

doubt that the representations of the Surgeon Superintendent were perfectly correct. The only question was, whether it was a proper thing that money voted for harbor improvements should be diverted for the purpose of carrying out certain improvements in a Lunatic Asylum. The necessity for these improvements had been brought to the attention of the Government, years ago, when the public finances were in a flourishing condition, but the Government could not be induced to take any steps in the matter; but now when we were in extremity as to money matters, it was proposed to incur this expenditure. At the same time he should be sorry to oppose the expenditure upon this institution.

MR. A. FORREST was in favor of improving the condition of the asylum, which he considered to be a standing disgrace to the colony.

MR. SHOLL objected to reappropriate the money either for the jetty or the asylum, although, if it was a question upon which it was to be expended, he should certainly go for the asylum.

MR. SHENTON thought the amount, if it was to be diverted, should be added to the amount for the extension of Fremantle jetty.

MR. PARKER reminded the House that the matters of detail would be discussed when the bill was brought forward, and advised hon. members to delay their discussion till then.

The sub-section was then approved.

MR. SHENTON'S amendment, moved the previous night, which was deferred till all the other items had been gone through, and which had for its object the expenditure of the whole sum of £16,282 10s. 6d. on the extension of Fremantle jetty, was withdrawn, the Government promising to include it in the schedule of the bill—and the sub-section as it stood, approved.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) then moved a resolution to the effect that it was desirable a bill should be brought forward to reappropriate certain unexpended balances of the 1884 Loan.

The resolution was carried.

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

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

*Monday, April 16th, 1888.*

Petitions: Bayswater-Busselton Railway—Pearl Shell and Beche-de-mer Fisheries: Federal action—Contract for building Fremantle Post Office—Tenders for leasing Roebourne and Cossack Tramway—Message (No. 19): Assenting to Appropriation Bill—Report of the Acting Warden on the Kimberley Goldfields—Reappropriation Bill, 1888: first reading—Bayswater-Busselton Railway: Consideration of Report of Select Committee—Adjournment.

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

### PRAYERS.

### PETITIONS IN FAVOR OF BAYSWATER-BUSSELTON RAILWAY.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) laid on the table certain petitions from residents of Perth and Fremantle, in favor of the proposed railway from Bayswater to the Southern districts.

### PEARL SHELL AND BECHE-DE-MER FISHERIES: FEDERAL ACTION.

MR. VENN, in accordance with notice, asked the Colonial Secretary whether it was the intention of the Government to take any action with regard to the introduction of a bill, at the next session of the Federal Council, to regulate Pearl Shell and Beche-de-mer fisheries in Australasian waters beyond territorial limits, in accordance with the provisions of an Act passed for this purpose at the late session of the Federal Council, but which applied only to Queensland waters.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said it was the intention of the Government to introduce a bill to that effect.

### CONTRACT FOR BUILDING FREMANTLE POST OFFICE.

MR. SHENTON, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works—

a. The value of the work not included in James Kelly's contract for the Fremantle Post Office.

b. How the mistake occurred in the over-advance to Clifton & Fraser.

**THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS** (Hon. J. A. Wright) replied :—

a. Jas. Kelly's tender for completing the building in every respect was	£1,835
Ditto for work now in hand	1,360

Value of work not included in Jas. Kelly's contract	£475
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b. The amount of a certificate was paid to the order of a creditor of the contractors instead of, as intended and directed, to the advance account of the Honorable the Director of Public Works.

#### TENDERS FOR LEASING ROEBOURNE-COSSACK TRAMWAY.

Mr. RICHARDSON, in accordance with notice, moved the following resolution : " That in the opinion of this House it is desirable to invite tenders for leasing the Roebourne and Cossack Tramway, with the object of running it for the conveyance of passengers and goods between the above-named towns, upon such terms and conditions as may be deemed most desirable in the interests of the public; and that an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, informing him of such resolution." The hon. member said his object in moving the resolution was that he observed from the Estimates what certainly appeared to him an enormous sum set down for the working expenses of this tramway, which was only about 8 miles long, on a narrow gauge, and a horse tram, requiring no steam engine. No doubt the line would occasionally require some minor engineering inspection, but any ordinary driver could drive the tram; and it struck him that £2,500 to work such a line as this was something tremendous. Although the receipts were very large, considering the number of the population and trade of the district, yet they did not come up to this large amount for working expenses; and, looking at the thing casually, it struck him that if tenders were invited for working the line we should have it worked at a profit instead of a loss. Private persons would be found who would be willing to give an annual premium for having the use of the line, which would convert what was now a loss into a source of revenue.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS** (Hon. J. A. Wright) said it was only that morning that he saw the hon. member's notice on the paper, and he had not had time to get all the statistics and information which he should have wished connected with this tramway. At the same time he might say that the motion had struck him as being rather an extraordinary one, when, as he had often stated, this was one of the few reproductive public works which the colony possessed. He thought it strange that the hon. member should wish the Government to give up one of the few public works out of which it made any profit. Although the hon. member might consider the expenditure enormous, the fact remained that the tramway had left a credit balance of between £50 and £60 in one month. The last time he was up there, not only was it paying working expenses, but also 2½ per cent. on the capital spent on it; and he did not think they were likely to get any one to pay that much premium for being allowed to work the line. At the same time, the Government by working the line themselves, knew that it was being worked in a proper manner. The hon. member seemed to think that because it was a horse tram, there would be no difficulty in working it and keeping it in repair; but he assured the hon. member that it was quite as costly, at the first start, to keep these sort of tramways in repair as if they were worked with a locomotive. Of course as the line became consolidated the cost would decrease; but he should be sorry to see the line placed in the hands of a private contractor, over whom they could have little or no control.

Mr. A. FORREST could not understand how it could be said that the Government were working this tramway at a profit, when the estimated receipts from it for the year were only £2,000.

**THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS** (Hon. J. A. Wright) said that was a clerical error; it ought to have been £3,000.

Mr. SHOLL thought it would be an advantage to have this tramway worked by contract, though he could see objections to it. But if we were to let it, and we could get £300 or £400 a year profit, we would know exactly what it cost us, and what it yielded to us. He thought

that would be more satisfactory than to find £2,500 a year required for working this one-horse line. Surely the staff employed must be considerably larger than it ought to be. He thought a great deal of the laboring work in connection with this tramway might be done by natives, who had been used to European employment. There were a large number of these natives now out of the service of the settlers, and it would be better for the Government to find them some employment than keep them in prison. He saw no reason why some of the most intelligent amongst them should not take the place of some of the expensive employés of the Railway Department, for working this short tramway. He guaranteed, if it were his property, he would work it at a cost of £1,000 less than the Government required for working it. As to the contractor keeping the line in repair, he thought that might be provided for by requiring a guarantee from him.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. J. Forrest) was surprised at the hon. member for the Gascoyne talking about natives being available for driving this tramway. If a reliable native fit for such work as this could be obtained in that part of the world, they must have changed very much since he was there. It appeared to him, with a costly work like this, that had cost us £20,000, if the Government could not do better, in the interests of the travelling public, than entrust native prisoners to work it, the colony must be in a very bad way indeed. He was surprised at any hon. member suggesting such a thing in this nineteenth century. As to the working expenses, it must be borne in mind that the line had only just been started, and it required more attention than it would when it became solidified and in good working order, when, no doubt, greater economy could be effected as regards the cost of running it.

MR. MARMION asked how it was that no provision was made on the Estimates for working the Derby tramway?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said that tenders were invited for working that short line. It was not intended to carry passengers on it, as between Roebourne and Cossack.

MR. MARMION could not help thinking that the best thing the Government could do was to adopt the same system at Roebourne as at Derby: the former was not a steam tramway, any more than the latter, and he saw no earthly reason why it should not be worked by contract, and the colony derive some profit out of it, which, he was afraid it would not do, so long as it was worked by the Government. It seemed to him that £210 a month was a very large sum indeed for working a short line of eight miles. He thought the Government would be acting judiciously if they were to call for tenders for leasing the line, say from the 30th June next, with a guarantee that the line should be kept in good working order. At all events, there could be no harm in inviting tenders, none of them need be necessarily accepted, and the Government would see what they could make out of it.

MR. SHENTON thought that, with a work of this kind, so far away from head quarters and departmental supervision, it would be very desirable if the Government could let it out by contract; they would then know exactly what profits they could make out of the line, and what it would cost to work it, whereas at the present time they did not appear to do so. He believed a horse tramway of this kind could be worked cheaper by private persons than by the Government. He believed that even in England there were certain railway lines leased to other companies, and there must be some way of binding them down to keep the line in repair.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. J. A. Wright) said that leasing a line of railway in England was a totally different thing from leasing a tramway in Western Australia. He did not know of a single case in England where the lease was not for 99 years, subject to an amount of percentage on the earnings, and always a line that junctioned with the company's own lines. If we could let this Roebourne tramway for 99 years, on the same conditions, he should not have the slightest objection to the leasing principle being adopted.

MR. LAYMAN thought the Government were asking for a very large sum for the working expenses of this short tramway. There would be very little

difficulty, he should think, in providing in the contract for keeping the line in repair. As for the employment of native labor, he did not suppose the hon. member for the Gascoyne meant that these natives should be employed in responsible positions, but simply as laborers. He thought it would be a great saving if the line were let to a contractor, and he hoped the Commissioner would see his way clear to try the experiment. If it did not answer, it need not be continued.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY** (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said they had the opinion of the Commissioner of Railways, which was adverse to the proposal, and they must place great reliance on the opinion of an experienced professional gentleman like the Commissioner, in matters of this kind. He thought it was premature yet to speculate what a contractor could make out of the tramway, or what profit the Government were going to make, as the line had only been opened nine months. Therefore it appeared to him too soon to invite tenders, until the Government were in a better position to know what would be a fair price to accept. He hoped the hon. member would not press his motion, this year at any rate, especially as the House had already provided the necessary funds for working the line.

**MR. RICHARDSON** could not see that the reply of the Commissioner of Railways was a reply at all. All the hon. gentleman said was that this was one of the few reproductive works which the colony had, and therefore we ought not to let go of it, but keep it just to enable us to show that we had at least one public work that was a profitable undertaking. It appeared to him that, if this line was reproductive, notwithstanding its enormous working expenses, the Government were all the more likely to get a handsome premium if they were to let it. He took it that a contractor would be able to knock off from 50 to 80 per cent. from the present working expenses. He failed to see that there would be any difficulty in stipulating that the line should be kept in repair and good going order. There might be some weight in what the Colonial Secretary said as to its being somewhat premature to accept a contract yet, and that it would be

wise to wait until we saw what the probable returns would be, and the amount of traffic. But, in the meantime, there could be no harm in advertising for tenders, just to see what offers came in.

**MR. RANDELL** agreed that it would be premature to invite tenders yet, until we saw what the receipts were likely to be, without which it would be impossible for the Government to arrive at any true estimate of what would be a fair and reasonable tender. It took a considerable time before a new line like this became consolidated, and he thought for that reason it was desirable it should remain in the hands of the Government for the present. The Government, in any case, would require a considerable guarantee from any contractor, with regard to the up-keep of the line and the preservation of the costly rolling stock, and all sorts of guarantees as to the proper working of the line; and contractors would bear this in mind when tendering. He did not think there were many members there who knew much about tramways. He believed there were not many tramways even in England paying as much as 4 per cent., and many of them did not even make both ends meet. Unfortunately the public here had got into the habit of expecting too much accommodation from railways, and he was sorry to say they got it, at a very considerable expense as regards the working of the lines. He would give them every reasonable accommodation, but he did not think it ought to be done at the expense of the country.

