

division taken with the following result:—

| | |
|------|---|
| Ayes | 9 |
| Noes | 7 |

Majority for 2

| Ayes. | Noes. |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Hon. R. G. Burges | Hon. H. Briggs |
| Hon. F. T. Crowder | Hon. D. K. Congdon |
| Hon. C. E. Dempster | Hon. A. G. Jenkins |
| Hon. R. S. Haynes | Hon. W. T. Loton |
| Hon. S. J. Haynes | Hon. C. A. Piesse |
| Hon. A. B. Kidson | Hon. G. Randell |
| Hon. J. E. Richardson | Hon. J. W. Hackett |
| Hon. F. M. Stone | (Teller). |
| Hon. W. Spencer | |

(Teller).

Amendment passed.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: In view of this important division, will the Colonial Secretary move the adjournment of the House, in order that the Government may consider what proceedings they propose to take?

HON. R. S. HAYNES: I object to the hon. member interposing with such a request. We are met here as men, and not as children to play.

Main question—that the Address-in-Reply, as amended, be adopted—put, and division taken, with the following result:—

| | |
|------|---|
| Ayes | 9 |
| Noes | 7 |

Majority for 2

| Ayes. | Noes. |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Hon. R. G. Burges | Hon. H. Briggs |
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| Hon. J. E. Richardson | Hon. G. Randell |
| Hon. W. Spencer | Hon. J. W. Hackett |
| Hon. F. M. Stone | (Teller). |
| Hon. R. S. Haynes | |

(Teller).

Address, as amended, passed.

THE PRESIDENT: I have to inform hon. members that I have communicated with His Excellency, and he will be pleased to receive the Address at noon to-morrow. That completes the business of the House.

ADJOURNMENT.

On the motion of the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the House adjourned at 6.30 p.m. until noon of the next day.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 23rd June, 1898.

Papers presented—Question: Miners' Rights and Mineral Licenses—Address-in-Reply: Mr. Leake's Amendment; fourth day of debate—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the ATTORNEY GENERAL: Registration of Firms Act, Regulations.

By the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: Rabbit question, Report; Public Abattoirs, Report of Proceedings to establish the system.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—MINERS' RIGHTS AND MINERAL LICENSES.

MR. MITCHELL asked the Minister of Mines whether it was intended to assimilate the Mineral Lands Act to the Goldfields Act, 1895, as regard miners' rights and mining licenses.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) replied: This matter, which I thank the hon. member for bringing before me, will receive careful attention and inquiry; but I am unable to state definitely, upon such short notice, whether it is the intention of the Government to ask this House to agree to the alteration of an Act of Parliament.

MOTION—ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

MR. LEAKE'S AMENDMENT.

FOURTH DAY OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed on the motion for adoption of the Address-in-Reply to the Governor's Speech, and on the amendment moved by Mr. Leake to add a new paragraph expressing disapproval of the reappropriation of loan authorisations, as intimated in the Speech.

MR. LYALL HALL (Perth): All well-wishers of the colony will agree that the rejection of the Commonwealth Bill by the people of New South Wales is one of the very best things that could have happened to this country. Not that I think

the electors of this colony would have agreed to the Bill, because I believe that a majority of the electors are utterly opposed to our entering into the Commonwealth at the present time. We are not ready for federation, and I am pleased to think that there are a great majority of the electors, and especially those who have the welfare of the country at heart, who are of the same opinion. It is all very well to ape the sentimental, and talk about patriotism, Australia for the Australians, and one people one destiny; but the fact remains we have everything to lose and very little to gain. During my visit to the eastern colonies I attended nearly all the federal meetings in Victoria, and had a chance of listening to all the principal speeches made on the subject, and I was able to institute comparisons; and from them it was proved clearly to me that if we decided to enter into the federation we would be committing a very grave error. One thing which impressed me very strongly was that while the speakers—leading public men of Victoria—were bellowing forth from the platform worn-out cries of patriotism, one people one destiny, one brotherhood, they, at the same time, lost no opportunity to decry this fair colony of Western Australia; and I could not help feeling that this colony would certainly fare very badly if these men had a hand in the government of it. What we want at this time, more than federation or anything else, is population, and in this connection I am pleased to say that the Governor's Speech proposes that there shall be an amending Tariff Bill this session. Admittedly the first duty in inducing population is to decrease the cost of living. This matter was thoroughly threshed out during last session, and I hope the Premier, when introducing this Bill, will make it as comprehensive as possible. It is absurd to keep the present duties on eggs, butter, cheese, and bacon, and so on.—[MR. SIMPSON: What is the duty on "so on"?]—The hon. gentleman knows more about wood than I do. I hope that these duties will be at once removed. I agree with the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) that some measure of protection should be afforded to the agriculturists, but here I think some modification

may with benefit be adopted. I am aware that the loss of revenue will be brought forth as one of the reasons why we should not interfere at all with the tariff, but I think the Colonial Treasurer has other means of obtaining revenue, and there is no source that recommends itself so well to my mind as a tax on the large unimproved estates of the colony. The Commissioner of Crown Lands has shown us what can be done with these large estates by means of repurchase, and I think that a tax on these large estates would compel most people to cultivate the land and bring it under settlement. Failing this result, the absentee owner who declines to improve his land should be made to contribute directly to the revenue. With the cost of living materially reduced, and also house rents at a normal state, I think we should have a large increase of population during the coming year. Our numbers are increasing, it is true; but not nearly at so great a rate as we would all desire to see, and therefore I think it behoves the Government to pass some special legislation or provide some special means to enable the working miner and the artisan and labourer of the large towns to bring his wife and family over here.

MR. MORGANS: You must carry out the water scheme to do that.

MR. HALL: I recently made a suggestion to the Premier, which I understand is at present under the consideration of the Cabinet, to endeavour to stop the immense amount of money going out of the colony each month, by providing free passages for the wives and children of the men of this colony who have been here for, say, six or twelve months. At the present time large sums of money are going out of the colony every month, sent by the bread-winners to keep families living on the other side. I took the trouble this afternoon to go down to the Money Order Office, and obtain some figures as to how much money was leaving the colony through the Money Order Office alone. I find that for the year 1897 the sum of £900,000 went out of this colony, and this year for the month of January there was £51,000; for February, £55,000; March, £63,000; April, £57,000; May,

Mining Bill, and I trust this will be ap- £58,000; and for the month of June, from what has been already sent away, it is reckoned that fully £60,000 will go out of the colony.

MR. A. FORREST: A lot of it goes out for "sweeps."

MR. HALL: Not much. The figures I quote do not include money that goes out through the banks, and in registered letters. People enclose a pound-note or a five-pound note in registered letters. Therefore it is evident we should endeavour to keep some of this money in this colony. It is also evident that, while the cost of living is high, there will be no inducement for the toiler to bring his wife and family to the colony. The proposal which I made to the Premier was this, that a free passage should be issued for the wives and families of men who have been in the colony for, say, six months, and who can show that at the time of application they are in constant employment. The effect of this would be to stop to a very large extent this immense amount of money going out of the colony; and, besides, the importation of every woman and child into the colony would be worth so much to the colony. Some objection might be raised by hon. members that the other colonies would consider it an unfriendly act by offering some special means for people to leave their shores.

MR. MITCHELL: No; they want to get rid of them.

MR. HALL: If members only knew, as I know, how much the people on the other side value, or even acknowledge, the help they get from this colony in that direction, they would cease to worry over that phase of the question. I must offer my congratulations to the Government on the appointment of the Minister of Mines. I think the Minister controlling the mining industry should be absolutely free from all idea of legislating for his own interests, and I think that, so long as a man has good common sense, it is very much better for him to fill that position than a man who has interests, large or small, in the mining industry, and of whom it may be said, he is legislating for his own benefit. One of the most important measures mentioned in the Governor's Speech is an amending

proached by the House with a general desire to obtain the very best possible measure under the peculiar circumstances relating to the mining industry of the colony. One thing is evident: we cannot permit the dual title to exist any longer, unless we desire to throttle the industry, and prevent the inflow of outside capital for the development of our mines.

MR. VOSPER: Is not the outflow of alluvial better?

MR. HALL: At the present time no money is available in London for investment in our mines, owing to the fact that we cannot offer the London investor any security of tenure. I do not desire to deny to the alluvial miner his just rights.

MR. SIMPSON: Thanks; much obliged.

MR. HALL: I think I have as much say, and probably as much influence, in this House as the hon. member for Geraldton.

MR. SIMPSON: More, probably, if you talk long enough.

MR. HALL: If we want to encourage the mining industry we must give to the capitalist, or the man who spends his money in opening up our mines, some security of tenure; and as to the man who has proved his *bona fides* in regard to the leases we must also make him rest perfectly satisfied that he is not working for nothing. With regard to the railways, I am glad to see the policy of the Government is one of strong encouragement to the goldfields. The railway from Menzies to Mount Leonora will, as far as I can learn, benefit and prove a great boon to the mining districts of Mount Margaret, Mount Malcolm and Mount Leonora; and our experience of goldfields lines has been so satisfactory that I think the Government are continuing a wise policy in constructing the railways further afield. As for the railway to Norseman, I am pleased that the Premier has seen his way to give a railway to that important mining centre. The mines at Norseman have been very promising for the past six months, and I am sure they will be much better served by being placed in direct communication with the railway system of the colony, than if they had a line constructed from Esperance to Norseman. Being satisfied that the districts

named are proved to be good gold-producing centres, I would not stop to inquire whether they will pay at the present moment or not, because I hold that railways are constructed for the purpose of opening up new country; and so long as it is shown to me that new railways will open up and tend to develop new country, I always feel inclined to support them.

MR. MOROANS: They will pay.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Can you pay for them? That is the question.

MR. HALL: While on the subject of goldfields and goldfields railways, and the encouragement given by the Government to the goldfields, I am not exactly pleased at what I am told is a large increase in the rates of railway carriage to the goldfields. I am not prepared to go into this matter, because I think it is a fair thing to await the statement of the Commissioner of Railways; but such criticisms as have been indulged in by members on the opposite side are entirely unfair, until the Minister has had a chance of making his explanation.

[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.] I am glad the Government have decided to make a commencement with deep drainage for the city of Perth, and I hope the members of this House will look on this question from a national standpoint, and help the city members to remove the stigma which has so long rested on and been hurled at the city of Perth, in regard to its insanitary condition. I am glad to say, however, that after my recent visit to the eastern colonies I was more than ever convinced of the truth of the old saying, "Give a dog a bad name and hang him;" because I found that in Adelaide, in Melbourne, and in all the large provincial towns of Victoria, there was more typhoid fever, more diphtheria, and other diseases than in Western Australia.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Bar Adelaide.

MR. HALL: No, I do not bar Adelaide, though it is a clean, pretty place; for I took the trouble of sending a telegram to the Town Clerk in Perth, inquiring as to the number of fever patients in the hospital here, and I found that in Adelaide there was actually more typhoid fever at that time than we had in Perth.

MR. A. FORREST: Doctors in Perth are all starving.

MR. HALL: But there is one epidemic in Perth which I would like to see the Premier direct his attention to, and that is the great boom which has set in recently in the matter of highway robbery and garrotting. I think it is quite time some inquiry were made into the police force of this colony, as it seems to be utterly incapable of dealing with this evil, which has become so great that I would suggest to the Government the appointment of a board to see into the working of the police department. I do not know who is to blame, but it certainly seems that the police force are wholly incompetent to deal with this evil. [MR.

KENNY: Hear, hear.] I thoroughly agree with paragraph 29 of the Speech, that the prospects of this colony are extremely satisfactory; and I was pleased to hear so able a member as the representative of Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) state in this House that at the present time this colony is able to borrow any amount of cheap money in London. If the hon. member did not think we were in a prosperous state, he would not say our credit in London is so good. I must say I am surprised, however, at the hon. member, and some other members on the Opposition side complaining of the Government borrowing half-a-million of money locally. It is the very best thing for the colony to borrow money locally rather than outside, because this will show the English investors the unbounded confidence which local institutions, and the A.M.P. Society, which is purely an Australian institution, have in this colony. Besides that, when you consider the amount which has necessarily to be paid away in commission, in brokerage, and so on when raising a loan on the London market, it will be found that borrowing money here at 4 per cent. is nearly, if not quite, as good as borrowing in the London market at 3 per cent.

THE PREMIER: The interest is payable here, too.

MR. HALL: And the interest is payable here, the money being kept in the colony and circulated.

MR. SIMPSON: Does the A.M.P. Society spend its money here or send it away?

THE PREMIER: The society does not send away all. It spends some here.

MR. HALL: I am rather surprised at members of the Opposition trying to ruin the credit of the colony by what they have said here; but I submit that the figures I have quoted show that as each month of this year goes on the amount of money earned by the wage-earners here and sent out of the colony is larger. There is, I admit, an individual poorness in the community, but that is owing to individuals having embarked in business of a speculative nature, and having their money for the present locked up. Another cause of depression, to my mind, is the fact that our banks are controlled almost entirely by directors in Melbourne and elsewhere, who have no sympathy with this colony, and make us suffer for the sins of wild speculations which were indulged in a few years ago in Melbourne. The Government of this country, whatever Government may be in power, must before long consider the necessity of establishing a State Bank. There is only one other matter I would like to refer to, and that is the Electoral Act. I promised on the hustings that I would do my best to make it easier for men to be placed on the rolls, and the fact that so many men have been and are being struck off the rolls shows "there is something rotten in the state of Denmark." I hope the Premier will, this session, take some steps to enable the people of this colony to be placed on the rolls more easily.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And to be kept on instead of being struck off.

MR. HALL: In conclusion, I must thank hon. members for having listened to me, and say that I have much pleasure in supporting the—[MR. VOSPER: The amendment]—in supporting the adoption of the Address-in-Reply. I am surprised that the leader of the Opposition, at a time when complaints have been made by members on his side of the House of so much time being wasted through the House not meeting earlier, should take the course of introducing, as he seems to do annually, such paltry motions of want of confidence at the very time when Parliament and the people are so desirous of proceeding with the business of the country.

MR. LEAKE: You might have saved your speech, on that principle.

