deal of good in the country, and will be the means of supporting thousands and tens of thousands of people in a short time. The Bunbury harbour is a great work, and I say to hon. members who have not seen it, go and look at it, and you will come back convinced that it will be profitable.

MR. SIMPSON: The ships that go into the harbour never go out again.

THE PREMIER: With regard to the other small items set down for my district, I never asked for them. With perhaps one exception, the items were on last year's Estimates; the works were not completed, and the money has to be re-voted. In regard to the remarks of the hon. member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly), who took upon himself to say something about the work at Bunbury, I may tell him we have not neglected his district in the past. The Government have spent £100,000 in the Dundas district on public works, and we are spending money there now. But we have not done all he wants, which means the building of a railway at a cost of £300,000, and £50,000 to construct a jetty to carry the locomotives. Because the Government have not decided to carry out these works, the hon. member

tries to compare what has been done in an old-established and settled district which has a large industry at its back with his own district. The hon. member tried to argue in favour of his district in that way. That is not the way to deal with the Government. I say that is not the way to deal with it. Let other districts get what they can. Let them get fair play, and let each member try to do his best for his own district, and you will get my support, as you always have had it; but I want to tell the hon. member that we have not neglected the district he represents, and that we have spent upon it £100,000 more than we have got out of it, so far as revenue is concerned. We spent more money in the Dundas and Esperance Bay districts than we have ever got out of them in revenue. That, of course, is not a very good argument, because I would spend ten times as much if the prospects of the future justified it. We have not been bleeding the district for the benefit of the coffers of the State and giving nothing in return. The hon. member may depend upon it we will try what we can to do justice to his district as well as to others. In regard to public crushers, my friend the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) has pointed out that we are only spending £30,000 on this item instead of £50,000, as promised; but I have told the hon. member that £50,000 will be spent, though we will not require more than £30,000 this financial year. He may depend upon it that we are really in earnest in this matter. We are not taking it up as a political dodge or as a cry, merely intended to serve the passing moment: we are in real earnest, and will start the work as soon as we get the vote. I have opposed any action being taken until we get the vote; but he may depend upon it that, if the project is a success, we will not stop at £30,000 or £50,000: we will go on with it so long as it can be made reproductive, and so long as we are certain that we are doing good work in the interests of this country. So I would not like him to look at this matter from a narrow point of view, by considering whether this district or that one is being equally well treated—let him look at it from a broad principle. This is a great public work.

We are embarked on an immense business which may cost an enormous sum of money ; but, if it will only be productive of good to the community, we will go on with it in the interests of this country. There is no occasion for the hon. member or anyone else in this House to urge me on in this matter. I am a willing horse : I am doing my best for all these districts, and fully recognise that the great development of this colony and the prosperity which has come to it are mainly due to the production of gold. There are, of course, other reasons, too ; but that is the great reason, that is the great motor, and there is no necessity to whip me into activity, for I am willing to do my very best for the goldfields members, knowing that they represent the districts where the greatest of all our exports is produced. In regard to some of the attacks made by our friends opposite, I must refer to the remarks of the hon. members for North Perth (Mr. Oldham), and North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), upon the Government Printer. I regret that they have spoken as they did concerning the Government Printer. I am not going to say that department is absolutely perfect, but I know this, that there is a high-minded, conscientious man at the head of it, who is trying to do his duty, and has done it for many years in this colony ; and I say he does not deserve such treatment, and it is a shame that men like the members for North Perth and North-East Coolgardie should stand up and slander an old and honourable public servant. It ill-becomes anyone in this committee to throw stones at a man who has served the country long and honourably, and grown grey in the public service. I should not be doing my duty in my present position, if I did not protect that officer from insult.

A MEMBER : It was the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) who spoke of the Government Printer.

THE PREMIER : I am referring to the hon. member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham), and speaking of the Printing Department.