**MR. HENSMAN** said if he thought that by voting for this resolution he was voting in favor of the acceptance of a contract, he should be sorry to do so. But the object of the resolution was, he took it, to ascertain on what conditions contractors would be prepared to work the line. It would not bind the Government to accept any tender sent in, and it appeared to him to be a very harmless resolution, inasmuch as it pledged the Government and that Council to nothing. It was assumed that all reasonable precautions would be taken to bind the contractor down, in the event of a contract being entered into. He believed that, as a general rule, private people did things a great deal cheaper than the Government, and he felt inclined to

support the resolution, seeing that it did not bind them to accept any contract.

MR. MORRISON said it appeared to him they were reopening the Estimates. They had already voted the money asked for by the Government for the working of this line for the current year, and if hon. members considered the sum asked for too high they should have raised their objections when the Estimates were under consideration. Although there was not much harm in the resolution, at the same time he could not help thinking that to a certain extent it showed a want of confidence in the Commissioner of Railways. It was not often that we had a public work of a reproductive character in this colony, and it did seem rather hard on the Commissioner that, the moment we got one, we should take it out of his hands.

The motion upon being put was negatived, on the voices.

#### MESSAGE (No. 19): ASSENTING TO APPROPRIATION BILL.

THE SPEAKER announced the receipt of the following Message from His Excellency:

"The Governor has the honor to inform the Honorable the Legislative Council that he has this day assented, in Her Majesty's name, to the undermentioned Bill:—

"An Act to appropriate the sum of Three hundred and twenty-six thousand six hundred and twenty-two pounds one shilling and fourpence out of the General Revenue of the Colony, for such services as shall come in course of payment during the year One thousand eight hundred and eighty-eight."

"2. The authenticated copy of the Act is returned herewith.

"Government House, 16th April, 1888."

#### REPORT OF THE ACTING WARDEN ON THE KIMBERLEY GOLDFIELDS.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, moved that the report lately received from the Acting Warden at Kimberley, and partly published in the *West Australian* of the 13th inst., with reference to the gold reefs in that district, be laid on the table of the House.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said the practice of the Government had been to send to the public newspapers any reports or information of public interest, but sometimes there were portions of official reports which were of a personal character, and relating to matters that were of no public interest, which, for obvious reasons, it would not be desirable to publish. If it were to be supposed that the press were to get all these reports *in extenso*, without regard to the nature of their contents, he could not consent to supply the public newspapers with them at all. In the case referred to, all that was of interest to the public was sent to the press, the remainder of the report being of a nature which it was not considered expedient to publish.

MR. A. FORREST expressed himself satisfied with the explanation.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

#### RE-APPROPRIATION BILL, 1888.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser), in accordance with notice, moved the first reading of a bill to re-appropriate certain unexpended balances of the Loan of 1884.

Motion agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

#### BAYSWATER-BUSSELTON RAILWAY: MESSRS. NEIL McNEIL & Co.'s PROPOSALS; REPORT OF SELECT COMMITTEE.

SIR T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL moved—"That an humble address be presented to His Excellency the Governor, submitting for His Excellency's favorable consideration the report of the select committee appointed to consider the proposals of Messrs. Neil McNeil & Co. to construct a railway between Bayswater and the Vasse, and praying that His Excellency will be pleased to enter into a contract with the proposers in accordance with the recommendations of the committee." The hon. baronet said he must again express his regret that the report of the select committee was not placed in the hands of hon. members earlier. He had previously informed the House as to some of the reasons why this was not done, and on reference to the report they would see that a considerable

amount of information was required which the committee were not able to obtain in a shorter time. He did not think, however, it was necessary that he should weary hon. members by recapitulating the contents of the report, as they had it before them. It would be seen that the original proposal of Messrs. McNeil & Co. did not give sufficient accommodation for the requirements of the traffic or the working of the line, nor did it contemplate any rolling stock. It became necessary, therefore, for the committee to devise some means of equipping the line, if it was determined to construct it. There seemed to be no chance of providing for rolling stock out of current revenue, nor was there any rolling stock available on the Eastern Railway; and hence it was necessary to refer the matter to McNeil & Co. to see on what terms they would be prepared to provide these necessities. The committee having received Messrs. McNeil & Co.'s reply, came to the conclusion that, supposing the House should decide to recommend the Government to enter into a contract for the first two sections, the extra cost of equipment would bring the total cost of construction up to about £2,500 per mile. This amount might to a slight extent diminish as the remaining sections of the line were proceeded with, as it was not considered probable that the extra trucks and carriages required would increase in proportion to the length of the line. So far as the members of the committee were judges in the matter, they considered that a well-formed roadway, with the proposed equipment, would at that price be a line cheaply constructed; and the Commissioner of Railways informed them that he considered the offer, on the whole, a favorable one. The committee did not go into the abstract question of the policy of constructing this line of railway; that question was debated at some length last year, and a certain amount of information and statistics were procured, when Mr. Dobson's proposal was before the House. There could be very little doubt, so far as the section to Jarrahdale was concerned, as to the reproductive character of the work. There was, in the first place, the Perth Race-course traffic, which would bring in a consider-