MR. KINGSMILL (Pilbarra): I have noticed with regret, within the last few months, that the right hon. gentleman who holds in so firm a grip the destinies of this our colony, has been displaying at various times an acerbity, I will not say under opposition, but an impatience under criticism in which difference of opinion is expressed. This has especially been the case during this present session, and I myself, some two or three months ago, was so unfortunate as to incur his wrath at Esperance. [THE PREMIER: No, no.] Therefore, in order to avert the vials of that wrath being poured on my unfortunate head when I inform him that I am about to support the amendment, I ask him not to accuse me of want of patriotism, because I believe we have in Western Australia a fine colony, a colony that, if it is handled properly, will develop into one of the most important of the Australian colonies, and I say so advisedly, because although not a West Australian, I think I may claim to have travelled over and to have seen and worked in as large a portion of this great colony of ours as any other member in this House who is not a West Australian. I ask the Premier to remember that whatever remarks I make on this occasion are made in no spirit of captious criticism, but that I am truly sorry to have to make them. And, with regard to the further charge that he is wont to level against members who differ from him in opinion, that of rudeness, I hope I shall never be liable to have that charge made against me by the right hon. gentleman. I am rather pleased than otherwise that the Premier has refused to accept this amendment as a motion of want of confidence; principally because party feeling is thus eliminated, and the question becomes not so much one of parliamentary as of national politics. The reason why I am about to support the amendment, briefly stated, is that I can approve of only one of the railways which the right hon. gentleman has asked us in the Governor's Speech to consider. That railway, I believe, can be built without incurring further in-

debtedness, which I take it the reappropriation policy now laid before us will necessitate. The railway I refer to is that from Menzies to Leonora. Some little time ago I had occasion to travel through that part of the country, and while there I may say I was accorded every facility for inspecting the numerous mines in the many mining centres, and I was very favourably impressed by that goldfield; and after inspecting practically all the eastern goldfields outside the great Kalgoorlie field, I consider that district is second to none. Furthermore, the railway has this to recommend it, that it forms part of what must be a trunk line to the North-Coolgardie fields. The next line I have to deal with is the Bonnie Vale, and I do not think the colony has arrived at such a stage that it can afford to build railways like that. The railway system of Western Australia may be likened to a water system. We are employed just now upon the main pipes; we have not begun to reticulate; and I take it that the Leonora line is one of the main pipes, whereas the Bonnie Vale line is a very small service pipe. I had the pleasure of hearing the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), whom I now welcome to his new position close to me (Government cross-benches), making the statement before several members that the railway would probably pay 15 per cent. If it will pay 15 per cent., and if it is not the sort of railway which the colony should build now, why not, if the Government can get over that insuperable objection which they seem to have—why I do not know—to private enterprise, why should not the hon. member for Coolgardie and other members whom he can find to support him have a private Bill, and build that line themselves? I should be very willing to support anything of the sort. I come now to what I confess is my *bête noir* in the Governor's Speech; that is the Coolgardie-Norseman railway, which carries with it as its corollary the absolute, wanton, and ruthless destruction of the town and trade of Esperance—that "town and trade" which I heard the right hon. gentleman so ably propose in a toast at Esperance some two or three months ago. I used the word "wanton" advisedly; because, after

examining the question from all points of view, I must confess I can see no reason for this step. Looked at from the point of equity, though perhaps that may be a somewhat unusual standpoint to take, all the justice and right seem to be on the side of the Esperance people. But some will insist on considering the question in the light of the fixed railway policy of the Government. If this is to be the result of the Government having a fixed railway policy, I should advise them to exchange that fixed policy for a semi-portable one—something they could take with them round the country. I hope at any rate that the goldfield I represent will not have to wait for a railway until this Menzies—Leonora line is constructed, say as far as the Ashburton. It is only a question of degree; the system is practically the same. Again, I say that, in wasting—I can use no other term—public money in building a line to Esperance, the Government are doing a wrong, not only to the inhabitants of Esperance, but to the people of Western Australia. Why, if they intended to wipe the town out of existence, did they spend, as I have heard it said, between £50,000 and £60,000 of Government money on that port? What was their object in so doing, when they intended to wipe the town out? Why did they ever lay out a town-site there, and attract people to their shores? The spending of money by the Government was practically a guarantee for the settlement of the place. If the Government think it worth while to spend money on a harbour and on a town-site, surely private individuals are justified in thinking it worth their while to do so. In this case, how has it been worth their while? And look at the class of people who inhabit Esperance. The Premier and several other members have had an opportunity of seeing how the money has been spent, and I challenge any of them to say it could have been better spent, or that the people in any other part of Western Australia show a more progressive and more patriotic spirit than the people of Esperance. They are progressive; but, alas! they will not be allowed to be patriotic. I think the idea of this Coolgardie-Norseman line must be the creation of the last few

months, or possibly of the last few weeks ; because for years past the Premier, if not actually in definite terms, has always expressed himself favourably towards Esperance. I think it was in 1895 or 1896 that he assured the member for Plantagenet (Mr. Hassell) that when Norseman required a railway it would start from Esperance. Why has he changed his mind? I think the fact is fully established that Norseman requires a line ; but why is it not starting from Esperance? I take it that Western Australia is not so flush with harbours that she can afford to dispense with one of the best she possesses. Therefore, why this treatment of Esperance? This line may be delayed, but it cannot be stopped. Perhaps the right hon. gentleman will say that is an argument against what I am bringing forward ; but I say, no. It must add an additional bitterness to the wrongs of the unfortunate people who now inhabit Esperance, or rather who were inhabiting Esperance, for the exodus from it has now become pretty general, to know that, although they have spent all their time and capital in developing the town, somebody else will step in after them and reap the fruits of their labours. I could possibly say a good deal more about the Norseman-Coolgardie line, but I might possibly be cutting the ground from under the feet of other members. I have a few words to say about the Coolgardie water scheme. This is the scheme, I take it, from which most of the reappropriations are to be made. Now, from the Governor's Speech it appears that the Government fully intend—as far as I can see, for none of their intentions are fully expressed—to carry out this water scheme themselves. Through the press we have become acquainted with the fact that a private offer, if not private offers, has been made to the Government to carry out this scheme—as far as we can judge, more satisfactorily than the Government are prepared to do it, and for a less cost ; indeed for a cost which would effect a saving sufficient to build the Menzies-Leonora line. If the Government have any objection to this private offer which everyone knows about, I think they might have put it forward in the Governor's Speech. It is a subject which has attracted a great deal of pub-

lic attention, and public feeling runs very high upon this question as to whether the Coolgardie water scheme should be carried out departmentally or by inviting tenders for its construction. I remember the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) last session saying that his friends would be able, not only to carry out the scheme, but to find the necessary capital. Now, we already have an unsolicited offer to carry out the scheme for £2,231,000, or thereabout. That offer is gratuitous. It is made, not as a tender, when there is any fear of opposition, but gratuitously. And is it not feasible that, if the Government invited tenders for this scheme, they would get the price cut down much lower? In that case they would effect a saving which would suffice to build this Menzies-Leonora railway. I mentioned just now the apparently insuperable objection the Government have to private enterprise. What this is founded on I can scarcely tell. With regard to the Esperance-Norseman line, I believe they have at least one offer to build that. The Premier says that line will not pay ; yet he says the Coolgardie-Norseman line will pay. How he arrives at that conclusion I do not know. It appears to me that the people of Norseman are going to get exactly the same quantity of goods and material, whether they get it from Coolgardie or Esperance, and as these goods will have to be carried over the railway, I think they could be carried cheaper from Esperance than *via* Coolgardie ; and if the Norseman line is going to pay, why should not the other line pay? As I was about to say, I believe the Government have had a private offer to build this line. This seems to show that some people seem to think the Esperance line will pay. At any rate, we know as little about that offer as we know of the one in reference to the Coolgardie water scheme. But we know that people have made an offer to build that line as a commercial speculation. These people simply want enough land to run the line on, and they will run it as long practically as the Government like to let them, offering the Government what is known as a buyer's option. I do not think the Government could get a fairer offer than that. I cannot see the reason of putting the offer on one side

and never mentioning it. The Government should give this House the opportunity of deciding whether the Coolgardie water scheme, and this railway line, should be constructed by private enterprise or not. The present time is far from opportune for raising a loan either here or in London. I am sorry I cannot agree with the right hon. gentleman's estimate of the prosperity of the colony. Looking at it as a whole, it is no doubt enormous; but individual prosperity, I was going to say, is a *minus* quantity, though it really is not so small as that. Another thing I believe is that one of the strongest grounds on which the Government based their view of the country's prosperity is the exports. Has the right hon. gentleman ever considered that the gold is reckoned amongst the exports, and that the gold goes out of the colony and very little comes back? The gold does not belong to us. It simply travels over our railways and through the Post-office.

THE PREMIER: It pays for some of our imports.

MR. VOSPER: A great deal of the gold comes back in wages.

MR. A. FORREST: I rise to order, Mr. Speaker. Is the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie in order in interrupting when he is not in his seat.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member is certainly out of order; in fact, he is out of order in being out of his place.

MR. VOSPER: I wish, Mr. Speaker, to apologise for being here: and only for the architectural defects of the building, I should not have been here [near the fireplace].

MR. KINGSMILL: I say that very little of this gold comes back to the colony. We are told that the greater part comes back in wages. It may temporarily come back, but we have heard from the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Hall) that the greater part of the wages is sent out of the colony.

MR. MORGANS: That is not the fault of the gold-mining industry.

MR. KINGSMILL: I am not saying that it is. It must be admitted that the gold does not belong to us.

THE PREMIER: The gold is an export.

MR. KINGSMILL: But it does not benefit the colony to anything like its full extent.

MR. A. FORREST: Wool goes out of the colony just the same.

MR. KINGSMILL: I beg to differ. The people are here who grow the wool, but the people to whom the gold belongs are not in the colony.

MR. A. FORREST: But the principal stations are owned by London financiers.

MR. KINGSMILL: I do not think these interruptions have any effect on my argument. There is another reason why I do not think it right to incur fresh obligations. The indebtedness of the colony is increasing, as the right hon. gentleman would say, "by leaps and bounds." It is increasing at an enormous rate. We must devise some means of saving money. Unless we can devise means—and I think we can devise means of saving money—we should be very foolish to incur fresh liabilities. I think I can point out one means of saving, and that is in regard to the public buildings policy of the Government. Surely by this time the various electorates have been nearly satiated with public buildings, and if they have not been satiated. I should say that the most simple style of architectural building might be constructed, and the money saved be put to other objects, such as building railways. Again, the effect of what the right hon. gentleman said was that all the producers in Western Australia were doing well. They are, and it redounds to the credit of the colony that they are doing well; but I think the colony could stand a greater number of producers than it has at present. The unfortunate part is that the percentage of first producers in this colony is so small. They are quite an infinitesimal portion of the community. I think I have explained my reasons, and I hope I have done so clearly, if not I have done so to the best of my ability, for supporting the amendment. I hope to speak on the main question, as I think I am entitled to, later on.

MR. QUINLAN (Toodyay): In rising to offer my mead of support to the Address-in-Reply, I do so with mingled feelings of pleasure and sympathy: sympathy for the Government and the country, for the present depression which exists, and for which I attribute in a

measure some blame to the Government, for the reason that they have undertaken too many works in too short a time, and by that means have induced a sudden influx of population, many unfortunately who are of the class which it is not desirable to have here. The people I refer to are those who direct their attention more to the towns and centres of population—those who are fond of offices in the Government service, the railways, and the police force. The class of population we desire, and which we require most, are the class who direct their attention to the cultivation of the soil. The Australians, to my mind, are too prone to sports, and avocations in large centres; and it is a pity indeed that works which encouraged so many of those seeking “billets” about Government offices were taken in hand so suddenly. Upon their completion these people were thrown out of employment. No doubt these people were induced to come here by the expenditure of loan moneys, and hence it has caused the depression which it cannot be denied exists at the present time. The figures which have been stated in the press as to the unemployed are to some degree exaggerated, but I regret extremely to say that in business circles great depression exists, and also general discontent. The question of federation has occupied the attention of the colonies, and to my mind has occupied the attention of the men of this colony, who might have been better engaged at home. As far as Western Australia is concerned, this has been a waste of time. We have not reached that stage at which we could join the federation, which we all desire to join some day. Now we are in our infancy, and we should pay more attention to our local affairs. Thanks to the good sense of the people in New South Wales, the matter, at least, is set at rest for some time. In congratulating the Government I do so particularly in regard to the exports of timber and gold. The Government are deserving of some credit for the encouragement given to these two industries, which are so rapidly being developed throughout the length and breadth of the country. As to the question of the gold output I am inclined to the opinion expressed by the hon. member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill), and I have held

that view for a long time. I do not see the benefit we reap from the output of gold, at any rate the benefit which the Premier sees. We do reap a benefit indirectly it is true through the customs tariff, and through the market it gives to the producers in the colony, but we do not reap the measure of benefit from this industry that we ought to do. I am going to express a sentiment now, which I know will not meet with the approval of my friends representing the goldfields constituencies, but I say the day will come when some method or means will be devised by which the colony will reap far greater benefits from the gold industry. Whether that will be through those who find and produce the mineral, I do not know, or whether it should be applied to those companies paying immense dividends which are going out of the country. There will be no fear of retarding the development of the goldfields. The mineral is there to pay the dividends, and at the present time the benefit is being derived in other parts of the world and not in Australia.

MR. MORGANS: What about taxing the commercial men, too?

MR. QUINLAN: They probably will bear their share of taxation in another direction, probably by an income tax. With regard to the present means of raising revenue, I think it is the most equitable. We are not reaping the benefit we should from the industry which has been stated to be the great one in Western Australia. I would ask, in referring to the tariff, our friends the members for the goldfields constituencies, especially those on the other side, who are so much in favour of a revision of the tariff, that they will at least be reasonable in their views, and consider every industry in the colony entitled to some protection. There are some anomalies in the tariff, I admit, and I will be prepared to vote with the members opposite for a reduction; but for anything that can be produced, or any industry in the colony, I am entirely a protectionist. I agree fully in the expressions contained in paragraph 13 of the Governor's Speech. I have recently toured my district, and I am agreed in every particular with the amount of settlement that is going on, not only in regard to new

settlement, but in regard to the older settlers and owners, who are extending their cleared land and developing the country which they have held idle so long. This to my mind reflects credit on the energy of the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who has done so well since he has been in office. In respect to paragraph 21, I know sympathy, is not of much value, only I sympathise with those concerned in the industry in which the outbreak has taken place. This will be the means of directing the attention of the Government to the necessity of encouraging a co-operative system in regard to freezing works, not only in the Kimberley district but elsewhere, and I have not the least doubt whatever that suitable vessels would readily be available for the conveyance of chilled or frozen meat. This is the only solution, at least for lessening the cost. I think we should have some protection from the other colonies. We ought to offer every facility to those who have borne the heat and burden of the day so long in a tropical climate. In regard to paragraph 24, I am glad to see so many important measures mentioned therein, and amongst them a Bill dealing with the goldfields. I know there is need not only for a goldfields Act, as it is termed generally, but the unfortunate Mining on Private Property Act, which was passed last session, requires amending. It is true that it was hurried through Parliament, but it has been found so unworkable that to-day we should have been getting gold from another quarter if the measure had been workable. I hope and believe hon. members will give the matter their serious consideration, and do everything possible to have this Act amended in such a manner as to be of some service to the country. Reports have been given in to the Government approving of the resumption of land in the district I represent, and I have no doubt whatever, from information that I have received, that abundance of gold is there. I understand it is not what is termed "a poor man's field," but it is one, I learn from those better acquainted with the subject, which is called a reefing field and a permanent one.

MR. LEAKE: Is it much better than Dandalup?

MR. QUINLAN: With regard to paragraph 25, referring to railways to various parts of the colony, I shall want a very much stronger argument to convince me of the necessity of some of these lines, than those which have already been given by our worthy Premier last evening. I refer more particularly to the Norseman line. I have not been over that part of the country, but I have some friends who have, and I do not think myself, until I am convinced to the contrary, that we should be justified in constructing a line to Norseman or Esperance. If the line is undertaken to Norseman, it follows that the day will come when it will go to Esperance.

MR. MORGANS: Why not?

MR. QUINLAN: Because it is a barren waste. I do not think the country should commit itself to the heavy expenditure for the construction of more lines. We have taxation quite enough for the present. I am always open to conviction, but I certainly cannot favour the construction of these lines, from the information which is before us. With regard to the other railways proposed, I am open to conviction as to the necessity for them. Possibly the line to Mount Malcolm and Mount Leonora may receive my support, but I shall want further information than I have at present. Although I may differ from the Government in this regard, I am, as they know too well, one of their warmest supporters; but this is not a party question, and I hold that I have a right to my opinions, and as I know the responsibility that rests on our shoulders over the spending of public money, loan or otherwise, I must carefully consider these questions before I vote upon them. With regard to the railway to Goonalling, I am satisfied it will be a payable line, for I have travelled through the locality recently, and must admit I was astonished at the amount of settlement that has been going on. I am aware this line is intended to be constructed on a cheap scale, and all that is asked is that a light railway shall be made. I believe the Government have plenty of light rails suitable for the purpose in stock, and I understand the whole thing will not cost more than ten or twelve thousand

pounds. Such a line would be much better than road-making.

A MEMBER: It will cost thirty thousand pounds.

MR. QUINLAN: I solicit the support of the House for this particular line, not because it is on the fringe of the district I represent, for as a matter of fact it serves the Northam district; but because I am convinced it will be a payable line, and will be a great benefit to settlement in that district.

MR. MORGANS: It will cost money, the same as other lines.

MR. QUINLAN: It is to be a light line, and will not cost much money.

MR. MORGANS: You object to spending money.