MR. VOSPER : I spoke of the Printing Department.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) did not say so much about the Printing

Department, but my remarks apply to him too. Evidences of youth may be absent in the Government Printer—old age may be creeping on—but for rectitude of character and a desire to do his duty, a better man could not be found in the service.

MR. VOSPER : I did not raise the question of rectitude of character.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member spoke of "favouritism" and "incapacity" in connection with the Government Printer, who has dozens of times in the past received the thanks of this House for the faithful manner in which he discharges his duty. This is not the stage at which to deal with items which appear in the Estimates. That should be done as each department comes before the committee for consideration in detail. The Estimates for the Printing Department and the Postal Department will come up by-and-by, and then will be the time for observation on the conduct of the respective heads. Parliamentary privilege was abused the other evening when the committee had to listen for hours to remarks in detail *re* the action of heads of departments.

MR. SIMPSON : The time was taken up by new members.

THE PREMIER : I do not care whether they were old or new members who took up the time. I feel very strongly on this matter. The Postmaster General may have his faults, as we all have, but he is a high-minded, honourable man. He has served under me for many years, and a man who is more precise or has a firmer grasp of all the details of his department could not be found in the public service. I would be wrong if I did not defend this old, honest, and well-tried officer from defamation and insult at the hands of a man who has had no experience in the Parliament of this country.

MR. VOSPER : I have had some experience of the Postmaster General on the goldfields.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member may have had some experience on the goldfields, but he has had no responsibility. No allowance has been made for the great changes which events of recent years have necessitated in the postal department. It is simply wonderful how the Postmaster General has encountered

and surmounted great difficulties, and in a short time effected necessary changes and reforms all over the country. What has this much-abused man done? He has so administered his department under the Government, as to cover this vast country from one end to the other with postal and telegraph services. Yet two new members, who, so to speak, have not been five minutes in the House, take upon themselves to lecture us all, and to insult the Postmaster General and the Government Printer. Such conduct reflects no credit on those hon. members or on the constituencies they represent. I am not going to stand here, in my responsible position, and hear old and well-tried servants abused and insulted.

MR. OLDHAM: All right. We will speak out plainly, too.

THE PREMIER: You can speak out as much as you like, but you will be just where you were the other night.

MR. SIMPSON: We will have an inquiry about land resumption, which the Premier does not know about.

THE PREMIER: I defy the hon. member to put his finger on anything I have ever done in the colony——

MR. SIMPSON: May I be allowed to say that I never implied any doubt as to any action of the Premier; but there is a grave rumour in town about a Government official and land resumption.

THE PREMIER: Who is he? Name him!

SEVERAL MEMBERS (on Government side): Name him!

THE PREMIER: I defy the hon. member to name the official.

MR. SIMPSON: The Postmaster General.

THE PREMIER: The Postmaster General?

MR. SIMPSON: Yes.

THE PREMIER: I do not know anything about it.

MR. SIMPSON: I know you do not.

THE PREMIER: If the Postmaster General has done wrong, the Government will not shield him. I speak of the Postmaster General only from my own experience of him. If I am wrong in the estimate I have formed of a man——

MR. SIMPSON: We do not accuse him of that.

THE PREMIER: Of what do you accuse him? I know nothing about it.

MR. SIMPSON: I know you do not.

THE PREMIER: I know the Postmaster General, after a life-long experience, and speak of him as I know him.

MR. SIMPSON: I never implied anything about you.

THE PREMIER: I apologise. I was a little excited. I do not wish to say anything offensive; but, if I do, I shall be glad to apologise afterwards. The member for Albany spoke about a reduction of the Estimates. I do not believe he will be able to effect any reduction, but I will assist him in his attempt. If there are any reductions to be made in these Estimates without injury to the public service, no one will be more glad than myself.

A MEMBER: Did you not have some trouble with the departments about the Estimates?