able revenue, once a bridge were constructed over the Swan. Then there was the Canning traffic, and the traffic along the Albany Road to the 36-mile—to which spot the company proposed to extend their own Jarrahdale line, working it as a feeder for the Government railway. With regard to the second section, from Jarrahdale to Pinjarrah, he could not say much personally, beyond what he had seen travelling up and down; but the committee were informed by one of their number who resided in the district, that a considerable amount of settlement was now being effected, and the gentleman referred to spoke of the productive and useful character of a great deal of the soil. Without laboring this question further, he took it for granted that it was generally expected the line would be a reproductive work; and the only question now was whether it was desirable to construct it at the present moment. He himself was thoroughly in agreement with His Excellency as to the expediency of a policy of bolstering up the prosperity of a country by loan upon loan. No doubt in the other colonies it had been resorted to, but in none of them successfully, except where it had been systematically directed to the development of settlement and the increase of population. Possibly we ourselves had been going in for borrowing too heavily, without considering whether our loans would have the effect of increasing settlement and population. Whether we had or not, the fact remained that during the last few years considerable sums of money had been expended by Government on public works, and there had also been a large expenditure in connection with the Beverley-Albany line. All this expenditure would soon cease; and it seemed to him that, in looking forward to that fact, they must face the fact that, unless some steps were taken to avert them, very serious consequences were not unlikely to arise. They had already arisen. Population was leaving us, and there was no doubt a very considerable amount of depression at the present moment. No doubt—in the near future, he hoped—the bright promises which our mineral discoveries were opening up to us would tend to dissipate this state of depression, for he thought we might now safely accept the fact that we

had goldfields which, in all probability, would turn out to be payable before long. At the same time there could be no doubt it would take some time to develop these fields; and, between the time of the cessation of this large expenditure which had been going on and the development of those auriferous resources to which we looked for our future prosperity, we should have a time of very serious crises, he was afraid, unless something be done in the meantime to tide over this intervening period. With regard to the financial position, he understood that the Government were in possession of further information with regard to the finances than had yet been placed before the House, and that the returns for the first quarter of this year looked very bad indeed when compared with the revenue for the corresponding quarter last year. At the same time, he had received certain explanations as regards that, which made him think that perhaps it was not an indication of such a serious depression as at first sight might appear. But there was no doubt that the state of the finances, and the anxiety which the Government felt regarding them, made them inclined strongly to object, he was afraid, to the line of policy which that House was likely to recommend. They wished, naturally enough, that the House should show them where the ways and means were to come from to carry it out. His reply to that was,—it was utterly impossible for them to do that. They could not show what the ways and means would be two years ahead—and it was not until then that there would be any payment of interest required. They could not foresee what the financial state of affairs would be two years hence. They could only place some little confidence in the future. At any rate there was one thing certain: if nothing was going to be done when the present expenditure upon public works ceased—if they were simply going to watch the situation—the state of things at the end of two years would be very much worse than it was now. As to the other objections of the Government to entertain the scheme, there might be some technical objection as to the manner in which it was proposed to carry on the work, and that it was not a principle adopted in the

other colonies. But he thought that was an objection that might be easily got over, if the Government were only in accord with the views of the House. There was also the other objection: the expression of opinion on the part of the Secretary of State that we should not enter the loan market at the present time—which, he presumed, would also apply to our incurring any further liabilities without entering the loan market. But he would point out that this expression of opinion on the part of the Secretary of State was simply an echo of a suggestion made by the Governor in one of his despatches, and that had that suggestion not been made, probably they should never have heard of the Secretary of State opposing any further borrowing at the present time. He could understand the reason why the Governor made that suggestion at the time; but he certainly thought it was a most unfortunate suggestion, and he was afraid it would place that House in a position of embarrassment which it would not have had to encounter had it not been made. At the same time, he felt sure, if the Governor should agree with them now, he would be able to overcome any objection which the Secretary of State entertained upon His Excellency's suggestion. The other objection made by the Government was that it would not be fair to their successors to incur further liabilities at the present time. The Government might intend to have successors, and no doubt they would. But they in that House did not intend to have any; and it was they who would succeed the Government—not, perhaps, the present members individually, but the representatives of the people; and when they, the representatives of the people, asked the Government to undertake this work, it seemed to him perfectly ridiculous to say it was not fair to those who were going to succeed them in power. He did not know that he had ever noticed so unanimous a feeling as there was amongst all classes of the community in favor of carrying on this work; and he did sincerely trust that the Government might yet see their way to meet the views of the country, for he felt convinced it was the earnest wish of the country at large that it should be carried out. He hoped the Government would

see that it was, in present circumstances, a statesman-like policy. He felt certain that no responsible Ministry could stand for a moment, at such a time, unless they came forward with some such policy. He felt sure, if the Executive, and His Excellency particularly, assented to their views, and were anxious to carry out the work, His Excellency would, by the representations he might make to the Secretary of State, be able to succeed in getting his approval. He would not weary the House by any further remarks, but move the resolution standing in his name.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY** (Hon. Sir M. Fraser) said it might assist hon. members if he rose at this stage to state the action he had to take in this matter. Hon. members were aware this was not a new subject. The matter had been discussed and re-discussed, and it had been before them twice within the last twelve-months. It was brought before them last session by correspondence connected with Mr. Dobson's proposals; and the matter was very fully and clearly put forward by His Excellency in his despatch to the Secretary of State, showing very plainly what the opinion of the Governor was. His Excellency, in his despatch of the 23rd August, 1887, said: "A loan could at the present time be employed in most useful and necessary works; for instance, in constructing the first sections of a railway traversing the South-Western district to Pinjarrah, Bunbury, and Busselton." It would be seen from this that His Excellency the Governor was in no way averse to the work itself; but the Secretary of State was opposed to the granting of a loan, and had expressed himself still more strongly to the work being undertaken on the guarantee principle. It had always been the opinion of the Government—and it was the opinion of the Government now—that public works of this character, in this colony, were best carried out by loan. He felt sure the professional adviser of the Government in these matters, his hon. friend the Director of Public Works, would agree with him that such was the case,—that was to say, when the Government had the money available. They all knew that when one had to purchase anything on the deferred payment sys-