MR. QUINLAN: This will not be wasting money. Referring to paragraph 27 of the Speech, dealing with the sewerage of Perth, this necessary and important work should be undertaken, as will be apparent to everyone; and I congratulate the Premier on his wisdom in bringing forward this proposal. I know the difficulties surrounding the subject, but I hope the Government will, through their officers, select the most suitable and the best plan, in the interests of the city, and of the colony generally. Not only the people of Perth, but the whole colony, are interested in a work of this kind, for securing the healthfulness of the chief city, so that we may wipe out the bad name and the false reputation which the city has got as an insanitary place of residence. In other parts of the world, as has been pointed out by the member for Perth (Mr. Hall), there are causes of unhealthiness; and we, in Perth, are not so much to blame as is made out, there being spots in the other colonies where the conditions are as bad or even worse. As we have every inducement for attracting people to come here by offering them cheap land in a good climate, we should do what we can to make the chief city as attractive as possible. In conclusion, I shall give my qualified support to the Government programme, and to the Address-in-Reply. I hope I shall be convinced on some matters in regard to which I am now in doubt, and that I may be able to support some of these proposals when brought forward by the Government.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): It is not much I have to say on this occasion, but I must state that I deplore what occurred last night, when the Premier attacked one of those on this side of the House, that is myself, without my having said a word one way or the other on the question at issue. It put me very much in mind of a man scolding his son, by reproving him for losing his temper; the father commencing mildly, and then with very little notice tearing a passion almost to rags. I would recommend the right hon. gentleman in future, before acting in the way he did last night, to study a little of Hamlet's instruction to the players. I think the attack which the right hon. gentleman made upon me was uncalled for, and it was not the first time that such attack has been made. What was the reason? Because I sit on this (the Opposition) side of the House. Some remarks were made by the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) on the works going on at Fremantle; those remarks being more severe in regard to the Government than any made by other members, when he called attention to the gross extravagance which was being carried on in the construction of the harbour. I know nothing about the matter myself, but that hon. member, from questions he has asked, has evidently gained some information. I have heard remarks in Fremantle in regard to what I may call mistakes that have been made by the Government in the harbour works, and especially with regard to the patent slip. Two or three weeks ago I was told that all the hands were taken off the patent slip, and that the thousands of pounds spent upon it were useless. It will be for the Director of Public Works to say whether that is true or not. With regard to the matter before the House, I think that in some cases the Government are to be thanked for showing to the public that they have carried out some of the works which were approved by this House, and for which Estimates were passed; but have they carried out nearly all of them? Have they carried out the greater part of the works which were passed in the Estimates of last year? When the Director of Public Works gets up, he will explain what works have been done and what have not. It is a great satisfaction

to the colony and to this House to know that many of the works have been carried out. I presume they have been carried out successfully, as we hear no complaints about them, and the people in the districts are apparently satisfied. The principal question on which I rose to speak this evening is as to the desirability of reappropriating money for certain new works proposed in the Speech. That is a procedure I object to. I object to the principle of reappropriating money which has been passed by this House, after due consideration, and applying it to other matters altogether which have not been asked for; and, so far as I know, there has been no demonstration to show that they were required. Yet we are asked to reappropriate money that has been passed for works which were not agreed to without considerable argument on both sides of the House, and in almost every instance the Premier has stated here that the particular works were necessities, and were imperatively required for the benefit of the colony. Yet before those works are completed, we are asked now, indirectly, to make ourselves responsible for further debts to carry out further works. For my part, I think we should finish properly the works now in hand. With regard to federation, I may say I am not in favour of it. I do not think the Premier is in his heart in favour of it as one born in this colony, one who has the whole interests of the colony at heart. I do not think he would sell this colony for what I think is a "mess of pottage." It is satisfactory to know that the money which was reappropriated last year has been given back. I suppose that is so. A member interjects that the money has not been repaid. Well, if the money has not been given back, how is it that we are asked now to reappropriate money for foreign purposes altogether which have not yet passed this House? We are asked to reappropriate money for new works altogether, as suggested in the Speech, notwithstanding that we have had to reappropriate from works that are not nearly completed. We are asked now to reappropriate money that has not yet been refunded. It is not my intention to take up the time of the House now, because it is on the main question I in-

tend to vote, and that is the reappropriation of money. I would like to mention one or two little matters with regard to the financial position of the colony. I do trust, as a business man, that at the end of June the Government will give this House a detail of all the works that have been done and not paid for; that is to say, that we shall know what the liabilities of the colony are at the end of June.

THE PREMIER: You get that every year from the Estimates.

MR. SOLOMON: But that is a considerable time after the end of the financial year. My reason for asking this is that I know of one case where a contractor for meat has had to wait for six months, since November last, and the amount has gone up to nearly six hundred pounds. I am told he has not been paid a penny of it.

THE PREMIER: That cannot be correct.

MR. VOSPER: There are many cases of that kind.

THE PREMIER: It must be a disputed account.

MR. SOLOMON: I only ask that this House shall be furnished with a statement of liabilities at the end of the financial year. I intend to support the amendment, so far as reappropriation of money is concerned.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison): I had not intended speaking now, but as other members are not disposed to do so I will go on. I am sorry this amendment has been brought forward, for what I want to see is that the Address-in-Reply shall be passed, so that the House may get on with the practical business of the session. Turning to the proposed new railways, I do not approve of the railways mentioned in the Governor's Speech. As to a railway to Norseman, that place is stated to be half-way between a natural port and the town of Coolgardie. If we construct the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, we shall have some five or six hundred miles over which to carry all the plant required, and that is a considerable item in the cost of construction. I have no idea why a line is to be constructed in that way. Esperance is said to be the natural outlet of the Norseman goldfield. I do not know whether the line is to be constructed so as to prevent the trade of the eastern goldfields

being taken away from Perth and Fremantle. I can hardly think that is so, because I have heard many people in these places disapprove of the proposed line. I do not know whether the Government think that by making the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman the line is going to end there. I think that, once the railway is constructed as far as Norseman, there will be such pressure put on the Government from people living at Coolgardie and on the gold-fields generally that they will be bound to carry it on to Esperance. What will be the consequence then? The Government will then have to do just what they are now trying to prevent, and the pressure that will be brought to bear upon them will be such that I do not think any Government will be strong enough to resist it. I know nothing about the Bonnie Vale railway, and therefore I will say nothing about it. I am very sorry to see it suggested that a railway should be constructed from Menzies to Mount Malcolm. In the district in which I reside, and which I have the honour to represent, it is thought that this is a move to divert the present trade of Geraldton to Coolgardie and Fremantle. It would be bound to do so in time. There are very large vested interests in Geraldton, which ought to receive much more consideration than they do in what is foreshadowed in the Governor's Speech. I may tell you at once it is not my intention to vote for the amendment before the House. I am sorry to see it proposed; and I may say that, before this amendment was brought forward, I spoke to many hon. members sitting on the opposite side of the Chamber, and asked them not to bring forward an amendment. I said I would not have it for a moment, though I would certainly make my voice heard when the Bills to authorise the construction of those railways were brought forward. I do not exactly agree with most of the speeches on this matter of reappropriation. I say that if we want the money—and I do not know whether we do or not—it is a better plan to reappropriate money which is now voted, if it is not wanted immediately, than to rush into the market and ask for a new loan. The Premier told us last night that he did

not think all the money put aside for the Coolgardie water scheme would be required, and he gave us an encouraging hint that probably £500,000 would be left to be appropriated for some other purpose outside the work authorised in that Loan Act. And if we take that for granted, what can we do better than reappropriate £500,000 out of that vote—that is, if we want it? But, though we might reappropriate that sum, I would never accept the Bills for constructing the railways foreshadowed here. The Premier said last night that he thought there were a lot of people in the colony who would like to see it stand still. Well, I for one and many others would rather see it stand still than go on heaping debts upon debts, and making debts for the children we will leave behind us. I will never consent to any increase in the present indebtedness, if I can help it. The mover of this amendment, I may say, used most unjust words last night. He said very uncomplimentary things of the Government—that they were pursuing a pick-pocket policy. That is a very hard word to use. He taunted the members who sit on this (the Government) side of the House with taking their orders from headquarters. I can only speak for myself, but I do not think there is any member on this side of the House, whether he be on the front benches or elsewhere, who does so. Certainly the Government have never attempted to dictate to me as to what I should do, and if they did I should certainly resent it. I would take no political orders from anyone. The member for East Perth (Mr. James), I am sorry to say, made some very uncomplimentary remarks in reference to a certain portion of the public service. He said the public servants were not paid to be honest, but that they were paid to support the Ministry. I do not think that gentleman had any right to impugn the honesty of our deserving and underpaid public servants. If you refer to the newspaper report, you will find these words have been used.

MR. GEORGE: They get very well paid for what brains they have—some of them, anyhow.

MR. MITCHELL: I do not know about that. From what little I do know

of the civil service, the men are very much underpaid, as a rule. Some of them, of course, may be better paid than others. I may say that I received a telegram from some of my constituents this evening, and another from Geraldton, where they are very indignant at the action of the Government in recommending this line from Menzies to Mount Malcolm, which they look upon as an attempt to injure vested interests in that old centre of population, which has hitherto been a great supporter of the Government, not only in the matter of revenue, but in every other way. I hope the member who moved this amendment will see the desirability of refraining from dividing the House upon it, because I believe that if he does so he will have a big fall. He will go down, and go down badly. Therefore, I hope and trust he will not carry it to a division.

At 6.17 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair.

At 7.30 p.m. the SPEAKER resumed the chair.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell): After the able and exhaustive speech which has fallen from the Premier, in reply to the speeches which have been delivered on the other side of the House, there is little for me to say. I have followed the speeches of the gentlemen opposite, and I confess they have given me great disappointment. They exhibited, to my mind, an utter want of faith in the resources of this country. There are two hon. members opposite whose utterances I followed very closely, and to which I take great exception. The chief difficulty of members on the other side appears to me to be that there are three railways which the Government intend to construct. To my mind, it is not the railways they are opposed to. I ask myself, before deciding on railways, whether the country to be tapped is worthy of a railway, whether the country through which a goldfields railway is to go is auriferous, and whether an agricultural railway is to open up rich agricultural areas, and if a timber area is worthy of being opened up. To my mind, instead of stopping the construction of railways, we are only at the beginning. The policy of the Government has been

one of development, and the country has before it the result of that policy. I go so far as to say that, in the near future, further railway construction will be forced upon us. I am sure the leader of the Opposition will see with me that one of the railways to be constructed in the near future will be a line from Bridge-town to Albany, to open up that rich area of timber country; and when that time comes, instead of that hon. gentleman opposing the construction of that railway, if he is not holding the reins of government himself, he will support the Government in the proposal. At the present moment these resources of ours are only in their infancy. There are one million acres of rich karri land in the hands of the Government, and there are other enormous areas of timber country. Hon. members must recognise that with the selections that are going on, and the timber that is being cut, all the timber within reasonable distance of a railway will soon be absorbed. Whether we like it or not, I can see plainly that we will soon have to face the construction of many lines to reach the timber resources of the country. We should rejoice exceedingly at having these resources to tap. There is one remark made by an hon. member opposite which I cannot allow to pass, and that is in reference to the proposed agricultural railway. It proves conclusively that the hon. member has not studied the question. The hon. member evidently spoke on the impulse of the moment, and he has the audacity to say, referring to the agricultural railway, that it simply went from Northam to Sodom and Gomorrah. Let me say to the hon. member that I think it will be advisable for him to study the paper which has been laid on the table, in which he will find some work by one of the ablest officers of the department, who has already surveyed 40,000 acres of land, which means 20,000 sovereigns; and this land is waiting for a cheap railway to open it; besides that, the document tells us that the homestead lease land is practically unlimited. How do we propose to construct these agricultural lines? There are not to be elaborate stations, and the line is to be constructed, as I am informed by my col-

league, with second-hand rails taken from the Yilgarn railway. It is to be a cheap line, and when hon. members hear that it will tap 120,000 acres of land under compulsory conditions of improvement, I think the hon. member opposite will regret that he drew this comparison about Sodom and Gomorrah, and will become an ardent supporter of the line. Reference has been made to the depression which exists, especially by my hon. friend opposite. I confess that in my walks abroad, and by mingling with business men, I find that there is a certain amount of depression. Certainly hon. members could not expect anything else. Twelve months ago I foretold a depression amongst the artisan class. What did we see twelve months ago? There was private enterprise erecting stately buildings in the city, and these demanded skilled labour. There was the construction of public buildings and bridges and other public works going on, and it could be easily recognised that, with these works proceeding, there was an abnormal demand for skilled labour. Thoughtful men could not expect this enterprise to go on for ever, and that the Government could go on constructing public works for all time. As buildings were finished and public works were completed, men would be disbanded, and the result would be, as we see it to-day, that a large number of men would unfortunately be seeking work. Is that a reason why we should deprive the colony of necessary public work, and refuse to go on with our policy of development? I will remind you of the passages in the Governor's Speech referring to the large output of gold, to the great increase in the cutting and export of timber, and to the great amount of land which has been taken up for occupation under conditions of compulsory improvement; and I say that, with the increasing productions from the soil, we may hope that in the near future we shall be able to wipe out the large imports of agricultural produce for which we now send money out of the country. One of the great hopes I have for relieving the depression is that there may be a vigorous development of our valuable coal deposits at the Collie. I pin my faith very much to the development of the land under

the system now in operation, to the development of our goldfields, and still more to the active and vigorous development of our coal deposits. When it is announced that the Government have entered into contracts for the delivery of seventy or eighty thousand tons of coal to be supplied in one year, you will see that we may expect all these men to be fully employed in the near future; and, instead of the present state of things being a reason for our not going ahead in developing the resources of the country, we have the greatest possible reason for going forward in this great policy of development. Looking round this great country, and seeing those large public works carried out by the Government, and carried out with the approval of this Parliament, I say that if the Governor's Speech at the opening of Parliament did not give you a statement of the works carried out under your orders, the Government, and the Premier especially, would fall short of their duty in not giving you the information which you expect, and which you ought to have, as to the works carried out by the authority and instructions of this House. I take a most hopeful view of the country's prospects, and I echo every sentiment that has fallen from the Premier. I go further, and say that were he less hopeful, less sure of the resources of the colony, I should blush in my place to follow him. It is my ardent desire to put before the world evidence to show that we have a colony worthy of the expenditure we propose to make upon it. One word fell from the member for North Freinangle (Mr. Holmes) respecting the purchase of private estates by the Government; and I am glad to have an opportunity of giving some explanation with regard to that. The hon. member regretted that the Government, instead of developing the land remaining in their hands, should have bought estates from private holders; but it should be remembered that in doing so we have carried out the wishes of this House, for we were entrusted with the expenditure of two hundred thousand pounds for the purchase of large private estates; and if it be an error to have purchased four large estates, which I trust it is not, we are

only following the example set us in the eastern colonies of Australia. We have large estates dotted about, even in the great centres where railway communication gives ready access to the land; and yet these estates have continued to lie unused and unproductive, notwithstanding all the new facilities provided by Parliament. We have purchased four of these estates, and they have been cut up into small portions, and within the last three months have been occupied by settlers under conditions of compulsory improvement. What has been the result of that policy? We have wiped out three settlers who were doing nothing with their large estates, and we have got seventy-five settlers who are making good use of the land. Fancy that, and what it will mean eventually! It will not be a question of increase of production only, but it is a question which intimately affects the artisans and traders in our towns; for it will mean that the implement maker, the cart maker, the harness maker, the plough maker, and many other classes of workers in towns, will be called upon to supply the various requirements of new settlers on the land. It means that these new settlers will be so many additional customers for the artisans in the towns, and that their workshops will be kept busy supplying new orders. That is the reason why I warmly support the purchase of large estates suitable for close settlement; and if you peruse the report on the subject which has been laid on the table of this House, you will be satisfied that this new departure has been a wise one, and in the best interests of the country. With regard to the amendment before the House, I only regret that the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), instead of bringing forward a want-of-confidence motion on this railway question, did not propose a direct motion of want of confidence in the Government. I for one would like to see, and the whole country would like to see, and especially myself and those associated with me would like to know, what the country thinks of us, and what this House thinks of us. I trust the hon. member, even within this session, if he can see his way, instead of dealing with amendments of this kind, will propose a direct motion upon which the House can

debate the whole question of confidence or no confidence, so that we may know definitely whether the Government have the confidence of this House and the country. I believe we shall come through the ordeal triumphantly, and that this House and the country will recognise that they have a Government in whom they can repose confidence. I wish to say also, in regard to the Lands Purchase Act, and in regard to other estates held by absentee owners, that in my opinion the Government are bound to take some such step as they have taken in these cases, in order to compel absentee owners to deal with their land. I hope that, possibly during the present session, a measure will be brought forward dealing with large estates held by absentee owners; and I believe that, if the Government do introduce such a measure, we will have the earnest support of every thoughtful man in dealing with land held by absentees. I emphasise the word "absentees." You will see large estates uncared for, untended, and in some cases unoccupied, notwithstanding that the land is good and some of it is adjacent to a railway. As Commissioner of Crown Lands, I have received correspondence from intending settlers, showing that they have made appeal after appeal to these absentee owners to have their land thrown open for settlement; and I think it is our bounden duty, as a Government, to take such measures as will secure the development of these estates, and to ensure that owners of land shall be compelled to live up to their responsibilities. Is there anything wrong in this? On the contrary, we shall be guilty of neglect if we do not do this. As to the price at which private estates have been purchased, I may say that owners of land adjacent to a railway, and who were asking ten shillings an acre a few years ago, are now asking one pound or thirty shillings or two pounds an acre. Further, it would be wrong if we neglected our duty in this direction by not taking action; and I hope that in the present session the Premier will introduce a measure having this in view, and I feel sure that all round this House and throughout the country the Government will have support for such a measure dealing with

large estates held by absentee owners. I say "absentee owners" advisedly, because other owners are, with few exceptions, living up to their responsibilities and doing their duty. With regard to absentee owners and how they should be treated, the question is to my mind a simple one. I am altogether opposed at the present time to anything in the shape of a land tax. It would be very difficult indeed to adopt that system. Every man who takes up five hundred or a thousand acres of land at present is hemmed in by compulsory conditions of improvement, and rightly so. How would I treat the large estates of absentee owners? I would impose compulsory conditions of improvement, the same as are imposed on other owners; and with that object I would have the land classified, and so deal with it that the compulsory conditions should be enforced only upon first-class land. It is our duty to do this, and I feel strongly upon it. I am glad to be able to say I have the approval of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), and have also the approval of the Premier, who contemplates taking this step, and I hope it will be done during the present session. Once more I express my unbounded confidence in the future of Western Australia. I would be glad indeed to see the gentlemen on the opposite side of the House for a time seated on these benches, so that they might show us what they can do. I suppose they will in time turn us out, and when it is done I hope it will be on fair conditions, and that they will not endeavour to entrap us, as the Premier expressed it. I think it was a cowardly move on the part of the leader of the Opposition to move this amendment. I would prefer much that he should table a motion, affirming that the House has no confidence in the present Government.