THE PREMIER: I have to frame the Estimates, and I cannot come here showing a deficit. I had to return the departmental estimates to the heads of the departments, with instructions to reduce some items, so as to give me a balance. They all did something. Some cut down the estimates not so much as I named, and others cut them down nearly as much as I named. I asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands for £22,000, and he gave me £14,000 out of a total of £90,000. I did not look at them in detail, and they got into the general Estimates in the form in which hon. members now find them there. I have not time to examine every detail, but I have to take care that there is a balance, and I trust to Ministers to do their best to keep their departments within bounds, and I must say that they have worked loyally with me. I can assure hon. members that I have been through every one of these items with every Minister, and if hon. members can find some place where a reduction can be made, I will try and meet their views; but I think very few places will be found where a reduction can be made without injury to the service. Hon. members may give the Government credit for having some knowledge of what has been done and what is required. If there is a place where a reduction can be effected, we shall be glad. I recognise that the expenditure is very large. Some of these works have been commenced, some are

about to be commenced, and it will be difficult to strike out many of them. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) is unfortunately not in his place. No one in the House poses every year as a financial authority as the hon. member does. He can say exactly what the revenue is to be, what the balance is to be, how money is to be obtained and at what price, and is always sure that the Government know nothing whatever about the subject with which they are dealing. There are some fairly good authorities in London, too. I have no doubt that the directors of the London and Westminster Bank are second to none. They have their finger on the financial pulse, certainly as much as any other great financial house in London. The Government have the benefit of their experience and advice. I have told the House to-night that, requiring some funds to carry on, in order to meet our requirements we took advantage of the power given us under the law to place a small loan privately on the London market—not by advertising, not by calling for tenders, because it is not desirable to advertise that we want a sum of £200,000 or £300,000. That would do us no good. These things are not done by advertisement: you go on the market. If a business man wants a little accommodation, he does not publish it in the newspaper that he has gone to his banker. We obtained the money, and I think we did very well, considering all things and the position of Australia at the present time. That we were able to borrow in a small way for our current requirements for a very short term money at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for two years I do not think is bad. I wish I could get money at $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.; I have to pay 7 per cent. for my overdraft, and I suppose other hon. members are in the same position as I am. When we have an opportunity to go on the market for a loan, not for two years but for 40 years, with the option after 20 years of being able to pay it off at any time, giving 12 months' notice—because those are the terms on which our loans have been raised since the Government have been in office—then we will advertise it throughout the world. But I do not think it will do us any good to publish it to the world that the Government have to get a temporary advance of

half a million. It would be better to wait until we get a permanent loan, and then we will advertise it all over the world. There is nothing advantageous in informing everybody what we are doing. The result of this little advance is excellent, and it is well to know that we can get half a million when we want it. The hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) seemed to think that the Government will have, at the end of the year, a deficiency. I do not think we shall. We shall watch how we are going on, and if the revenue does not come up to our expectations, we shall curtail the expenditure. I do not think it is desirable to have a deficiency, but supposing we had a deficiency of say £200,000 in a revenue of two millions and a half, I do not think that would be a serious matter: we could pay it off the next year. But it is not advisable to have a deficiency—we have never had any deficiency yet—and the object of the Government will be to prevent anything of the sort. We shall curtail the expenditure if we find the revenue not coming up to expectations. The hon. member for Central Murchison said a lot about how the people were taxed in this country. The Government have never increased the taxation. The public pay no more taxes than did the people who were here in 1891, before the colony was under Responsible Government. But the Government have reduced the taxation. We have the duty off tea, sugar, mining machinery and implements. The hon. member for Central Murchison referred to the fact that when the question of another Minister was proposed in the House, it was expected that the Public Works and Railways Departments would have been separated. Some hon. members expressed that opinion; but to say it was thoroughly understood that the departments would be separated, I deny that. I quite agree that two such large departments might well be divided, but it is easy to see why attention has not been given to the matter. I have been away to England and to several of the colonies, but I intend to give my attention to the question before we meet next session. Some arrangement, somewhat in accord with what the hon. member said, might be arrived at. I believe there should be a fairer adjustment of