tem one had to pay dearer for it. Persons in the way of business would make them believe that such was not the case when they pressed their wares upon people, on the system of deferred payments—that they paid no more than if they paid cash down. But their own common sense must tell them otherwise. And this guarantee system of carrying out public works was nothing more nor less than a system of deferred payments. With regard to the finances of the colony—a most important matter in these considerations—hon. members would bear with him for a moment while he reminded them of the past. When he looked back at the words which he addressed to hon. members when dealing with the Estimates in 1884, those words might now be regarded as having been prophetic. Speaking of the increasing liabilities of the colony, he asked hon. members to go with him in agreeing upon a policy of prudence and economy. He told hon. members that the words of caution which he was uttering might be unpalatable truths; but it was better to face them openly and frankly. The Government by the exercise of economy commenced that year with a credit balance of between £70,000 and £80,000. But it was insisted upon by hon. members that the Government had no business to hoard up the people's money in that way, and what was our present position? We had an estimated balance of £2,000 at the end of the year. The mover of the resolution before the House alluded to the fact that the Government were in possession of later information with regard to the revenue for the first quarter of the year. That information would, very shortly, be published; but he might give, in brief, a few figures to show how matters stood at the end of last month (March). The estimated revenue for this year, as hon. members were aware, was £17,000 over the receipts for last year; but the receipts for the first quarter of the current year were between £5,000 and £6,000 less than the receipts for the corresponding quarter last year. There would therefore be a deficiency of something like £22,000 or £23,000 to be made up during the remaining nine months if the estimated revenue for the year was to be realised. Hon. members were aware that our



estimated expenditure for the current year was within £2,000 of the estimated revenue; and they thus see how matters stood at the end of the first quarter. Was not this a time to realise the facts thus staring us in the face, and to exercise caution? Was this the time to incur fresh liabilities, with the finances in the position he had mentioned? It had been said that as the result of the cessation of public works, people were leaving the colony. He was not at all sure, with regard to many of them, that it was not a good thing for the colony that they were going. He said so for this reason—they did not come here for the purpose of settling; they came here, following the introduction of capital. They were traders, mechanics, or laboring workmen who came here, like bees, to gather honey from the expenditure of our loan money. Probably none of them came here with the intention of settling here. They were mere birds of passage, here to-day and there to-morrow. The same remark applied to the navvies employed on our railways. They never intended to settle here, but moved about from colony to colony, as railway contracts were entered upon. These people came here simply to rake in our dollars, and then clear out. He therefore maintained it was no great loss to the colony when such people left our shores. If he thought that there was an exodus of the settlers of the colony, of the men who had made the colony their home, it would be a different thing. But he did not find that our settlers were going away.

**MR. MARMION:** They are settlers in every sense of the word.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY** (Hon. Sir M. Fraser), continuing, asked was it prudent, was it the duty of the Government or of the Legislature to plunge the colony further into debt simply in order to prolong the stay of these adventurous spirits amongst us, to rake in more of our dollars? He wished the House to look at this matter from a sensible point of view, when they proposed that the Government should at the present juncture borrow more money, or incur further liabilities, simply to keep these people in the colony. What we wanted was to keep our capital and our settled labor in the colony, and not burden the colony

with a heavy debt in order to provide employment for a floating population. He regretted exceedingly to think that our public works policy and all our immigration schemes had not, up to the present, been a great success. The colony had not yet realised the fruition of its hopes as regards the result of the large expenditure upon its railways and public works. He believed the time would come when our railways would prove a benefit to the colony, and become a financial success. But that time had not come yet. He did not think, himself—he was sorry to have to say it—but he did not think himself that the exports of the colony had been increased £1 as yet by the lines of railway we had constructed. Unless our exports increased it was clear that our sources of wealth were not being developed, and, in this respect, he was sorry to say our railways up to the present had proved of no benefit to the colony. Although he agreed as to the desirability of a policy of progress, he would not agree to the policy of desperation and despair which some hon. members advocated. The hon. member for Kimberley's policy was a policy of desperation and despair,—always crying about people going away, and that if we wanted to keep them we must borrow more money. That was not a policy of progress, but one of despair. It was said that there was a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, led on to fortune. That might be. But the hon. member wanted the same result when the tide was ebbing. This was not the time for rash speculation, and for further plunging into debt, in a spirit of desperation. Whether we increased our liabilities by a direct appeal to the money market or by committing ourselves to the guarantee system, the result was the same,—the colony was pledging itself to increased liabilities in the future. He did not think it was right, he did not think it was fair, he did not think it was politic that we should pledge our successors, whoever they might be—the present occupants of the Government bench might not be amongst them—to further liabilities at the present time. With regard to the good effect which the railway, if constructed, would have upon the Southern districts of the colony, it was

not necessary for him to dilate upon that subject; but as to the policy of undertaking the work, at the present moment, and in the manner described, he thought he might say that all the members of the Government were in accord. At any rate so long as he had a voice in the question of the borrowing of money, he should strongly resist this policy of desperation. He would not be a party to binding the colony to further liabilities, which might result in colonial bankruptcy. He did not like to use such an expression; but here were the facts staring them in the face. If we still had the balance we had a few years ago of £40,000 or £50,000, and the hands of the Government had not been forced by the hon. members of that House, we should have been in a better position now to undertake these fresh liabilities. Why could not hon. members wait until the public works expenditure of the past few years began to bear fruit? Why should we be rash? Why be impatient? The colony was gradually progressing, as was indicated by its revenue, which for the past seven or eight years had steadily increased. But our expenditure was also increasing, and must increase with the expansion of settlement. Why could not hon. members give the country breathing time, and not be consumed with this feverish anxiety for plunging into further debt, just at a time when for obvious and many reasons it would be impolitic to do so? We had done an immense deal for such a small population; and our public debt, and our railways and telegraphs, had almost placed us in the front rank, proportionately with the number of our population. Even at the present moment the colony was having constructed for it a public work that would cost about a million of money. Yet they were told because a few people were leaving the colony, because of the departure from our shores of those adventurous spirits he had referred to, it was insisted that the colony should plunge itself into further debt, regardless of consequences. Whoever intended to support such a cry, he did not intend to do so; and it was his duty now to move, as an amendment upon the resolution, the following proposition, which he was quite sure would commend itself to every member of the

House, so far at any rate as the abstract principle was concerned. It was—

1. That the Bayswater-Bunbury and Busselton Railway is a desirable public work which should be constructed, in sections, from Loan funds, as soon as these are available.