MR. SIMPSON: That is carried in another place already.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: If they turn us out I suppose they will perform a funeral oration over us, and our epitaph will be: "Here lies a Government too progressive for the members of the House and for the country."

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS AND DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piessé): I do not intend to deal with the

question of the Public Works Department upon the Address-in-Reply, as I should have preferred to wait until the introduction of my annual report, and also for the Estimates, when I could deal with the specific items which have been commented upon. But, as the course of the debate necessitates my speaking at this stage, I will ask hon. members to bear with me for a short time; for I shall have to deal with the somewhat voluminous notes which I have made, and to give statistics and speak at some length with regard to the Public Works Department generally. The unanimous condemnation passed by those who have spoken upon the Works Department calls for comment from me, lest the public should be misled by the false accusations which hon. members of this House, and especially those on the opposite benches, have showered upon me in the course of this debate. The leader of the Opposition, evidently having no case—[MR. LEAKE: Not a bad one]—decided, in legal parlance, to abuse the other side. This may be the course he generally adopts when he has a bad case; but on this occasion he has got a very bad case to fight; and I may say that, although I must take exception to some of the remarks he has made from time to time during the discussion, as well as in his speech, yet at the same time he had his case to place before the House, and he did it in the way which he thought best. But in regard to the condemnation showered upon myself and upon my department, I think hon. members have certainly gone out of their way a little—in fact, I may say a great deal. They must have searched their dictionaries through to be able to use the variety of offensive epithets and expletives to which they gave vent—such expressions as "crass stupidity," "damnable incompetence"—[MR. SIMPSON: "Lamentable" was the word used]—which I think was an expression which should not have been used; and also the phrase "utter and fatuous incapacity." I can only say, with regard to epithets like these, that the sooner they are left out of reasonable debate the better, because I consider that words of this kind, used as they have been not only inside the House but outside of it, are entirely out of order and very uncalled for.

MR. SIMPSON: You would gag freedom of speech, if you could.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: All I want is fair criticism, and I am quite willing to place before the public, by means of my reports and of any statements I am able to put before this House, clear accounts of my actions in the past, and of those I contemplate taking in the future. Some members have questioned my ability; and that, of course, you are all free to do. It is perhaps my misfortune that I do not possess the ability which the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) takes to himself the credit of possessing. If that be the case, if I do not possess the kind of ability for which he is distinguished, I can only say that the reason is that possibly I have not acquired my experience in the same school as that in which his has been gained. I have learned mine in that practical school which, after all, makes a man, and that experience is of the greatest use to me in the great undertakings which I have in hand. I take it that I am perhaps particularly well fitted for the work I have taken up; for, as I often say, my experience is one of that kind which enables me to deal effectively with the important departments which I now control. I mention this, not because I wish to draw attention to this question of my own ability, or lack of ability, but that I may say in self-defence that I do possess, and so do the officers of my department, an earnestness and honesty of purpose, and a desire to do my best in the interests of the country.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, you are honest enough.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I wish to deal fully with the statements made by the hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George), because his remarks had reference to a most important matter, the Fremantle harbour works. He made some lengthy statements, which he obtained from a report which appeared in one of the papers some time ago.

MR. GEORGE: In the *West Australian*.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I do not question the appearance of the report. It no doubt did appear, and no doubt emanated

from someone connected with the Fremantle harbour works; but I would like to point out to the hon. member that I think it very unfair he should base his conclusions on a newspaper report, and blame the officers of the Government for misstatements contained therein. How can the officers of the Government be held responsible for the way in which the case is stated in a newspaper, unless they actually wrote the article themselves? I am assured that this article was not written by any officer in the department. It is quite possible, and, in fact, probable, that certain figures were supplied from the Fremantle harbour works office to representatives of the press, as has frequently been done; but surely even the local officers cannot be held responsible for the form in which those figures are given to the public; and still less can the Engineer-in-Chief be responsible, as he neither gave the figures nor saw the compilation until it appeared in a newspaper. It is quite enough to hold the Government officers responsible for reports which they themselves produce, and it is altogether unfair to hold them responsible for reports produced by other persons. As I have said, I shall have to deal freely with my notes, for what I am now stating will perhaps help me materially in regard to my annual report, and also in respect of the Estimates. I hope it will not be necessary for me to again deal with this question, for I trust that what I state here to-night will convince this House that what has been stated by the member for the Murray cannot be borne out by investigation. The quantity of cubic yards which, according to the newspaper report in question, had still to be removed was the quantity required to be removed from first to last, of which about two-thirds had been removed at the time in question. The hon. member's criticism in regard to the boring operations is also unsustainable, for this class of rock with which we are dealing at Fremantle could not at all conveniently be drilled by machine drills. The machine drills have been tried in similar rock before, and have failed, because they clog in the holes; and the drilling of this soft rock can be done so quickly by hand that it is much cheaper to do it in that way than to incur

the expense of shifting about the much stronger and heavier staging which would be required if machine drills had been used. The hon. member knows that is the case.

MR. GEORGE: I dispute it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I have seen the machine drills in use at Newcastle, on a different kind of rock from that with which we have to deal at Fremantle; and although I mentioned to the Engineer-in-Chief at the time that I thought he might probably with advantage have these drills used at Fremantle in place of hand-drills, I was assured by him there would be no advantage and no economy in doing so. Wherever the machine drills are desirable, they have been used—as in the case of the Bunbury harbour works, which also have been referred to by the hon. member; and at the Mundaring reservoir, now in progress, we intend to have machine drills. But at Fremantle, as I pointed out by an interjection last night, the work is of a character altogether different from that on which rock drills are generally used. The quantity of rock drilled and blasted to the 7th instant is 1,027,950 cubic yards, at a cost, including drilling and explosives and everything, of 3s. 2d. per cubic yard; and the total quantity lifted has been 853,989 cubic yards, at an average price of 13d. per cubic yard. This makes in all 4s. 3d. per cubic yard, as against the estimated cost of 10s. per cubic yard; but the cost in the future will be somewhat greater than in the past, as the dredging will be deeper. If the hon. member will only follow these figures, he will see where he made his mistake.

MR. GEORGE: I have made no mistake.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I cannot state exactly the cost of the work as a whole to date, as compared with the estimate of £800,000, because a large number of works has been charged to the loan allocation for the Fremantle harbour works which do not come within the works provided for in that estimate—for instance, a sum of about £20,000 for the extension of the original ocean jetty, and £13,000 for wharf at the North Mole,

also £6,000 for wharf at the South Mole, and nearly £40,000 for duplication of railway line and sidings in the Fremantle station yard, with other smaller items, amounting in all to over £80,000. When we take into consideration this amount, together with £60,000 which has been expended for the purpose of rolling stock and cranes, and other machinery—a total of £60,000 at present charged to this allocation, but which cannot fairly remain a permanent charge to it—the hon. member will see that the total amount charged to allocation to date is about £700,000, and after allowing for this amount of £140,000, there will remain an amount of £560,000 as the cost of the works, forming part of the original design, which are already completed, and that leaves still an amount of £240,000 available for the completion of the works as originally designed. I am assured by the Engineer-in-Chief that this sum will be sufficient—in fact, more than sufficient—to complete them. Hon. members will see, therefore, that we are keeping well within the estimate—in fact, very much under the estimate—notwithstanding all the alleged heavy expenditure and wasteful expenditure which we are said to have been responsible for during the time this work has been progressing. With regard to the balance that is required, we shall, as the Premier pointed out last night, carry over something like £35,000 from this year towards the completion of this work, and it will thus be seen that we shall require about £200,000 more to complete the Fremantle harbour works. Now, the £35,000 that we shall carry over from this year will be only sufficient to carry us on for about two and a half months. Consequently, unless we are able to obtain funds to go on with this work, the result will be that it will have to stop. I take it that this is not what is required by the people of this colony. It is absolutely necessary to proceed with these works, because they are the most important works we are engaged on at the present time in the colony. We must have a central port, which must be the port of the colony; and although we have so frequently heard it said there are many other outlets on the coast, still those who take an interest in this colony

must admit that Fremantle is the central port of this great country ; and from Fremantle, notwithstanding all the statements made as to centralisation, and all the denunciations of our efforts to centralise business here, I think that every right-thinking man must come to one conclusion, and that is that we must centralise here at this port—that from Fremantle everything will be carried away into the interior of the country. And, further, there is nothing to prevent Fremantle from becoming the great distributing centre even of Australia. I say that this port, being so near to the mother country and so advantageous from a maritime point of view as a port of discharge, will undoubtedly attract the large shipping houses which have hitherto domiciled themselves in Victoria and South Australia, and they will now come here and erect their large buildings, so as to deal with the big trade of Western Australia which must come, and imports will perhaps eventually be distributed from here to other ports in Australia.

MR. SIMPSON: Sydney will shift over to Fremantle.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We shall see what will happen. It seems that a very large business which has been done in the other colonies is being done now in Western Australia by direct importation from the old country ; and the importations from the colonies, which have consisted principally of products, will cease to be required in consequence of our own productions, although the large British imports will continue, and the port of Fremantle must become a very important centre, so that everything should be done by us to encourage the development of the shipping trade there. In regard to the criticisms on the Coolgardie water scheme, which the hon. member (Mr. George) touched upon, I would like to point out that, in reference to the railway to the reservoir site, the hon. gentleman has taken a very superficial view of the question, as the cement which he alludes to is far from being the only thing that has to be carried on that railway. There will be a large quantity of sand required for the concrete, and engines for two pumping stations ; also materials for the sheds

and several miles of pipe will be required, and coal for the two pumping stations for many years to come. The cost of carting this would come to very much more than the cost of making this short railway ; and the cost of building this railway is not much more than the cost of constructing a good road. And when we remember that for years to come—in fact, I suppose for all time, while Coolgardie lasts—we will have to convey coal to that place for the purpose of working the engines which will pump the water to Coolgardie, you will see that, unless we had some means of this kind to convey material, it would be most expensive to cart it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You will make it expensive enough.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: With regard to stopping short two hundred yards from the reservoir site, it would be impossible to bring an ordinary adhesion line of railway, worked by ordinary locomotives, down to the reservoir site, the grades being already as steep as they could safely be. Such a course, as the hon. member knows, is quite impracticable ; and consequently the course we shall adopt is that which the hon. member would take, and which any engineer and any contractor would adopt, and that is, to have a tramline or an aerial railway, or something of the sort, to connect the line with the place where the dam site is. The hon. member alluded also to an expression of opinion by the Engineer-in-Chief at Fremantle, on a public occasion. I was present on that occasion, and he did express his opinion with regard to the working men, and I remember the words he used. He did not take to himself any credit for having instituted the eight-hours system. What he said was that he was in sympathy with the eight-hours system, and that, the Government having introduced that system, he felt it was the right system ; and I think the hon. member will agree with me that it is the right system to introduce, and I am sure the result of the adoption of that system has been most satisfactory in respect of these harbour works at Fremantle.

MR. GEORGE: Those reporters again!

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The reports were taken on that day by two reporters, but they did not agree, because I remember reading them. Probably the reporters at the time were not too careful to note the exact words which were used, and it was implied that the Engineer-in-Chief made use of certain words which I am confident he did not use; and I take this opportunity of exonerating him from the blame which the member for the Murray (Mr. George) wishes to attach to him in this matter. The Engineer-in-Chief did say that he thanked the officers and men of the Fremantle harbour works for the loyal way in which they had carried out the instructions given to them; and I think that is one of those expressions which we might well expect to hear from an officer in charge of a large body of men such as this, with a view of giving them a little encouragement, and of thanking them for the way in which their work had been carried out, especially in view of the fact that the number of hours in the working day had been reduced from what it had been previously. I think the hon. member is going very much out of his way in speaking as he did of this officer—an officer whose opinions he may not always agree with, though that is no reason why he should take such an objectionable stand against him.

MR. GEORGE: Little things for little minds.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Having thus dealt with the Fremantle harbour works, I will again take up the question which I was speaking on just now, with regard to the money required to carry them on—the question of the reappropriation. The trouble that will face us is that, unless hon. members will support the Government in this reappropriation, where is the money to come from? Although we have authorisations for large amounts, still at the present time, as has been so freely stated, the introduction of a Loan Bill would not be acceptable either to the House or the country; and unless hon. members will agree to this reappropriation—which, after all, is not such an awful thing as some would lead us to believe, because we shall have no difficulty in carrying on the works we have in hand with the

amounts which we intend to reappropriate—unless they do so, we shall find ourselves in an embarrassing situation. Then I say, why not agree to this reappropriation? If you refuse to agree, it only means that with regard to the Fremantle harbour works, for which we have only some £35,000 available, we shall have to look round for some other means of raising the money. These works are within measureable distance of completion, and the sum of £240,000, as first estimated, will be more than sufficient to complete them. Within eighteen months probably, and certainly within two years, the works can be completed. Within a year from now we shall have the satisfaction of seeing within that harbour the steamships which we have so long hoped to see there—the large mail steamers which have hitherto called at Albany with mails for this and other colonies. Naturally, we hope to see these ships come to the port of Fremantle, and unless we are provided with the funds to go on with this work, I can assure hon. members that the consummation which we all so earnestly desire will not be realised. Unless the reappropriations can be made, we shall have to go in for a fresh loan; because, after all, this work cannot be allowed to stand still.

MR. SIMPSON: Why do you not go in straight for a loan?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: With regard to the other questions touched upon by the reappropriations, the extension of the different railways, I think they have been talked over so much that it is hardly necessary for me to dwell upon them. With regard to the one, which no doubt will call forth most objection, the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, I think hon. members will agree with me that, notwithstanding the remarks that have been made as to the large expenditure that has taken place at Esperance, the better course is to construct the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, because we shall then be connected with the present railway system, and thus avoid the necessity of having a separate railway system, which we should be compelled to have if we decided to construct the railway from Esperance to Norseman. There would

have to be separate stock, separate railway works, and separate adjuncts would have to be put there if we decided to go from Esperance to Norseman; but if we carry a railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, and if the day should come when it is necessary to carry the line from Norseman to Esperance, the work will be done cheaper for the country, by carrying the line on from Norseman, than to now construct the line from Esperance to Norseman. If we were to carry the line from Esperance to Norseman, although hon. members say there is going to be a lot of business, there is nothing to justify a separate system being started, whereas with one hundred miles extension, the present rolling stock we have will supply the requirements. There will not be so much additional expense of working the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, as there would be if we had a separate system. Then hon. members must remember that already the business which at one time went from Esperance to Norseman, in consequence of our extended railway system to Coolgardie, has left Esperance, and is going from Coolgardie to Norseman. The business is now being done with Norseman from Coolgardie, and what will be the result when we build the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman? It costs only 4s. 2d. per ton to convey the mineral class of goods from Coolgardie to Norseman, and for goods such as flour, chaff, and oats, and such things, the cost is only 7s. 6d. per ton, so that the people will be placed in a most favourable position.