work. The Works and Railways Departments are big, and there is very trying and arduous labour in connection with them. The Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works has too much anxious and trying work to do, and we must try and so arrange the departments that the work may be more equally divided amongst us. Reference has also been made to members coming to Ministers, and getting consideration. It goes without saying that if a member of Parliament comes to a Minister to ask for something for his constituents, the first desire of that Minister will be to see how far he can meet his wishes. The member is not asking for a favour for himself, but for the people he represents, and I think it is quite right that every consideration should be shown to members of Parliament by Ministers in regard to their requests, and, if it is possible, their wishes should be met. I quite agree with those members who have said that a time is coming when we cannot please everybody. We have to say "No" sometimes, and there is no doubt about it that, unless our coffers are very full, as in the years gone by and during last year—unless our revenue goes on increasing at an enormous rate far above our estimates, we shall be unable to comply, as we have done in times past, with all the requests of hon. members. When the time comes that the revenue will only be capable of keeping pace with the expenditure, it will be absolutely necessary for Ministers to say "No," in order that a deficiency may not occur. My hon. friend the Commissioner of Crown Lands, in defending himself to-night, took, I think, rather too serious a view of the attacks made upon him. I have no doubt his feeling was this; that for all the energy and trouble and anxiety which he had displayed in trying to put his department on a proper footing, he did not deserve these attacks and misrepresentations, and that his feelings were somewhat hurt by them. The hon. member's answer should have been this: Look at the Railway Department; look at what it is opening up; look at the revenue it has produced! There is the result of my work; there is the success of my administration; and it is certainly due to my department that the railways have been able to make such a large con-

tribution to the revenue of the country. That is the answer the hon. member had to give, and I give it for him. I say the hon. member has no reason to be ashamed, but that, on the contrary, he should be well satisfied with the result of all his work and all his anxiety and all his trouble, and that he stands before the country as one who has most efficiently administered this department during the past year, and made a considerable profit for the colony. I noticed that the railways were not attacked; and with regard to the harbour works, I think they are in a far better position than they were a year or six months ago. The hon. the Director of Public Works has had, for a long time, to devote himself almost exclusively to railways; but I believe he is now giving more attention to the Public Works, because the railways are on a satisfactory footing. I would like to inform the hon. members for Albany (Mr. Leake) and Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) and members generally, that we do not want to spend money for the sake of spending it—in fact, I am most anxious that we should not do so. I am sure that during the last few months I must have been very troublesome to all my colleagues in asking them not to spend more than was absolutely necessary; and, if we can save money in this country at the present time, by refraining from undertaking unnecessary works, then I shall be only too glad to assist my colleagues and other hon. members in not spending it. In regard to the Excess Bill, which the hon. member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) made so much of, it is unnecessary to say that the demands and interests of the country increased so much that it would have been foolish if we had not complied with them by spending this money. When this Bill comes up will be the time for me to defend the expenditure on the various items.

A MEMBER: There was no authority for the expenditure.

THE PREMIER: True, there was no authority for the expenditure. The overdraft was £600,000, but there were underdrafts amounting to £480,000. [MR. LEAKE: No.] The hon. member says "No." In the first place we only spent £120,000 more than we had authority to spend. I will tell the hon.

member something of which, perhaps, he has no idea. Had I chosen to take advantage of the law, I could have transferred this £480,000 against the £600,000, and have shown an excess expenditure of only £119,000. That is done in other colonies, but I have never taken that course, and never will. Every item of expenditure on behalf of the State is presented to this House, in order that members may see where the excess expenditure is. In the Auditor General's report, part of which I have seen, it will, I believe, be pointed out that the law is as I have stated.

A MEMBER: It is a bad law.