2. That the Government shall bring forward a further Public Works Loan Bill so soon as the finances of the Colony allow, and the consent of Her Majesty's Government can be obtained.

MR. VENN said he did not suppose for a moment that the hon. gentleman expected to get any support in that House to such an amendment. It was almost as bad an example of retrogression as the Government showed to them some twelve months ago, when they asked the House to consider certain proposals of a similar character made by Mr. Dobson. Those proposals, like these, were referred to a select committee, and when the committee brought up their report, and it came on for discussion, the Government startled them with the same sort of an amendment as they had done that evening. Certainly it was not quite such a surprise in this instance, for the Government had been more open with them. The Colonial Secretary told them, when the proposal was made to refer the matter to a select committee, that he did not see the utility of it, in the present state of our finances. The resolution now before the House was, he took it, tantamount to a motion that the report of the select committee be adopted, and he presumed they had to consider the report of the committee in conjunction with the resolution. If so, he thought it would be better if the discussion were taken in committee of the whole House.

THE SPEAKER: It is not competent to move the House into committee after a debate has been commenced.

MR. VENN was sorry to hear it, for he was sure a great deal more information would have been elicited if the matter could have been discussed in committee. He himself was still open to conviction upon several points contained in the report, and probably other members of the committee were also open to conviction. As regards the abstract principle involved, he did not think they need trouble themselves now about it.

They threshed it out last year, when there was a strong unanimity of feeling as to the desirability of constructing a line of railway between Bayswater and the Vasse. Having travelled more than once over other portions of Australia, and comparing the capabilities of the soil with our own, he could only say this as regards the country which this line would serve: if there was any portion of Western Australia where a railway was likely to support a population, and settlement was likely to be developed, it was in our Southern districts. There could not be the slightest doubt about that. If we could not look to these Southern districts, hereafter, to supply us with most of the necessities of life, and keep the colony going, instead of depending upon importations, it was very clear to him that Western Australia was not fit for settlement at all, as an agricultural colony. It was the only portion of the colony, taken in conjunction with the Eastern Districts, which we possessed that was favorable to agricultural settlement and development. If this railway was going to be an incubus upon us, or upon our successors, a mill-stone around our necks, he thought the sooner the better we made up our minds to realise upon what property we had, and clear out of the colony. He said that, having a large interest in the colony. The Colonial Secretary told them that we must not build railways to prevent people going away. He disagreed with the hon. gentleman. That we must not build railways simply to prevent navvies going away might be a true axiom of political economy. But what we wanted to prevent was the exodus of people who would settle on the land, and cultivate it, provided they saw there was a reasonable prospect of profit upon their labor. This could only be done by giving them facilities for sending their produce to some market. It was unreasonable, it was quixotic, to expect such people to settle on the land a long distance from the centres of population, unless we provided them with railway communication. This was one reason why he was so strongly opposed to the action of the Government in shutting up—or rather in not opening for traffic—the railway already constructed from Bunbury to Boyanup. Had the Govern-

ment thought wise to have opened this line and worked it, he was sure it would have given such an impetus to the development of that district and to its prosperity as would have in a great degree forced upon them the necessity of connecting Bunbury by rail with this part of the colony. The great lion in the path of the present proposal, so far as the Government was concerned, appeared to be the question of ways and means. They were told that the revenue for the first quarter of the year was less than the revenue for the same quarter last year, and the Government came to the House asking where the ways and means were to come from? He did not know that it was for private members to point out to the Government where they were to find ways and means. The House simply recommended the Government to accept the proposals and let the work be carried out, and, having done so, he took it that the House and the colony would be prepared to submit to some extra scheme of taxation. He took it that the very numerous and influentially signed memorial laid on the table of the House that evening, representing between 800 and 1,000 people, was a guarantee to the Government that these people were ready to submit to some sort of taxation if necessary, in the event of this line being constructed. What more did the Government want? They were still in power; the reins had not yet been taken out of their hands. Why could they not bring down their own scheme for providing the necessary ways and means, within the next eighteen months? He thought himself, if he were in the same place as the Colonial Secretary, he would simply have listened to the wishes of the House in the matter; and, if the House desired to have this railway, he would have come down with his proposals for finding ways and means, and said to the House: "If you want this railway, gentlemen, this is the price you will have to pay for it. If you agree to the price, the railway is yours." He could have understood the Government adopting a course like that. Suppose, for instance, they were to increase the stamp duty 25 per cent. or more: that would give them £2,000 or £3,000 a year more than at present. This was only one item. [An Hon. Member: A

land tax.] Let the Government devise their own scheme. There was one other matter he wished to refer to. When Mr. Dobson's proposals were under consideration, it was suggested that tenders might be called for the work; and he did not know but that it would be a good plan to do so in the present instance. But there was this difficulty in the way, and it received the attention of the committee. We had a distinct guarantee from the present company that the work would be commenced at once, which, under existing circumstances, was a question of grave consideration. If we had to call for tenders for the work, considerable delay must necessarily occur before the work could be taken in hand; and the very object which it was now desired to obviate would occur. There were many other points connected with the proposals which members no doubt would wish to discuss and have further information upon, if the debate had been in committee. The schedule of prices, for instance. The select committee were in possession of information on the subject, and they believed the prices were fair and reasonable. Hon. members would observe that the committee had taken considerable trouble to show what amount of interest would have to be provided as each section became completed. From this table it would be seen that, even supposing the work were to be commenced within a few days, no payment would be required for interest until the coming year, and then only £1,450 would become due. It would also be seen that the committee made certain suggestions as to the value of the debentures. As our 4 per cent. debenture bonds, at current ruling prices, were worth about £108, and might probably increase in value, the committee suggested that, in making payment to the contractors, the last quotation on the London Stock Exchange should be taken as the basis of the value of the debentures, and that one-half only of the premium over par should be payable to the contractors. He did not know how the promoters of the scheme would view this proposal. It had struck him that as they had to wait a considerable time for their money, which did not become payable until the completion of