MR. VOSPER: What will be the average price per ton from Fremantle to Norseman?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: £4 13s

MR. VOSPER: What will be the cost the other way?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No doubt it will be very much less. For flour the price would be £1 13s. The rates will be about the same as those from Fremantle to Menzies, as the distances are about equal, and the rate for the mineral class of goods is 22s. 5d.; therefore we shall be able to convey timber and that class of goods for that amount. For flour, chaff, and oats the rate will be 33s. 9d. For the general class

of goods, that is Class 1, the cost will be £4 13s. 7d., and the highest rate is £8 12s. 7d. Those are goods of the third class rate. Hon. members will notice that our rates are very low. The rate for machinery is £3 8s. 10d., so that hon. members will see that machinery could be taken from Fremantle to Norseman for £3 8s. 10d.; and when we take into consideration that the present rate by teams is about £13 or £14 per ton, our rate is very cheap.

MR. VOSPER: Still it is two-thirds higher than it would be by the other route.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We acknowledge that we cannot carry goods a distance of 460 miles for the same rate as we can carry them for 190 miles. The hon. member's argument was good enough, but the argument we are using is that we have already a system as far as Coolgardie, and the extension from that place will be much less costly, and will be worked at a much less cost, than to adopt a separate system. With regard to the railway from Mount Leonora, the Premier spoke about that and its advantages last night. I am not going to speak of the mineral advantages, because we know that the mineral profits are very satisfactory; but we have another object in view in regard to this line, and that object is water. We all know the difficulties which we have been placed in in the past in regard to water, and by means of this line we shall be able to obtain water from Mount Malcolm and bring it to Menzies or Kalgoorlie at a much less cost than from other places along the line. With the advantages we shall possess in the future from the Coolgardie water supply scheme, it will not be necessary to obtain water from Mount Malcolm, but some time must elapse until the Coolgardie supply is available, and we must make use of the advantages which the country offers, and construct a railway which can convey water at a much cheaper rate than from any other point. We shall also be able to make use of that much-abused Niagara reservoir, which is the only reservoir that anyone seems to attack us upon. No doubt it has cost more than what was expected, but we shall be able to explain

the reason why. That is the only tank which has proved to be in any way leaky.

MR. VOSPER: What about the Davies tank?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That was leaky, but it is all right now. With regard to the Goomalling railway, I will not speak of its advantages. They have been touched on by the Premier, and by my old and respected friend, the Commissioner of Lands. There is no doubt about it that that railway is justified. We travelled through that country, and the settlement is very encouraging. What we propose to do is to make an experiment with this line, to see what can be done. We have been abused for extravagance, no one more so than myself; but if the Government are entrusted with the carrying out of this work we will be able to show the country that we can construct a line cheaply. This is to be a pioneer cheap line, constructed with great economy. We are to have no platforms, and I shall have to ask the assistance of hon. members when the Railway Bill is before the House to help me in this respect, because we have no authority at present to have no railway platforms, and, if some lady steps out of a railway carriage and has an accident, we should be held liable. We want to deal with the traffic on this line without platforms. What the Government intend doing is to introduce a measure enabling us to deal with traffic in small places without these platforms, and I hope the House will assist the Government and vote for the carrying out of the work. If the work is entrusted to me I shall try and make it one of the cheapest lines of the colony, consistent with good workmanship. As to the Marradong line, although it is said that we have thrown that line over, hon. members will recollect that that proposed railway passes through my own district, and if anything could have been done to help it along, anyone would have thought that I would have assisted it. Hon. members must remember that this line passes through a difficult piece of country, the most difficult I think through which we have yet taken a railway. We have made five different surveys towards Marradong, and only in the last few weeks have we been able to obtain a line which can be con-

structed at a grade of 1 in 40. The cost of that line will be fairly heavy. The plans are not ready, and they will not be ready for some months. The Government are not prepared now to proceed with the work, but it is a matter that will be considered. If the district does justify a railway, and there are timber areas there which are amongst the best in the colony, the proposal will receive some consideration, and probably not before long. I come to another point touched on by the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) as to railway matters, and I would like to point out that this is a subject I wish clearly to place before hon. members. It is a question of the railway tariff. I was surprised last night to hear that the hon. member was under an impression which has gained ground on the goldfields, and which requires contradiction, and which I took the opportunity of contradicting by telegraph, that the rates which have been increased only apply to the goldfields, and to nowhere else. When we assimilated the rates in 1896, we then acted in what I may term a generous spirit towards the goldfields. The Government did this at a loss of £130,000, but it was thought that the goldfields should have the same rates as those ruling in other parts of the country. We carried out these rates, but now we find it necessary to rearrange our tariff; and, unfortunately perhaps some of these rates happen to affect the goldfields, and the people on the goldfields turn round at once and say that this is another way of raising revenue at the expense of the goldfields. If hon. members look at the first page of the railway rate book they will see that the rates apply to all parts of the colony alike. There is no distinction, and there never was any intention of having a distinction. We wish to encourage the goldfields in every way possible; but we want to point out to hon. members that we cannot encourage the goldfields at a loss to the country. Although the railways were shown to pay some time ago, matters are somewhat changed now.

MR. VOSPER: You are losing now, then?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Not losing generally, only on the gold-fields line.

MR. LEAKE: And you want to build more lines.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It is not a pleasure to ask anyone to pay an extra rate, and if we could reduce these rates, instead of increasing them, it would be a great pleasure to do so. But we are not increasing these rates in the way in which the hon. member for North East Coolgardie would like the country to believe we are doing. We have only increased the first class rate. On looking at the rate book, hon. members will find that there are several classes. There is an alphabetical class, a mineral class, and first, second, and third classes, and we have increased the first class only.

MR. VOSPER: That contains the food supplies.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No, most of the food supplies are in the A class. There are only some four or five articles of daily consumption included in the first class. I am going to take Kalgoorlie as an extreme station to which goods can be sent, and to-day the increased rate first class to that place is 25s. 1d. per ton. Amongst the articles enumerated in this class there is sugar.

THE PREMIER: And there is no duty on sugar.

MR. SIMPSON: That was taken off years ago.

THE PREMIER: But in the other colonies there is a duty of £4 to £5 per ton on sugar.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Included in this class are sugar and flour, and one or two other articles, but there is a liberal allowance given to the individual. If a man buys eight pounds of flour he simply pays one penny more, and if he buys eight pounds of sugar he pays one penny more. It was not noticed at the time that this class contained these articles. There are some three or four more articles of daily consumption in this class, and the Government are not obstinate, and if they find at any time that the rates inflict a hardship, the Government's motive is not like the law of the Medes and Persians—unalterable. What we want to do is to make the railways pay. The in-

creased cost of working is owing to the great distances we have to go. If the hon. member will look back at my reports, he will see by the report of June last year that that was the first year after the assimilation of rates, and the first year of the long distances. When the rates were assimilated the distance was as far as Boorabbin, and was not so costly to work; but now we have to work to Kalgoorlie, which increases the working expenses. We have also difficulties as to water. Later on I will give the exact figures as to the working of the line to Kalgoorlie during the last four or five months. We go on the differential principle. I will give an instance. Take the distance of 100 miles; for the mineral class the rate is 7s. 1d., but if we take the distance to Coolgardie, say 363 miles, then the rate is 4s. 2d. People get the advantage of 2s. 9d. per ton as the distance increases. If we work only 100 miles the freight is 7s. 1d., but if we work 300 miles it is only 4s. 2d. per mile. It may be said that the difficulty has disappeared in regard to the water, but it is all very well for people to say that the dams are quite full and overflowing. A great many dams are not full, and several are far from full. Those that are full are from Parker's Road to Boorabbin. All the dams are holding well with the exception of the Niagara reservoir, and I may say that every reservoir constructed throughout the gold-fields, with the exception of the Niagara reservoir, has cost less than the estimate. The Niagara dam was more costly, but there are exceptional reasons for that. Now I come to the question of the reason for altering the rates. There is the cost of maintenance, which I think is a reasonable cause. Two-thirds of the present rolling stock came into our hands during the last 12 months, and this rolling stock was put together in the workshops at the cost of loans. The rolling stock had to be delivered on the rails, and it was brought here and put together here. This rolling stock, which went out of the shops new, is now coming back into the shops needing repair, and there is extra cost of maintenance in consequence of the long running this rolling stock has had to undergo. Our engines do more work than engines in any other

part of Australia. The next highest mileage per engine is 14,000 miles, which is in New South Wales, whilst in Western Australia we are working our engines for 23,000 miles. We are trying to get more engines, so as to lessen the mileage per engine. That is one of the difficulties we have to face, and until we can get those engines here—their delivery having been delayed in consequence of difficulties at home because of the strike—we are obliged to work the engines we have at a mileage which is too great for them, and consequently the expense of maintenance is considerably increased. Then as to the increased pay given to the staff, I may explain that beyond Southern Cross it is the rule to pay increased rates to our workmen, and all beyond Southern Cross get 25 per cent. extra, so that with the small army of men we have to employ on the railway the increased expense is considerable. When we adopted these railway rates a few years ago, we expected a large business to follow but that business has not increased in the ratio which is necessary to keep down the cost of working the railways, and consequently we have had to bear extra expense in connection with our rolling stock. We have also the increased pay which has been given to the men about the city, in consequence of the rates of wages which were being paid elsewhere, and also because I thought it was necessary to get good men for the railways, and of course to pay them well.

MR. SIMPSON: You had been paying lower rates than ordinary, then?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: When I came into office, it was my intention to have the best men obtainable for the service of the railways, and to pay them good wages; and you will agree the result has been satisfactory in the working of our lines. When I entered office, the men used to stay with us a few weeks until they got enough money together to take them to something else, and then we lost them; but now the men we employ are willing to retain their positions. By this means extra expense has been incurred in connection with our railways, and after all it is justified. When I present my annual report to this House, it will not

show such a satisfactory statement as has been submitted in former years, but it will be satisfactory, having due regard to all the circumstances. The services performed by the railways at present, as stated by several visitors to this colony, are generally regarded as fairly satisfactory. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] We have had the impressions of Mr. Wheeler, an ex-Minister of Railways in Victoria, who has travelled over our lines; and, when interviewed at Albany by a press reporter, he stated that he considered the railway service in this colony very satisfactory, and expressed approval of our railway system. We still have faults which I hope will be remedied; but notwithstanding all this, I hope that the men we have employed will prove to the public that we are discreet in our selections, and that we endeavour to do our best in the interests of the travelling public. I am sorry to have to deal with figures, but I would like to point out to the hon. member (Mr. Vosper) one or two things which perhaps may convince him that his criticisms were not justified. There is, however, another matter I almost forgot. When we imported our new rolling stock, and when it came to hand in 1896, they were three-inch axles; and these have proved to be a difficulty in use, for every case of breakdown of our stock is traceable to these three-inch axles. We have had, consequently, to import some sixteen hundred pairs of wheels, which will cost us some fifteen thousand pounds, although of course these improve our stock. This stock, which is now coming into our hands freely, means extra expense of maintenance in keeping them in order. In preparing the new rates, I may say the rate book was in hand something like four or five months, and it was in consequence of my anxiety to go personally through every item that it was delayed from time to time, and it was only after a complete criticism of the items that the new rate-book was adopted. The effect of the new rates is that we ask the people to pay a little extra on certain classes of goods, because we found we were going back, and that fact entirely justifies our asking the public to support a system which is conducive to the in-

terests of this country. If they do not support it, we must have a different policy, and the result will be anxiety and risk to the travelling public. I come now to the question of the goldfields lines as compared with other lines in the colony, and I will deal only with two, because, as the Premier pointed out last night, the goldfields railways are costing more money to work than the South-Western line, which is so much condemned by some members of this House. Although that line was opposed so strongly in this House when the Bill for its construction was before Parliament, and although it was said the line would not pay for the axle grease, yet we are now running five trains through daily and six trains part of the way. The service we have now on that line is earning a return which is not paying us so handsomely as the Eastern line, but is paying its way very well; but in regard to that line, our business is to encourage a local industry, and that is the timber industry. We are carrying timber at a lower rate than in any other part of Australia, and are doing it for the purpose of developing one of the most important industries we possess. Taking these comparisons, I will give you the results for five months, from December last to April. The revenue of the Eastern railway in December last was £32,790, and the expenditure was 49.83 per cent. On the Yilgarn railway the revenue for the same month was £38,675, and the expenditure was 81.99 per cent. In January last, on the Eastern railway the revenue was £36,332, and the expenditure 68.95 per cent.; and on the Yilgarn line the revenue was £35,652, and the expenditure 110.63 per cent. You will observe it cost us ten over the hundred to earn the hundred pounds. That length of line is from Northam to Kalgoorlie, and these calculations are based on the principle which has been used always in arriving at the way in which our railways are paying.

MR. VOSPER: There is not an inch of the Eastern line would pay but for the extensions to the goldfields.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I am giving you comparisons.

MR. VOSPER: It is not a just comparison, I think.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will now take the results for April last, being the latest return I have; and on the Eastern railway the revenue was £32,571, and the expenditure 80.57 per cent., and on the Yilgarn line the revenue was £34,584, and the expenditure 122.11 per cent. These figures, and especially those for April, are enough to make any one look round and see what is going to be the consequence of this disproportion, and I think they explain why we have amended the tariff of charges.

MR. SIMPSON: Is the cost of the sixty-pound rails included in that?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No; this is only the ordinary maintenance. We will take now the last ten months for which I have returns, and in that period the revenue on the Eastern railway was £320,796, and the expenditure 66.63 per cent.; and on the Yilgarn line the revenue was £365,653, and the expenditure 89.19 per cent. That period extends from the first of July in last year to the end of April in this year. Then we come to the total revenue and expenditure to the thirty-first May last, and the figures show that it has cost £83.39 to earn £100 on the Yilgarn line during that period. When you remember that we should not exceed 63 per cent. as a fair proportion, if we are going to pay all expenses of working our railways and interest on cost, you will see how necessary it has become to make some increase in the rates.

MR. VOSPER: What do you call the Yilgarn line?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: From Northam to Kalgoorlie, including the extension to the Boulder. I can give you the Boulder traffic, which has been of great assistance to us, although the line has been very expensive to work on account of the water required. Then we come to the working cost of railways in comparison with other colonies, which question the hon. member (Mr. Vosper) dealt with last night; and I will take for comparison only the colony of Queensland, as it has the 3ft. 6in. gauge, the same as in this colony. Taking the mineral class of goods, the charges are--

in Western Australia 11s. 1d. per ton, and in Queensland £1 2s. 10d. Coming to Class A, which is the class objected to so much, and the cause of all the trouble in connection with these increases—

MR. A. FORREST: Are these the new rates which are objected to?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: These are the new rates, which I am comparing with those of Queensland.

MR. SIMPSON: Are these the exact figures used in Queensland? And are any minerals carried in Queensland?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I cannot tell you what they carry, but I am comparing their rates with ours.

MR. SIMPSON: The mineral rates in Queensland are inoperative, as there is no mineral traffic on those railways.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The hon. member (Mr. Vosper) brought up the question of the cost of railways in New South Wales as compared with lines in this colony, and argued that because the cost in New South Wales was £14,000 a mile as compared with £4,500 in Western Australia, therefore the rates in New South Wales ought to be higher, comparatively, to make those railways pay. But it should be remembered also that in New South Wales the locomotives have greater haulage power, that the grades are generally easier, and that their four-wheeled waggons carry ten tons as compared with six-ton waggons in this colony; these conditions making a material difference. It costs us about 20 per cent. more to maintain a 3ft. 6in. gauge railway than it costs in New South Wales to maintain a 4ft. 8½in gauge railway; and of course the broader gauge is easier to work and maintain. We must take into consideration also the difference between 3 per cent. at which money has been obtained for railways in New South Wales, and the higher percentage we have to pay upon the cost of railways in this colony.