THE PREMIER: I do not know that. The money is all in one departmental vote. If you have an excess vote for pannikins, and so much is required for frying-pans, I do not see why some of the excess vote should not be taken from pannikins and expended on frying-pans. At any rate, the law is as I have stated; and all I wish to say is that the Government have not taken advantage of that law. As to the speech of the hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson), I do not know whether to say much against it. Some parts of the speech I was pleased with, and other parts I was not. There was nothing, however, which brought home to my mind that he is a great financier. That, I believe, is his reputation in the city.

A MEMBER: That is not his reputation.

THE PREMIER: Then I beg the hon. member's pardon: I thought he was versed in the science of finance. At any rate, the hon. member, when making his speech, posed as a financier, and said "the money was taken out of the people's pockets." Anybody would think the Government caught hold of a man, grabbed the money out of his pocket, and then putting the money into their own pocket, stuck to it. What is the real fact? The money comes out of the people's pockets, and then, as the Government distribute it, the money goes back to the people.

MR. SIMPSON: That is what makes every member rich, I suppose.

THE PREMIER: The Government do not keep the money, but spend it; and the Government not only distribute money contributed by the people of the

colony, but borrow hundreds of thousands of pounds and distribute that here also.

MR. SIMPSON: Then your policy of borrowing money makes us rich?

THE PREMIER: The cry—and it is a poor cry—about the Government taking the money "out of the people's pockets," is humbug. The money is distributed again on public works throughout the country, for the needs and benefit of the people.

MR. GEORGE: But the same people do not get the money back.

THE PREMIER: What I find most fault with, in the speeches of the hon. member for Geraldton and the hon. member for Albany, is that, though they are sometimes in the right, they generally indicate a want of faith in the country.

MR. LEAKE: No, no; that is deliberate misrepresentation.

THE PREMIER: Although those hon. members, in one part of their remarks, said they had faith in the country, their words, previously and afterwards, would lead people to believe the State was in financial difficulties—that we were on the brink of a financial precipice. [MR. LEAKE: And so you are.] That is the conclusion I draw from the speeches of the hon. member for Geraldton and the hon. member for Albany, and it is to the tone adopted by them I have great objection. I have not misquoted the hon. members, as shown by the interjection of the leader of the Opposition.

MR. LEAKE: You do not misquote me. I think you are in trouble.

THE PREMIER: Then I say the hon. member knows nothing about it, and that his assertion is not founded on fact. Hon. members have all the information I had for the purpose of compiling the statement I presented to the committee on the 16th November. All the information before me then is on the table at the present time. I say he is a traitor to his country, in trying to defame it. When an unexampled period of prosperity has come upon us, which has raised every one of us from the position we occupied to a position of far greater importance, owing to the progress of this country and the policy of this Parliament since we assumed the government of our own affairs, how can the hon. member say that we are on the verge of ruin? He is a

defamer of this colony, and has no business to be here representing a constituency in this House.

MR. SIMPSON: I spoke more in sorrow than in anger.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member for Geraldton complained that we had not a Civil Service Bill. I am quite in accord with him in that. I would like to get rid of all patronage. I do not want any: it is a perfect nuisance. People from all over the world write to me asking for work. Before I get away from my house in the morning I am deluged with applications. People seem to think that if only they can get a letter to the Premier, they are sure of a billet. I want to be relieved of the trouble and worry in connection with it. People seem to think I have any amount of billets to give away, whereas the contrary is the case. During the seven years we have had Responsible Government in this colony we have been trying to advance the interests of Western Australia in every possible way; but because we have not been able to do everything that has been done by colonies which have had self-government for 40 years, hon. members find fault. We must try and deal with the different problems before us as fast as we can. It will be a good thing when the civil service is modelled on proper lines. Whether the civil servants themselves will be financial gainers by the change I am not so sure. It will probably stop these annual increases, which I would be only too glad to give if I had the money. The member for Geraldton said we ought to get on with the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Does he remember the speech he made last year in regard to that? There never was such an attack made on a scheme as he made on that in this House. Now, one would think he was a great supporter of it. He tried to instil in the minds of the people, both here and in England, that there was no necessity for such a scheme; that the people did not want it. He delivered a speech in which he quoted the opinion of Captain Oats against the scheme. Had Captain Oats been a deity, the member for Geraldton could not have spoken of him in higher terms. He called him "the great mining engineer," and so forth. The hon. member now admits that he was wrong. He did his