each section, and meanwhile they would be losing the interest on the debentures—it had struck him that this might be set off against the increase in the value of the bonds. Possibly the committee were recommending too much. At any rate, this was only a question of detail, to be mutually arranged between the Government and the contractors. He hoped the House would agree to the resolution, and that the report of the committee should be taken as a guide or instruction to the Government in framing their contract with Messrs. McNeil & Co. If the House adopted the resolution, as he was sure it would, the House would have done its duty in the matter. The responsibility of rejecting the proposals and the recommendation of the House would then rest upon the Government.

CAPTAIN FAWCETT thought it was absolutely necessary they should do something to counteract the present depression, and it appeared to him these proposals of Messrs. McNeil & Co. came as a perfect godsend to the colony just now. It was no use waiting until we got Responsible Government. As the old proverb said, "While the grass was growing the horse was starving." The voice of the whole colony had gone forth in favor of some public works being undertaken, and that was a voice which it was not advantageous for any power to ignore. Everyone to whom he had spoken on the subject considered this scheme a most desirable one. There was only one exception, and it was the exception which proved the rule. He asked one gentleman if he was in favor of it, and he said, "No, I am not: they propose to take their line right through a piece of my land, and it would ruin that property." He did not know whether this gentleman required much consideration. The scheme had met with universal approval, with this one solitary exception. As to the value of the land in the districts which the line would serve, he could speak with the authority of one who had been long resident in the district. No one who knew the country could come to the conclusion that a railway would not be of immense benefit. It would be of the greatest advantage, not only to the Southern districts, where they could grow almost anything, but also to the colony at large. It certainly would

conduce to a great deal of increased cultivation, and especially of small patches of land, suitable for small freeholds. No interest would have to be provided until September, 1889, and then only £1,450. He should say that more than that would in the meantime be contributed to the Customs revenue, by the contractors and the men they employed, so that in reality the Government would be receiving  $12\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. (*ad valorem* duty), while they were only paying the contractors 4 per cent. It must be remembered that these gentlemen were going to scatter their money broadcast, giving employment to hundreds, and all the Government was asked to do was to pay 4 per cent. on their money, and get a railway made for them. He would vote with the Government on one condition, and that was this: if it were found we could not afford to pay this small sum in the way of interest, that the salaries of all public officers, from the Governor downwards, be reduced. If we could not afford to pay 4 per cent. for a reproductive work like this, we certainly could not afford to pay our high officials at the rate we were now paying them. If they could not discover any other way of finding the ways and means let it be done in that way. Most desirable colonists were leaving our shores by every opportunity in consequence of the present depression, and the Government would do nothing to stop them. It appears we could not go and borrow the money until we had Responsible Government. That might be half a dozen years hence, and we could not afford to lie idle all that time, and have the country depopulated altogether. A prophet had no honor in his own country, but he ventured to prophesy this, and he hoped it would be recorded: if the Government did not enter into this scheme, the grass would be left growing in the streets of Perth, and there would be no horses to eat it.

MR. SHOLL complimented the committee upon their very able report. At the same time he regretted they did not consider it desirable to deal with the abstract principle, and point out to the House how they came to the conclusion that the line was really going to be what it was said it would be—a reproductive work. They had no information or statistics upon this point. Personally, he felt

in this position: he should like to see this railway built; but as a public man and a member of that House he would ask whether, with the meagre information before them, they would be justified in committing the colony to this scheme. He was aware there was a great deal of depression, but they hoped that in the near future the cloud would be dispelled with the discovery of goldfields capable of maintaining a large population. No doubt it was very desirable we should have some public work to enable us to tide over the intervening period. Still he felt that they ought to have some further information before committing himself to this scheme. He regretted that the Government had not acted upon the suggestion made to them last year, that they should provide the House with some statistics, showing the extent of good land through which this line would run, and the probable traffic. For his own part, before he could support a scheme of this magnitude, he should like to know the number of people residing along the line likely to be benefited by it: secondly, the quantity of alienated and unalienated land (say) 40 miles on either side of the line, and also the quality of that land. He should further like to have some idea of the amount of traffic, and the produce likely to be brought up by the line; also the probable annual cost of working the line, and the revenue likely to be received from it. He thought before they committed the colony to this expenditure they ought to be supplied with this information. When the Great Southern line was proposed, the first thing that syndicate did was to send competent men to examine the country, and to report as to the quality of the land, and see whether they were likely to get value for their money. If we had these statistics as regards this other line, and if they showed him that the country would be justified in undertaking the work, it would have had his support; but, in the absence of such information, although he was anxious that something should be done, he thought his best course would be—as there were some members who knew more about the probability of the work being of a reproductive character than he did, and as he was not prepared to pit his opinion against theirs—he thought his best course would be, as he

could not support the scheme, to refrain from opposing it, by taking no part in the division.