MR. SIMPSON: You have also the fact that railways in New South Wales are not managed by a Minister.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We deal with our railways on those fair lines on which a business man would deal with them, and we work our lines as nearly as possible in the same way as railways are worked by commis-

sioners in other colonies. With regard to the goldfields being harassed and plundered by these new rates, as the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) expressed it, I think it is unfair and ungenerous and unkind to say so, because, after all, we are doing all we possibly can to meet the requirements of the goldfields traffic. When we consider that by the assimilation of the rates on the goldfields lines with those on other lines, in July of 1896, we gave away £130,000 which we need not have given up, as we could have gone on with the higher rates on the goldfields line for some time longer, and that we gave up the higher rates without being asked or pressed to do so, it will be seen that we have not attempted to plunder or harass people on the goldfields. I may state also that the reduction we then made in the rates on the goldfield line was not recommended by the railway officers, for they told me at the time that there would be an increase in the working expenses in consequence of the costs I have mentioned now; and we have to make up now by slightly increasing the rates on all the lines in the colony. Yet, after all, what is the increase? Some 25 per cent. of the articles enumerated in that long list of articles carried by the railway have been affected by the increase in class 1, but the others have not been affected. Class 1 has been affected, as I have said, but the minor classes A, B, and C have not been affected; and classes 2 and 3 have not been affected either. As to the cost of conveying machinery to the goldfields, that was spoken of by some hon. members; but machinery costs no more to convey it to the fields to-day than it did previously, when taken in 12-ton lots. The Railway Department must protect itself on those small lots of machinery which take up a large space in our trucks; consequently, for anything below 12 tons we have to charge the higher rates, but for 12-ton lots and upwards the cost is the same as before. The minimum quantity is four tons; and in the case of a 12-ton lot, you can pack in three trucks of four tons each; for if you will book up a consignment of 150 tons—in fact, anything over 12 tons, provided the consignment is booked up—we will take it as it comes to hand in quantities of not less than

four tons. I would like to point out that we have not acted so badly, after all. I have shown you that we must bring that class up a little higher, and I have shown you that we have not increased it above the rate in the other colonies, that we are still the lowest of the group, and that in fact there is every justification for a slight increase. And I would ask hon. members representing the goldfields to help us to maintain these rates, because what we require mainly is an efficient service; and we are always anxious to provide for the long-distance traffic, because, as a frequent traveller upon the railways, I know the discomforts of a long journey. The Government have gone so far as to order from England 50 vehicles, with a lavatory compartment in each, both second and first class, the second class being fitted up on the most improved principles, so as to give the second class passengers as good accommodation as we can. We have also arranged to give them that light which has now come into use so largely in England—that is, we have decided to light these carriages with electricity by way of experiment; and we are cabling an order home which will enable us to have 650 carriages fitted with this light, and it will also be fitted to the 20 sleeping-cars we have here now. I hope the benefits derived from the improved lighting will be appreciated by the travelling public, so that we may, in future, have the whole of our carriages provided with it. That decision has not been arrived at until careful inquiries have been made. I know that some other colonies have adopted gas; still, we find that the best all-round light, and the most economical in the long run, although a little more costly as regards the first instalment, is the electric light; therefore, we have decided to put it into our rolling stock. With regard to the extravagance which has been attributed to me in respect to the Menzies buildings, I may say that the Premier, when in Melbourne, had brought under his notice a statement that these buildings were going to cost £60,000. Even the other day this statement was made, but now it has been cut down to £40,000. Perhaps it will be a surprise

to hon. members that I can bring it down to £23,000, although, when you come to examine the question, you must remember that this is the first line in the colony which we are taking over complete with all its buildings and everything else.

MR. SIMPSON: What was the total amount of the contract?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: £137,000; and the cost of these buildings altogether, including the station yards, sidings, platforms, tanks, platelayers' cottages and everything else, is £39,000. It is not a very large amount, after all, when you consider that we must provide for the accommodation of our workmen on those lines. We cannot send men away into that country, with all its perils and hardships, without giving them houses to live in; therefore we have decided to erect 40 platelayers' cottages, and in deciding to erect them of stone we have had regard particularly to the question of maintenance. Wooden buildings in such a climate as that involve a very heavy bill for maintenance; and the cost of erecting these stone buildings is very small as compared with wood. To have got these buildings erected, with all the outhouses and offices, for something like £300 each, was, I think, the best course that could have been taken. Although the buildings may perhaps look too substantial in stonework, they are, as compared with wood, not very costly if we take into consideration the superior quality of the work, and the fact that stone is cheaper in the long run in respect of the cost of maintenance. I think we are perfectly justified in this, and hope we shall not hear much more about these Menzies railway buildings; because I am prepared to give the figures to any hon. member or to the House, if they like to call for them, of the tenders received for these buildings; and I can assure you that, when you look into them, there has not been such fearfully outrageous extravagance as hon. members try to make out.

THE PREMIER: It is only a contractors' growl.

THE COMMISSIONER FOR RAILWAYS: One hon. member asked whether

we are raising the freight on beer. I would like to point out that beer in four-ton lots will be carried at the old rates as first-class goods, because you must remember it costs that to take it up. The rate has been increased by 25 per cent. on all lots of beer under four tons; but we are led to believe by some representatives of the fields that this is done in the interests of rival brewers, to enable the Swan Brewery Company and other Perth brewers to take bulk stocks to Coolgardie, to compete against the local article. It has also been said we have kept beer at the old rate, and increased the rate for sugar. Now, the rate for sugar is £1 5s. 1d., the same as beer, the same ratio being still maintained, so that you will find that we have acted very fairly. These things only require explanation, because there has been a great deal of talk about them, and people of course look at them from that point of view which affects their pockets, and naturally too. There is no need to deal further with the rate question. I am ready to put forward an explanation which I have had printed, giving my reasons for it, together with a comparison of the rates with those of other colonies; and I am willing to discuss the matter with any member of the House who may like to come and talk it over with me. With regard to the criticisms on public buildings, I shall touch on only one or two more of the points that have been alluded to. The member for the Murray (Mr. George) dealt largely with the Mint.

MR. GEORGE: I never mentioned the Mint.

THE PREMIER: It was the member for East Perth (Mr. James).

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Well, I will give you a short epitome of the history of the Mint building. The contract was signed on the 12th June, 1896, for £22,200; the building to be completed in 12 months. Plans were based on those of similar buildings in England and the colonies, and were afterwards sent to the Mint in London for examination. When the building was started, the first delay was through the contractors' inability to obtain cement. Revised plans were sent to London as requested, and were given to the contractors in September, 1896. The work

was then delayed through inability to obtain suitable bricks. The contract was adjusted at £22,150—practically the original amount—without linings of steel for strong-room, costing £2,200. The building was delayed in 1897 through the difficulty of getting Rottnest stone in winter. The Deputy Master and Superintendent of the Mint arrived in September and November, 1897. These officers announced that the provision for the chlorination process, which had been specifically stated by the London authorities as sufficient, was not sufficient for the work to be done in this colony, and that a much more extensive plant and accommodation for it would be necessary. They also demanded the electric light as a necessity, and quarters for the superintendent.

MR. SIMPSON: Fifteen rooms in his residence.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The Imperial officers moreover required several other alterations and additions. The original capacity of the Mint was for the treatment of gold representing one million pounds per annum; but it was found necessary, owing to the development of the gold-mining industry, to make provision for dealing with gold to the value of several millions. I believe that, exclusive of the machinery, the Mint will cost about £30,000. The cost of the Mint in Melbourne was £45,000, and it is able to treat gold to the value of about three and a half millions sterling per annum. I am sure the comparison is in favor of this colony, because we shall have one of the most complete Mints in the Australian colonies when we hand it over. Early in July we hope to have it all out of the contractors' hands, and handed over to the Master of the Mint. Of course, you will understand that, although it will be ready by the 13th July, there will be some little delay before we shall be able to mint the gold. The necessary adjustments of the machinery will have to be made, because those who know anything of minting will understand that such very sensitive and complicated machinery requires most careful adjustment.

MR. MORGANS: We shall have to make it much bigger yet.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I hope we shall. I have now come almost to the end of my speech, but I would like to deal with the Collic railway and coal. I have heard a good deal of condemnation of the Collic railway and the coal; but I think those hon. members who have been decrying this line and this coal do not know the wealth that exists on that field. I have visited the place several times, and I am fully satisfied that we have a magnificent asset there. I am having a report printed, which will be available in the course of a day or two, showing the last trials of the fuel, which have been made by our engineer, and those trials have been most satisfactory—so satisfactory that we have entered into a contract with one company to commence the delivery of a supply on the 1st July next, and in fact they could supply us now, but the railway is not ready. When we take over the line on the 1st July, we shall commence to take coal from that company at the rate of 200 tons a week, which we have arranged shall be used upon our engines exclusively, at the price of 10s. 9d. a ton delivered on trucks at the railway siding. We have also arranged with another company to put in for them a siding of about half a mile in length, to be paid for by the company, and we have agreed with that company to supply us with 40,000 tons of coal. We have also sent an offer to another company in London, now in course of flotation, to take 40,000 tons of coal from them at once, and we are prepared to take 100,000 for cash on delivery. We are showing our faith in this coalfield, and the local engineer has told me that he intends to give the coal a fair trial. He has promised to use it, and will commence to do so from the 1st of July. I think this ought to be sufficient encouragement to the coalfield, and that it shows we have faith in the Collic product. I am sure all who have used the coal will admit that, although it may not burn with that brilliancy that the gaseous coal of Newcastle (New South Wales) exhibits, yet after all it gives forth a heat which I am sure is quite equal to the other, and the only fault of it is that there is more ash. The difference in value as between Newcastle coal and Collic coal is that the

Collic coal is worth only 7-9ths the value of the Newcastle coal. We hope for improvement as we go down. We all know that, so far, we have only had surface workings, and the coal has not yet had a proper test; but we hope to have good results in the future, and I fully anticipate that our hopes will be realised. With regard to the alleged falling off in the expenditure of public money, I am going to give the House a few figures. It has been said by people elsewhere that the depression has been caused by the cessation of public works and the lessening of our expenditure. I can assure the House that it has been frequently said that the depression has been caused by the cessation of public works and the Government not paying large amounts on the public account. I am going to talk to hon. members as a business man. I admit there has been depression, and that there are a number of unemployed, but there are not so many as has been stated, and I will give hon. members one proof of it. The Colonial Secretary opened a registry, and up to date only 137 persons have registered their names for employment. It cannot be shown that there are a large number of unemployed. I, as a business man and an employer of labour, have of course applications from people for employment—but show me the country where there are no unemployed. I say this would be a perfect elysium if we had no unemployed. I say this country is not in that stage of depression which people would lead us to believe it is in. My impression is that the country is in a more flourishing condition to-day than ever it has been. Our business men are the people who feel the depression; but why do they feel it? We business people have done the same as the Government have done: we have had faith in the country and over-imported, possibly because we expected a larger number of consumers here. And there is this, too, that Western Australia, owing to the depression in the East, has offered a field for commercial enterprise, and people have availed themselves of the field, and the fact is that there are more people here to-day to do business than there is business to be done. The result has been over-importations by business people. Large numbers of

business people have stocked their houses, and then they have found that the goods are not going off as they had expected, which accounts for the falling off in the customs revenue. Business people imported large quantities of goods in the early part of last year, but they have stopped importing now, because they have plenty of goods in their warehouses. People in business have ceased importing, and stocks are being consumed; the consequence will be that probably in a few months things will go up again. We business people who have had some 25 years' experience know that we have these waves of depression. The weaklings have gone under, and the people who are able to stand will come up triumphantly. I say this : we shall all reap the advantages of the prosperity which is coming in this country. I said I would give the House a few figures; I will only give two or three lines. It has been said in this House that we have been going on recklessly, spending money and building up the country on public works. It has been said that I have been lavish, reckless, and extravagant and everything that is bad, but I say that this Parliament entrusted me, or rather the Government, with loan moneys to expend to the amount of £1,534,428 at the beginning of the financial year. Of this amount we have expended £1,377,561. That shows that up to date we expended £28,996 less than we were entitled to spend, that is taking the proportion for the ten months. A large amount of money has been expended in rolling stock and things imported from England, material for the railways, and everything else required to carry on.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Have you paid all the debts?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: All. We have paid something like £250,000 for land resumption, which is a large amount, but it was in the interests of the country. Hon. members have accused me sometimes of going too fast, but if I had been in my present position I probably would have asked the support of my colleagues to allow me to secure the land in advance. That is one of the things hon. members blame me for—being extravagant and erecting

public buildings which are ahead of the times. I feel justified in doing that, and I say this, that I never regret the work done in connection with public buildings. Now I come to the amount expended out of the consolidated revenue, which everyone likes to hear about. The amount we were entitled to spend out of the consolidated revenue was £1,073,196; the House entrusted this to the Government to spend, although the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) said he would not trust me with anything, as I was such a spendthrift. We expended from this £1,073,196 an amount of £755,616, or £228,151 less than the amount we could have expended on public buildings and public works. To show hon. members that we have a grasp of what we are doing, I may inform them that I have a return made out every month showing what has been expended, and I have also a return made out showing what amount is likely to be expended during the next month. We have expended out of the consolidated revenue £68,692 per month. The figures for the last three months are: March £65,872, April £74,674 and last month £60,408. In the face of that we cannot be accused of causing the depression. We have been paying money out regularly at the rate of £68,000 per month. I ask, where is the cause of the depression in regard to public works? We have done this, we have got certain works in order so that we can dispense with some of the officers of the department. We certainly do find that we are getting to the end of the amounts which were allocated to us, but we have works which will be kept going for some months, and which will keep the labourer and the tradesman and other people engaged. After all, this accusation as to the depression being caused by the cessation of Government works is not true. We are continuing to spend with all judgment the amounts which we are authorised by Parliament to expend. During the year we have expended from the consolidated revenue £756,912, and from loan £1,394,075, making a total of £2,150,987. I shall be able to place on the table of the House a report, in reference to which hon. members will agree with me in saying that it is one of the most satisfactory reports of the work-

ing of the Works Department ever placed on the table of the House. I am satisfied with the works done, although I am supposed to be "led by the nose" by the officers of my department. I would not be fit to hold my position if I could not hold my own. I have been an employer of labour for the past 25 years, and I have had one of the largest businesses in the country to conduct, and people know the success of that business. I say the officers of my department have helped me through loyally, although I have had during the past two or three months to retrench and call upon officers to leave the service in consequence of the cessation of works. No one regretted that the public necessity demanded it more than I did. These officers have not been retrenched for want of funds. Who are those who impress on the Government the requirements of their districts, who say that the works are necessary? Why, the very men who condemn us.

MR. LEAKE: Your supporters.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will prove when the return is laid on the table of the House that members of the Opposition have had a fair share of works carried out, and in some cases more than a fair share. There is only one other point to which I have to refer, and that is in regard to the payment of accounts. The statement has been made that we delayed payment. I will stake my existence on this—

MR. SIMPSON: No. don't!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will stake my existence on this, because I know that, provided that the account is in order—

MR. SIMPSON: Oh!

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: And that everything is in conformity with the Audit Act, which we have to work under, and which the House expects me to work under, provided the account is in order, every public creditor can come to the Works Department and get his money.