best to block the scheme a year ago, but, like many of his methods, his opposition was not rewarded with success, and I think he is very glad now that it failed.

MR. SIMPSON: I said it should not be done by private enterprise.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member said it was not wanted, and now he has to admit it is wanted. That is only a shuffle of the cards. If such a calamity should happen in this country, and the persons in power were deposed and went over to the other side of the House, they would find the hon. member in his place advocating the scheme and taking possession of it as if he were the originator of it. That is what I think would happen. I myself do not profess to be the originator of the scheme. Then the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) says, with delight, "We are going to knock down the Estimates: we will do it." Anyone would think the hon. member only had to say "do it," and it was done. Why, the hon. gentleman has scarcely a follower in the House. I do not think the member for Geraldton would follow him in all things: he goes out to avoid defeat, sometimes.

MR. LEAKE: We beat you the other night, though.

THE PREMIER: Did you? It must have been something very bad we were advocating, if you beat us. The hon. member says he is going to cut down the Estimates. That means that the hon. member and his followers are going to stop public works and throw men out of employment in this country.

MR. SIMPSON: The hon. member for Albany said that to encourage land settlement, he was going to cut down the public works.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member says at one time he is going to cut down the Estimates half a million, and then he says he will cut them down by £100,000.

MR. LEAKE: I said, take away from the Works and give to the Lands.

THE PREMIER: That is what the hon. member is going to do: he is going to give the Commissioner of Crown Lands more money to spend, but he does not say how. The hon. member does not say how, and I do not think he cares how. But if the hon. member is going to cut down the Esti-

mates, I think he will find it a difficult thing: if he can do it without effecting injury, I shall be glad.

MR. LEAKE: You will "climb down."

THE PREMIER: I never "climb down." It is generally said I am one of the strongest supporters of the statement that gold is a factor in our prosperity, but there are men in this House who would make people believe that gold alone has done all that has been done in this country. I said before, and I say again, it is not so. The gold has done a lot, but if we had had no public-spirited works policy, people would have been going in a four-wheeler to Coolgardie now. The public works policy of the country and the borrowing of money, the introduction of six millions of British gold, the building of railways and telegraphs—all these things, in conjunction with the production of the gold, has made the country what it is. These things, working together, have encouraged the agricultural and timber and every other industry in the country. Hon. members know that there are thousands of men working now, where they could not get work before. That has happened all along the coast line from Bunbury to Bridgetown. Thousands of men are working in the timber industry, and the industry will go on increasing as long as the Government give cheap means of transit. I would like to know what reason there is in this colony to be alarmed. Are we all going stark staring mad in this place? Do we not know what the condition of affairs was a few years ago, when we had a revenue of only £400,000 and a population of 50,000, whereas now we have an estimate made by persons who know something about it, who certainly have brought some knowledge and experience to bear on the question, showing that the population of the colony is over 160,000, with a revenue of £3,000,000. Who is going to be alarmed? It is nonsensical for people to talk about the country being in difficulties, when such good fortune has come upon us. I do not mean to say that everyone is overflowing with riches. There are speculators in this place who are trying to make money, and some of them may lose it. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) may find himself in the same