MR. GEORGE: But he does not get it.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I will give hon. members an instance of one thing. Many business people came to me in reference to the block in the department, and there were many little

things I was able to tell them, and which, if I had not been a business man, I would not have known of in connection with their complaints. Contractors and others often mislead their financial agents and bank managers. They say "The Public Works Department owe me a lot of money; I want you to keep my credit good until I get it." Probably the Works Department do not owe the man any money at all, and this man wants his rotten credit bolstered up. I have only to refer to an hon. member behind me to support me in what I say. I know the case of a man who told a gentleman to whom he owed money that he had money to come from the Works Department. This gentleman rang me up on the telephone several times, and, after we had gone into the matter, I convinced him that the statement of this "public creditor" was false. That is one of many cases. The case mentioned by the hon. member for the Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) is probably in connection with some dispute, which has not been settled. The Government, like any other persons from whom money is claimed, insist on having the claim verified before settling the account. Surely it is not expected that I should pay accounts blindly. If that is expected I tell you I am not going to do it. I will act in the same way as I would in my own business and in conformity with the Act of Parliament. It is not true that payments are not made because the Government have no money. As the Premier told you, we have any amount, and have never been short of money. Never since the Public Works Department came into existence has there been such a system of account-keeping and of general supervision as during the last year or two. There is one little matter, although a paltry one, to which I would like to refer. I have been accused, both inside and outside the House, of travelling about with a large staff of officials. My last official visit was to Cue, the occasion being the taking over of a big railway. There are the Construction Branch, the Engineering Branch, and the Traffic Branch. Is it not well that the head of the department, and the heads of the branches under him, should make personal visits under the circumstances to see what is neces-

sary? There is more gained by travelling about the colony and seeing for myself than by my sitting in my office and merely hearing reports from district officers. All business people are suspicious that they may be deceived by reports. —men may have the best intentions and endeavour to do their duty to the utmost; but there are times when the observing eye of the Minister, and of the heads of departments under him, may prove of great service to the country. It has been said that myself and officers go on picnics. If we do, we pay for them out of our own pockets. This colony is noted for its hospitality, and when distinguished visitors wish to travel in the colony we treat them as they are treated in the other colonies. The least the Minister can do, if the country is not to be thought mean, is to treat such visitors with due hospitality. It is cruel and unkind to allude to these trips made, not for pleasure, but for the advantage and in the interests of the country. I sincerely thank hon. members for the kind way in which they have listened to me. It was necessary for me to deal with two or three subjects. Otherwise, it might have gone forth that the Government were in difficulties in regard to payment of accounts. The explanation I have made will do good. Some hot words have been used. Hon. members have occasionally said things which are a bit cutting, and sometimes I am a little bit thin-skinned and inclined to fight rather than compromise. But my better judgment comes to the fore; and, after all, I take all as well meant.

MR. SIMPSON (Geraldton): I am sure the Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works is to be congratulated on his discretion in furnishing the House and the country with some information which the Opposition had to make strenuous efforts to secure in the public interest. There is little doubt that, had not members on the Opposition side of the House pressed as strenuously as they have done for the information, Parliament and the country would still be in the dark. If I may, I would like to congratulate the hon. gentleman on the astuteness with which he particularly selected the traffic branch in order to cover the more glaring faults of the department under his control. Be-

fore dealing with the Railway Department, it is necessary to refer to that grave trespass made on the patience and possibly the powers of His Excellency the Governor by the lengthy inventory which, by the obligations of his great office, he had to deliver to Parliament during last week. A good deal has been said about the Speech. Some rude members nave, I believe, made fun of the Speech and laughed at it, much to the indignation of the composers. Might I suggest to those composers, whose energy and ability were so heavily taxed, that it is very often the fate of authors to be criticised, as part of their literary career? There are matters in the Speech which look extremely like an inventory of things worn out, or an inventory prepared by people who are selling off on going out of business. It resembles the catalogue of a lost luggage office or the list furnished by the Collector of Customs for the annual sale of unclaimed goods to be disposed of to the highest bidders for cash. It will not be entirely out of place to endorse the remarks that fell from the courteous member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill) in regard to the attitude of the right hon. gentleman who holds the distinguished position of leader of the House. I had almost hoped that, after mixing with the great men of the other colonies, and after the gentle way in which they treated him—letting him down lightly—the Premier would have been induced to realise that there was an obligation on him to deal more gently with such a very respected member of the House as the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Solomon). Last session it will be remembered the Premier considered it obligatory on him to tell the member for South Fremantle that the Government had put him into Parliament. We all know that was, perhaps, what the Premier would have liked to believe and to have convinced his audience of. It was a lamentable failure. It seems idle to expect the Premier to improve. Indeed, in his address to the House, the first word used by the right hon. gentleman was "humbug," in connection with some remarks which fell from the member for the Murray (Mr. George), who furnishes this House with so many wise words and pregnant subjects for consideration.

During the recess there have been the annual changes in the Ministry. It was said recently by the rude "man in the street"—that "man in the street" who seems to say and suggest so much—that the Premier has encumbered his Cabinet with a good deal of lumber. It was even suggested by the "man in the street"—and I know his individual opinion of the gentlemen who sit with the Government—that the Ministerial possibilities on that side of the House have been exhausted. One is strongly inclined to think so when one looks at the Treasury benches. I do not suppose that even the most solid, the most dumb supporter of the Government would contend that the intellectual power and ability of the Forrest Government have been added to in the last year or two. The commanding power and influence of the late Attorney-General (Mr. Burt) becomes distinctly marked when we note his absence from the Ministry. We see the late Minister of Education transferred to the position of Minister of Mines. Might I suggest, with the greatest deference to the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory), that it was a little *mal à propos* to suggest to the Minister of Mines that, as he had now such an accomplished Under-Secretary, he would perhaps be able to carry out his duty to the country? The suggestion is not mine, but fell from the gentleman who moved the Address-in-Reply. I must congratulate the member for the Gascoyne (Mr. Hubble) on his first able effort in launching the ship. You will remember the charming way in which he allowed the ship, Western Australia, to glide into the ocean. It must come with sadness and sorrow to that gentleman, whom we all so much like, to learn of the sad accident that has happened to the ship in another place. The vessel is already on the rocks, and probably after the division in connection with this debate, it will be admitted by the insurance offices that she is a total wreck. His Excellency's Speech talks about many things. We all heartily agree with the remarks of the Director of Public Works with regard to the extended requirements of the Mint. But he does not entirely account for the extreme de-

lay in connection with the matter. We all regret the great delay and unnecessary expense. The contract and plans were largely a legacy to the hon. gentleman. But we learn with satisfaction that there is a possibility of the building being completed, and of the gentlemen who have been drawing salaries for so many months beginning to earn the money. The Director of Public Works complained very much—absolutely growled—at the Opposition because they did not talk of a lot of things the Government have done. He expected the Opposition to praise that mad folly of his which is spreading like a pall over the future of the country—the Coolgardie water scheme—that scheme which, if not stopped, is going to ruin the fair prospects of the colony, and paralyse our business and our finances wherever our name is known. The idea of 170,000 people, with a huge arid territory, and with so much yet to be done in every small centre where people are trying to develop the resources of the country—the idea of such a community mortgaging their future for upwards of £3,000,000 in order to carry out a scheme for which there is no parallel on earth in the history of man!

THE PREMIER: Not upwards of three millions.

MR. SIMPSON: The Premier has no more conception of what this scheme will cost than he had of the cost of the Mint. The Premier complained that nothing had been said about the Coolgardie water scheme. But I have something to say about the scheme, and what I say is not in my personal interests, but in the interests of the country. I have ever been against the scheme being carried out, except by private enterprise. Imagine the position of public affairs if the weight of this responsibility were lifted off our shoulders! One feature of the right hon. gentleman's advocacy was that no private company ought to have control of the vital fluid which is absolutely necessary to existence. I then pointed out to him and the people of the country, and I want now to emphasise the fact, that there is a little village called London. Not a pint of the water which flows into London belongs to any but private

companies. Every pint of water which flows into London is the result of private enterprise. And yet we 170,000, who desire population to settle on our land and develop our resources, are going to mortgage our credit to this enormous extent. Even if the scheme succeed, which it is almost impossible to imagine, it will lead to duplication after duplication, and extension after extension. Our borrowing power will be entirely exhausted in connection with this huge undertaking, which will gradually absorb the profit gained from every other source in the country. We have object lessons in the goldfields. I don't know if there is a more sanguine man than I am about Western Australia. She smiled on me from the first day I stepped on her shores, but I must face the facts. Take the first railway we built, the Southern Cross. It was a lucky railway. I was a member of the House when the proposal was made for its construction. I neither spoke in favour of it nor against it. I thought it might be well to try it, as an experiment. We had gold there. We were satisfied about that, but we were a young community without much experience; nevertheless we decided, "nobly daring," to build that line. What would be the position of this colony now without that line? I say we have object lessons all over the goldfields. With the exception of Kalgoorlie, you will have great difficulty soon in finding anything that will pay.

A MEMBER: What about Kanowna?

MR. SIMPSON: It is dependent on alluvial gold, the industry which the hon. member did so much to drive out. The hon. member endeavoured, by organised meetings, to support the action of the Government in that surreptitious way to take the bread and butter out of miners' mouths who were doing their utmost to develop the country. The people all over the country are beginning to lose confidence in the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government. I told him last year that he had lived on jam all his life. He has had seven fat years, and the lean years are approaching. So long as he had overflowing revenues and big surpluses, and was able to spend £5,000 here and £10,000 there, the Premier was

magnificent. He was a magnificent sham so long as the people were hungry to get what he had to give. Some one who knew the right hon. gentleman well said of him once—"I have seen Sir John Forrest in prosperity, but I want to see him in adversity before I can say he is fit to be made a hero of." The right hon. gentleman is on his trial. How is he shaping? I for one do not think he will shape so well in adversity as he did in prosperity. His personality commands respect. Everybody likes him. I don't know anyone in the colony who is better liked. Inside the House we don't get on very well, but outside the House we get along splendidly. How about the other members of his Ministry? We have the Minister of Lands, a gentleman of splendid abilities and wide experience, who has been accomplishing marvels, although I am inclined to think that when he gets all those locomotives of his going full steam ahead he will begin to think in a couple of years, "I have set all these engines going, but I am not at all sure they will not come to grief, so I will get out of the difficulty by resigning." I think a system of compulsory improvements would be a safer thing for the country than the method at present pursued. Then we have the new Attorney General. I have no knowledge of his competency in the particular profession with which he is connected beyond this: I know he is responsible for the legal advice tendered to the Government when they published regulation 103, and I am also aware that in every single instance the tribunals of the country decided he was wrong in his law and unjust to the people. Does that inspire confidence in the Forrest Ministry?

THE PREMIER: They never decided anything of the sort. You know that very well.

MR. SIMPSON: Then we have the Minister for Works. You will remember how he came into office. He followed the gentleman who had held that office and who looked profoundly wise, but never did anything. I am incorrect. When ever he did anything he did it wrong. By the aid of the Opposition, that gentleman was transferred into the political oblivion which he adorns. In his place—I hope I speak candidly of the political

dead—the Premier selected the member for the Williams, a gentleman full of energy and full of “go.” One remarkable feature about this gentleman’s administration is that, after we had furnished him with all the funds he could ask for and given him plenty of money to make the railways a success, the working expenses have jumped up nearly 50 per cent., and he has had to increase the rates. Does that inspire confidence? Then there is the Minister of Mines, who is both respected and liked. We were comrades once, almost shoulder to shoulder on this side of the House. He has been translated, and I am sure he realises that the post of honour is also the post of danger. One of the first actions of the Forrest Ministry—no doubt intended as a compliment to the mining members—was to appoint a Mining Commission of eleven or twelve men. Having appointed this commission, the next thing the Government do is to flout the intelligence and ability of the very gentlemen whom they had appointed. I have no wish or desire to in any way detract from the value of the report those gentlemen furnished, or are alleged to have furnished; for neither it nor the evidence has reached us yet. The report is in the press, or somewhere else. The commission has closed its labours, but the results of those labours have not reached Parliament. There was a certain amount of manipulation connected with that commission. First of all the Minister of Mines was made president. Then that gentleman goes away, leaves the colony in fact. After that the commission was graced with the presence of the hon. member for Coolgardie (Mr. A. E. Morgans), who will have to be described as occupying a different geographical position from that which he was recently supposed to occupy, inasmuch as he has changed his seat. One of the gentlemen composing that commission, who first assisted to draft the Mining Act, has now been appointed Under-Secretary for Mines. I can assure my old friend the Minister at the head of that department that his staff is growing extravagant, and the sooner it is looked to the better; otherwise the administration of that department will become as great a menace to its future as that of the Public Works

Department. The Traffic Department has been referred to this evening. The general feeling of the public is that wonders have been accomplished by that department. It is, no doubt, a credit to the colony, but the construction branch is another matter altogether. One of the chief charges made against the leader of the Opposition by the Premier was that he never travelled about the country and never went out of Perth. Well, I do travel about the colony, and I want to give the Premier a little information which I am sure he does not know. I recently had occasion to visit the district which has long honoured itself by sending him to grace this assemblage with that wise judgment and that courtesy which contribute so much to the value of our debates and the proceedings of Parliament. I had occasion to go to that district, and I saw the Donnybrook-Bridgetown railway, the history of which work even you (the Premier) will admit has been a precarious one. The project was brought forward in this House very optimistically by the Premier in the heyday of his enthusiasm, and he did not actually suggest it should be built to Bridgetown, but in a sort of pathetic way suggested a railway from Bridgetown to Greenbushes. The Opposition succeeded in deferring that railway scheme for a couple of years. That was one distinct public good accomplished by the Opposition. I had the honour of visiting that district in company with the present Minister, and we pretty well agreed that, although a railway would undoubtedly have to be built there ultimately, it was inexpedient to commit the country to such an expenditure at that time. The first amount put down for this railway was £80,000.

THE PREMIER: £100,000.

MR. SIMPSON: Subsequently it was raised to £100,000, but I believe it was originally £80,000; the amount, at any rate, was subsequently increased. I have no hesitation in saying that one of the gravest indictments ever made against a public department in the world is to be found to-day in that Donnybrook-Bridgetown railway. The prodigal extravagance, the awful expenditure in the additions to that line, would send any business man in this House nearly

crazy. We believe that feathers indicate how the wind blows and straws the course of a stream, and even the Director of Public Works might be prepared to admit that small matters of this sort often indicate the character of the general policy of a department. Would you believe it, Sir, that this railway is largely a timber railway? We have in that district most magnificent timber, it is true; but the population is sparse—very sparse indeed. Yet there are seven stations in that 42 miles of railway. If one turns to the Year Book for the population of the district, he will find that it only runs into hundreds. I have no hesitation in saying that this railway, when completed, will cost very nearly 50 per cent. more than the amount passed by this House. It is the most extraordinary combination of curves and gradients in this colony. I made inquiries of the station master or the man who was acting as such as to the amount of traffic, and he told me that the freight carried on that line at present amounts to three tons a week, yet that railway, when completed—when everything is entered up in the ledger—will cost this country over £200,000.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. SIMPSON: I have a fact or two here which, if you want them I will give you. You would scarcely believe it, sir. Here is a hamlet—even its greatest admirer could scarcely call the town other than a hamlet; and yet in that place the Works Department take the main railway station right into the back yard of a "pub," though they had hundreds of thousands of acres round about it which were easy of access and all that could be desired.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no; not easy of access.

MR. SIMPSON: Just at the neck, as you approach the place, there is an ideal place for a station. Gentlemen, do not imagine I am telling you fairy tales. I am assured by a business man connected with the place—a trustworthy authority—that there will be very nearly £20,000 of resumption to pay for taking the railway into Bridgetown. You will have a network and a cobweb of arbitration down there: because the rural mind, when it really grasps the idea that the

Government has got to pay, is expensive, and it is clever.

THE PREMIER: That will not be the Government's fault.

MR. SIMPSON: I can assure you that to-day the question of resumption is a science in Bridgetown. It is an art. The man with money who went to Bridgetown to-day to buy land would come back. He might go there with a letter from his bank manager, "I am prepared to honour this gentleman's cheques to any amount;" but he would come out of Bridgetown feeling like a pauper. I have never met so many rich men in my life. I have been in Coolgardie, in the champagne age—they are down to cold water now, I understand—but I never met so many rich men in my life as I met in Bridgetown. Another thing which indicates the policy of our Works Department is that there are seven station houses, and seven station masters' residences, to say nothing of platelayers' cottages.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I think you are putting down more than there are at the present time. I think there are three station masters on seven sidings. State facts.

MR. SIMPSON: I will endeavour to do so. I have no wish to mislead this House. I do not think I have been accused of doing so, as a rule; but there are seven station houses between Donnybrook and Bridgetown. And with regard to the station masters' residences, you know what a magnificent timber jarrah is. But would you believe that some little time ago you could have seen in Bickford's furniture shop nearly £100 worth of Richmond River cedar from New South Wales being worked up for fittings for those houses between Donnybrook and Bridgetown? What language will suffice to describe it? Criminal extravagance, I call it, and it is indicative of the policy of the Works Department. There are platelayers' residences there, and there are conveniences; and all these conveniences lined with half-inch matchboard lining, and the white ants have sent out invitations to a picnic. These, sir, are facts that will induce hon. gentlemen sitting on that side of the House to say that the Forrest Ministry is worthy of the confidence of the country. That is what they are doing with the people's money. That

is the department which this new Minister, full of energy and boundless ambition—no doubt about that—came in to reorganise. The poor old gentleman who is dead and gone who used to occupy that position did nothing much; but this other man is putting cedar fittings into stations in the jarrah country. Such is the policy of the Works Department in regard to railway construction. Take the Cue railway. That has been largely under the control of the hon. gentleman.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We did not give much for that, you know.

MR. SIMPSON: What I said in the House last session pointed to another grave error. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) will realise how dangerous a railway constructed as was that line originally may prove. Am I not right in saying that the Cue railway had to be re-designed? Is it not true that the rain washed away the foundation, and there was the railway up in the air like the skeleton of a huge centipede? You will never know what it will cost till after the return of old Abraham Baxter, who has gone over to Adelaide to consult the Hon. J. H. Symon as to how lightly they will let down the Public Works Department. And I can assure the hon. gentleman that old J. H. Symon and Abraham Baxter are not lightly to be reckoned with. So much with regard to the reconstruction of the Ministry. From the Premier's wide experience, especially with the pages of history, one would have thought he would have been a man fairly competent in finance by this time. As hon. members remember, about seven months ago the Premier delivered the financial speech in the House, and at that time he had only to estimate the revenue for seven months, and we know he has lamentably failed. The right hon. gentleman would like to smooth the matter over now, and he rushes away from the question of the revenue and expenditure and refers to the exports. The Premier apparently has slightly improved. Last night he did not call me many hard names. I think he only called me one name, the coadjutor of the leader of the Opposition. I think I must be getting on very well, because I have only heard that name before in connection with a bishop.

I am informed by the gentleman whom I have the honor to sit next to that the population of Bridgetown is 210. To return to what I was saying. The Premier has to face the country with a falling revenue, a deficit on his estimate. I remember chatting with the Acting-Premier, when the right hon. gentleman was representing the country so splendidly in England, and he told me that the country would require very careful financing for the next few months. The failure to estimate the revenue of the country for seven months I should imagine will not inspire much confidence in the estimates of the Premier for the future. The right hon. gentleman, in dealing with the amendment moved by the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Lenke), of course abused members of the House considerably—he always does; it is part of the programme. We would think there was something wrong if we did not get abuse—in fact we like it; but it comes ill from the hon. gentleman. We do not lack support in the country, although we have not got it here. But by-and-by, when we get a new electoral Bill, and a redistribution of seats, we shall get support here. The right hon. gentleman accused the hon. member for Albany of rudeness and insult. Surely when we come into the House, as has been pointed out in the excellent speech of the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James), we must realise our position as trustees of the people, and speak out the truth which is in us. The Government would like to exercise a gag on the freedom of speech, if they could, the same as they use the Treasury in connection with the press. But in Parliament it is impossible. Fortunately the liberties won for us by our ancestors give us here freedom of speech. I say with regard to the present policy—I am going to make a statement which is forced on me by years of experience—I believe the dumb-driven majority of the Government on that side of the House, if the Premier came down with a policy of repudiation, would support it. That conviction is forced upon me. I say, if it were possible for the Premier to come down with a policy of repudiation, the majority on that side would support it. I will not condone its initiation in the treatment of the people

of Esperance, and I say that is the initiation of repudiation. The people who went to live at Esperance were induced to go there by the splendid hopes held out by the public men of the country that a railway would be given to them. I do not say whether the time has come to build a railway to Norseman or not; but one would imagine, with the experience the Premier has achieved by his heroic efforts in the past, that he would have realised that in Esperance we have one of the gates of the colony; that we do not require to spend £800,000 or £1,000,000 down there to make a harbour. Among the many endowments with which the Creator has endowed Western Australia is the natural harbour at Esperance. I put it to hon. members, not as representatives of the people but as statesmen; I put it to hon. members that in view of the future national life of Australia, is it right and just to endeavour to divert commerce from its natural avenue? Every page of history, every account of a just and upright people, distinctly leads us to the fact that those in power who, for the sake of temporary vested interests, endeavour to divert commerce from its proper channel commit a crime. The Premier cannot escape from this matter clean-handed and guiltless. I have no desire to endorse some of the extreme language used in the press in connection with this matter, but I ask—Have we a right to treat the people of Esperance as foreigners? If people go there and buy land, and contribute so much to the revenue, it is not right by a mere scratch of the pen to say, where there was a township and enterprising settlers there shall be desolation. By the report which has been laid on the table of the House to-night by the Commissioner of Lands, we see that people have been induced to go and live at Esperance, and now, after selling them Government land and taking their money, the Premier's policy is to ruin them. Blank ruin is staring them in the face.

THE PREMIER: Do not get excited.

MR. SIMPSON: I do get excited with inhumanity and injustice; and may my heart cease to beat when I fail to resent it! What do we find here? The Forrest Gov-

ernment have allowed the country to become infested with rabbits, and they turn away the settlers to build a rabbit fence. The Government have decided to send away human beings, and make rabbits the natural settlers of Esperance. Even the Premier cannot speak with the faintest gleam of enthusiasm about the proposed railway from Coolgardie to Norseman. The Director of Public Works had had his instructions, and was true to his role. To keep in power now, the Government are beginning to look around, in order to see who will move and who will stay with them, and are not looking solely to the interests of the country. The Government are trying to elevate Coolgardie into the position of a toll-bar, in the development of the eastern goldfield.

MR. MORGANS: Coolgardie is the proper place, is it not?

MR. SIMPSON: The hon. member dare not say otherwise. If he did he would be consigned to political oblivion. I have no doubt the hon. member, on this particular occasion, will see truth with a single eye—a Coolgardie eye, made specially in the locality. The Premier did not even attempt to prove that this railway would be conducive to the economic development of the resources of that part of the colony. The Director of Public Works is under the absolute control of the Engineer-in-Chief, whose speech he has read us to-night, to the effect that there could not be workshops, or anything of that sort, at Esperance and that the policy of the Government was to connect all railways from a base. But that policy does not apply to the Murchison Railway, between which and the Government system lies a country held by foreigners—the Midland Company. We know that the Premier has made an awful mull of it. He likes to say smooth and pleasant things. What he ought to have told the people at Esperance was, "The Government do not see their way to construct a railway at present; but if you can bring me sound securities—trustworthy, responsible people, who will build this railway from Esperance to Norseman under conditions the Government will consider necessary in the interests of the colony—we will allow private enterprise to

undertake the work." The Esperance people would then have got their railway. They would not have been treated as foreigners, and alienated from him. There is no getting away from the fact that, if you take away a man's bread and butter, he looks on you as his enemy for life. So much for that proposed railway. Then we come to that darling little project, so dear to the heart of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans)—the Bonnie Vale Railway. Of one with so charming a personality as himself, I do not like to imply or say anything unpleasant. But, speaking as a member of this House and as a politician, I say that this proposal is the bonniest little job ever submitted to any Legislature in the world. Have we arrived at the stage now, that our gold mines cannot be made to pay with a railway six miles away?

MR. MORGANS: Oh, the mines will pay all right.

MR. SIMPSON: Mining machinery is on the field now, and if you go to Coolgardie you can get cabs to Bonnie Vale. I believe there is a relation and connection between the Bonnie Vale Railway and the translation of the hon. member from his lately-occupied seat at the extreme corner of the Opposition benches to the position he at present occupies on the Government side.

MR. MORGANS: There is not. You may take my word for it.

MR. SIMPSON: I am not in a position to exactly define the connection; but it is singular that such a fulsome letter should have been written within a very few days by the Premier to the people of Coolgardie, asking them to bring every possible pressure to bear on their present member to induce him to sit in Parliament. These are absolute facts. Does any one doubt them? They have appeared in the *Morning Herald*, and surely no one will doubt that newspaper. At any rate, the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) will not doubt it. The Fremantle harbour works have been alluded to; and the Opposition were very much condemned by the Premier, because they did not talk about those works. The Opposition did not talk about the works, for exactly the same

reason they did not allude to certain accomplished facts to which it was needless to refer, and which they did their best not to make use of. The Premier seems to think it the duty of the Opposition to speak on all the works which Parliament years ago determined should be carried out. I think I can account for it. In a hesitating sort of way with regard to the particular wording, the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) stated he proposed to move an amendment to the Address-in-Reply. During the next day he, in his wisdom, determined to alter the wording of his amendment. Judging from the notes the Premier held in his hand, I think he had prepared himself to speak on the amendment of which the member for Albany had given notice the night before. But it was another amendment altogether, and the notes did not quite fit in. Hon. members may remember the story of that much-respected Presbyterian Minister who went to church on a Sabbath morning to deliver a sermon on a particular subject, and of the rude urchin who so transposed certain sermons which had been prepared as to land the old gentleman in the pulpit with the wrong discourse. The Premier had the wrong sermon, and he mistook the text on which the member for Albany was going to preach. As to facilities of transit in this colony, it is admitted all over Australia, and will be admitted by every man who has travelled and observed, that the Parliament of Western Australia have done more in the way of furnishing such facilities to a spreading population than has ever been done before. But I do not know that this particular Parliament ought to pat itself on the back, and, living in the past, become a mutual admiration society. I look for a policy of the future. But it seems, from some of the utterances of the Premier, that his future career is to be largely dependent on what he has done in the past. This country is not in that stage when a man can control affairs by continual repetition of what he has done in the past. I know nothing but the present, and I look to the future. The more we concentrate attention on the present and the future, the more we are likely to accomplish for the country. Allusion has been made to the unemployed question.

I have no desire in any way to encourage an unemployed organisation, such as has been seen in the other colonies. But when we have in the Speech assurances implying that everything is satisfactory, we know that those assurances are not true. Are we any poorer for knowing the truth? Are we not richer for knowing the truth, and more able to face difficulties? There are hundreds of respectable, decent men who want work and cannot get it. And, if the press is to be trusted, the Premier is to a very considerable extent responsible for this state of things. The Premier is reported to have said recently when in Melbourne—I do not know whether it is true or not—that if 5,000 workmen came to this colony he would find employment for them.

THE PREMIER: I never spoke on the subject when I was there.

MR. SIMPSON: It is quoted from the *Age*, sir. It has appeared in the *West Australian*. I have no wish to misrepresent the right hon. gentleman.

THE PREMIER: I never said such a thing at all.

MR. SIMPSON: The Premier denies it. Personally, I may say I do not believe he could make such a statement when he was the guest of the people in that particular colony with the object of bringing them over here away from their homes. But, at the same time, in order to show clearly the sources from which I derive my information, I have the following quotation from the *West Australian* about five days ago:—

During the past few weeks a number of letters have appeared in the "*West Australian*" in reference to the unemployed of Perth. With the object of ascertaining the true condition of affairs, and to hear any suggestions that might be made for the amelioration of the suffering which was stated to exist, a representative of this paper yesterday morning interviewed several prominent men in the ranks of the unemployed.

It winds up by saying:

The above statements were verified in substance by two other men who do not desire to have their names published, though they gave their addresses.

So that the inquiry seems to have been a reasonable one, and, as a leading article appeared in that paper in connection with the matter, we are justified in believing

that a fair investigation of the question has been made. One man here says:

I came to this colony in consequence of the representations made by the Premier in a speech in Victoria, after the recent Federal Convention. By a report in the Melbourne "*Age*" I saw that Sir John Forrest had stated that if 5,000 men came over here, he could find employment for the whole lot.

THE PREMIER: In Western Australia?

MR. SIMPSON: If it is untrue, the publicity given to this matter will produce the man who said it.

THE PREMIER: You mean when I was in Melbourne last time?

MR. SIMPSON: It says so.

THE PREMIER: When I was there last time? Why, I never spoke on the subject to anyone, publicly or otherwise. I never spoke at all about the labour question.

MR. HASSELL: It must be wrong. We left at nine o'clock at night, when the Convention ended. You could not have said that, for it states that it was said after the Convention. It could not have been done.

MR. JAMES: It may have been talked into a phonograph as you went along.

MR. SIMPSON: Dealing, however, with this question of the unemployed, and the statement of the Minister that everything all over the country is satisfactory, we have this statement—and it is a lamentable statement to be made in this young country, where we ought to want population—where we ought to be able to live well and easily:

To my personal knowledge there are 130 men in this town living on one meal a day, and I know fully 30 who often go a whole day without a bite to eat. Some of these unfortunates have wives and families, who have to suffer the same distress. In the present bitterly cold weather it is not very pleasant to be out of doors at night, yet I have this morning already met half a dozen men who said they had had to walk about the streets all last night because they had no money to get a bed.

Such statements are often exaggerated; but this matter has been investigated by the *West Australian* newspaper, which reports that reasonable credence may be placed in it. And that is the position of affairs in the capital city of the country, where the Premier says everything is satisfactory. Surely these facts speak for themselves. I do not say that the Government are entirely responsible for the depression. I say unhesitatingly

that the vast majority of the people of this country, as well as the Ministry, suffer from "swelled head" at certain times. But I do say that the wild extravagance of the Government in their public works has contributed enormously to the difficulties of the present situation. When we realise that the Forrest Ministry, since they have been in office, have spent about eighteen millions of money in seven years—

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I hope we will have eighteen millions more to spend.

MR. SIMPSON: You hope; but you are not going the right way to get it. We can realise what the Government have done when we see the state of affairs they have to face this session. Our country in the North is rotten with the tick, consequent on their introducing it. I say that the tick in the North is directly due to the Wave Hill concession in the early days.

MR. CONNOR: Good iron!

MR. SIMPSON: I do not quite catch what the hon. gentleman says.

MR. CONNOR: I said "good iron"—what you said the other day.

MR. SIMPSON: I do not know what I said the other day; but, if the hon. gentleman has become so touchy when the tick question is alluded to, I tell him, in the public interest, that he had better keep his private advantage distinct and separate from his political duty. And what else have the Government? In the South they have good rabbits.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: One rabbit.

MR. SIMPSON: What is the report of your brother Minister?

MR. VOSPER: He has got hundreds, in this official report.

MR. SIMPSON: And what have the Government accomplished in their seven years of office as regards the public feeling and spirit of the eastern goldfields with respect to the coastal centres? By this wretched and evil regulation they have alienated—I believe permanently—the sympathy, the hopes, and the ambitions of that population out therefrom the people of the coast. They have made an alien colony of the goldfields by the way in which they dealt with that alluvial question. There is no use in

trying to beg the question, and to make out that this was the result of the action of the Minister who has gone away—Mr. Wittenoom. It was done in Cabinet. The Minister of Works knew of it; the Minister of Mines knew of it; the Attorney General knew of it and sanctioned it.

MR. VOSPER: According to Mr. Wittenoom, the Premier knew of it.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: No.

MR. VOSPER: Mr. Wittenoom said so.

MR. SIMPSON: Don't rush into the breach so rashly. The Premier can hold his own, and yours too. What is the position of affairs in Perth? Daily we hear of destitution, and of hundreds, and perhaps, a thousand, unemployed. The big commercial men are reducing their staffs. There is a depression existing amounting almost to a panic. The commercial community to-day—I am in touch with it—are wondering whether they had better shift their stocks and their cattle and let Western Australia go back to where she was. That is the position. We are told in the Speech that it is satisfactory. The statement is misleading. The Government are resorting to devious ways of finance, which cannot result in good for the country. They are using their power to build railways which are only sops, for which there is no need; trying to divert commerce from its natural outlet, instead of endeavouring to do justice to all parts of the colony, to make it a great land, the home of an industrious, a thriving, and a contented people.

On the motion of MR. CONNOR (East Kimberley), the debate was adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER: As the next day of meeting will be a public holiday, I move that the House at its rising do adjourn to 4.30 p.m. on Wednesday next.

Put and passed.

The House accordingly adjourned at 10.45 p.m. until the next Wednesday.