position, if he makes what he calls "a plunge," and it does not come off; but he must not blame the country for that. It will not be the fault of the country, but the fault of his mistaken judgment. Perhaps his judgment is as good as that of other people, but still his anticipations have not been realised: and I think, from the way the hon. member spoke to-night, something of this sort must have overtaken him recently, for he seemed very depressed and alarmed to-night in regard to the condition of the colony. The hon. member referred to what I said yesterday in the Perth Town Hall. I certainly had an opportunity of speaking there, but I did not mention anyone's name, and I find that the newspapers did not report me. But, for the information of the hon. member, if he likes to hear it again, I may say that I told those present that I did not believe in whining croakers—that I did not believe in people who, when an area of prosperity comes upon us, go whining and croaking about because some little difficulty has to be faced. The only use of difficulties is to show a man's grit, and his ability to overcome them. That is how we have to confront them. The hon. member said something about the pleasant nature of my experiences through life. But I have had a hard struggle, too. I have worked as a labouring man in this country for a year or two in my youth, with axe and spade, and I do not think the hon. member ever did much of that, by the look of him. I should not like to do it again; but if I had my youth back I would not be afraid of the work. I have not been brought up in the lap of luxury, but have had to be careful and cautious all my life. The hon. member talked about a "panic in the place." That is why I think there must be a panic in the hon. member. I have never heard of any panic in this country. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. Solomon) must also, I think, have made a bad speculation lately, because he said "Hear, hear." I do not know what has happened to the hon. member's district, or why he should have said "Hear, hear," to the remark that there was a panic in the city. Yet he denies that he has defamed the country, although he tells us that there is a panic raging.

MR. A. FORREST: That is in the share market.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member ought to be more cautious, and not blame the colony for his own acts. In conclusion, I again thank hon. members for the reception given to the Estimates. I rely on the good sense of hon. members to consider the votes carefully in committee. No one will be more pleased than myself if any of the votes can be reduced, providing that by the reduction the interests of the colony are not injured. There is no reason whatever for us to be other than delighted at the prospect before the country. We are not going to have gold dropping into our mouths or attain the millenium all at once; but if the affairs of the country are looked after with care, economy, and a reasonable amount of caution, I believe that no disaster will ever come upon us.

Vote—*His Excellency the Governor*, £1,160—put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

BANKRUPTCY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council, and, on the motion of MR. LEAKE, read a first time.

AUCTIONEERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council, and, on the motion of Mr. MORAN, read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 12.6 midnight until the next Monday.

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 6th December, 1897.

Public Business: Ministerial Statement—Papers presented—Question: South Quay, Fremantle—Question: Volunteer Corps for Kalgoorlie, and Head Quarters Band Trip to Albany—Question: Candidates' Expenses at Elections—Inebriates Bill: first reading—Legal Practitioners Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Return: Boulder Post Office Business—Return: Military Trip to Albany—Auctioneers Act Further Amendment Bill: second reading: in committee Public Notaries Bill: in committee—Circuit Courts Bill: in committee—Workmen's Lien Bill: in committee—Roads and Streets Closure Bill: second reading—Annual Estimates: in Committee of Supply (resumed)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7.30 o'clock p.m.

PRAYERS.

PUBLIC BUSINESS—MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I wish to say a few words to members generally with regard to the amount of business we are to try to undertake and complete during the present session. There have been many incidents during the year which have delayed the usual session of Parliament. The year is now fast drawing to a close, and I have been spoken to by several members in regard to whether an effort cannot be made to complete a sufficient amount of our business to enable us to prorogue before Christmas. I am informed, and feel quite sure, that it will be very inconvenient to members to have to return to their duties in this House after the Christmas holidays; and it has occurred to me that an arrangement might be arrived at, by which we could finish the more important part of the work, while the Government might undertake to call Parliament together earlier in the next year than has been usual. If we were to meet next year about the first week in June, we should be in session a month longer than usual before the end of the financial year; and those of the Bills now tabled which we are not able to complete, and those additional Bills which will be laid on the table before Christmas, might well be considered immediately after we meet again. Of course the Government do not wish to unduly press this upon the House;