MR. SCOTT said the Colonial Secretary talked about a policy of "desperation," and of the railways already made not having shown the returns expected. It surprised him that an official occupying his position should not be a little more far-sighted. Could we reasonably suppose that railways through almost unopened-up territory were going to return a handsome dividend in a few years after their construction? But if a colony committed itself, as this colony had done, to a policy of opening up the country, it must go on with that policy, otherwise it was bound to have periods of depression and serious disasters. If we expected the lines we had already constructed to pay, we must go on connecting them with others, and not be content with an isolated line. He did not think we had anything to do with the remote future, or even with our immediate successors, when it came to a period of crisis such as this colony was going through at present. If we wanted to save the colony from ruin, we must think of its present requirements, and strain every nerve to avert such a catastrophe. It was admitted on all hands, from the Governor downwards, that this line of railway was a most desirable work, and a very useful work; and, if we were going to stop with public works altogether, it would have been better if we had never entered upon that policy. As to ways and means, he thought if the hon. member for Wellington had suggested a land tax, instead of increasing the stamp duty, he thought the hon. member would have been nearer the mark, for no doubt a land tax must eventually be the source from which the colony must derive a considerable amount of income. This line would not only serve to develop agricultural settlement: it would stimulate another important industry—the timber industry, in which the company were so largely engaged. They would employ some 300 men on their own station, besides the men at work on the line; and, as had been pointed out, the consumption of dutiable articles by this huge army of consumers would add considerably to the Customs receipts. He hoped the Government would hesitate before throwing on one

side a proposal so fraught with advantages to the colony.

MR. MORRISON thought it was very unfortunate that this proposal could not be taken on its own merits alone. There was no doubt that the scheme was a good one. There was no doubt that as regards the prospects of its being a reproductive work hereafter there was much in its favor. The climate of our Southern districts was first-class, the land was not bad, and there was a plentiful and regular rainfall, which made it admirably adapted for the agriculturist. They would also have a valuable acquisition of timber country opened up, and possibly mineral country. But, in looking at this scheme, they unfortunately had also to look at the position of the colony, both financially and politically. They had another thing to look at, and that was the Secretary of State's despatch, in which he told us that in view of the approaching constitutional change he did not feel inclined to sanction any more loans. We had to look at all these matters. If the scheme stood on its own merits alone it would be a different thing. But we had gone a certain distance on the road to reach a certain goal, and it appeared to him we had now come to where two roads branched off. On one finger post he saw "Responsible Government," on the other "Loans and Public Works," and the question we had to decide was which road we should take. For his own part, although he was in favor of Responsible Government, he thought we had missed our time for agitating for it. Apart from our own financial position, we knew there was a very strong opposition which we had to contend against—an opposition which, as a poor colony, we could not long stand against; and that was the opposition of the English press as representing English public opinion. He did not think they knew much about us or our colony, and probably cared less; but it was something to write about. For his own part, looking at all the circumstances, he should be inclined to go to the Governor, and say: "Upon reconsideration we are disposed to stop further action as regards Responsible Government, for the present—will you inform the Secretary of State to that effect, and that we consider we would be in a better

position to enter the money market now when capital is plentiful, than wait, perhaps for years, with the colony languishing, until we get Responsible Government?" He believed that would very soon bring us a favorable answer from the Secretary of State, and the colony would be relieved from its present position of anxiety, and uncertainty, and depression. As to the proposal itself, he thought, so far as it went, it was a reasonable enough proposal; but he could not help looking at the fact that the Secretary of State had distinctly told the Governor that, in the present position of affairs, he could not give even a qualified approval to a loan; and he did not see how the Governor, in the face of that, could be expected to sanction this scheme, which, after all, was nothing else but a loan—a loan under another name. We were asked to issue debentures to cover the cost of the work, and we would have to pay interest on those debentures. The only difference was, that we should pay our money to McNeil & Co. instead of to British bondholders. Unless we at once made peace with the Colonial Office he did not see how we could have this work undertaken, however desirable the scheme might be in itself. If Responsible Government were postponed for a time, and we entered the money market at once for a loan for this and other public works, he believed it would be a better thing for the colony. We might ask for the moon, but we knew very well we wouldn't get it; and it might be a considerable time before we got Responsible Government. With regard to the resolution before the House he did not think, if it were passed, there would be the least chance of its being carried out. With regard to the amendment, he did not think it went far enough. Therefore, if the matter came to a division, he should follow the example of the hon. member for the Gascoyne, and abstain from voting for either one or the other.

MR. A. FORREST thought the Colonial Secretary's speech was unworthy of him. When he (Mr. Forrest) last year told the Government that unless something was done which would give work to a large number of hands, the Government would find that they would have to dip into the revenue to keep unemployed

working men from starving, the Colonial Secretary said that nothing would be more likely to injure the credit of the colony than such remarks. He would ask whether the hon. gentleman's own words that evening were not more likely to injure the credit of the colony? He was surprised at the opposition shown to the wishes of the House in this matter by the Government, as represented by the hon. gentlemen on the opposite bench. He did not wish to be personal, but he would speak very plainly. Who were these gentlemen, after all? Were they men with any stake in the colony? Had they a shilling invested in the colony? Had they any interest at all in the colony besides drawing their salaries? On the other hand, what was the position of the elected members in that House? Their interests were identical with the interests of the colony, and surely they were in a better position to say whether they could afford this work or not. As to the Secretary of State, he thought that House was all-powerful, if it liked. He himself did not care "tuppence" for the Secretary of State. What did the Secretary of State know about the country? All he cared for was whether the colony was in a position to pay the interest. He hoped the colony was not in such a bad position as that, bad as it was. As to ways and means, why not put a tax on land, as we ought to have done years ago. Our railways would have paid much better than they had paid if we had done so. When they, the representatives of the people, said, "We want this line, and the country is willing to pay for it," and when four hon. gentlemen on the Government bench said, "No, you shan't have it"—he thought it was preposterous. He should support the resolution, and he thought the Government ought to take some notice of the large and influential petition lying on the table of the House, signed by all classes of the community, trades-people, banking people, merchants, and others—all interested in the welfare of the colony. Were all these people to be treated with contempt, by the four gentlemen on the Government bench? If we lived in the dark ages we should know what to do with these gentlemen: we should simply put them on board ship and pack them out of the colony. We might then get what we wanted. He

thought the select committee who prepared this report deserved the thanks of the colony, for their very able report. He thought they had gone into almost every single point that was necessary. The only objection he took to their recommendations was as regards to payment by debentures. He should like the Government to have the right to pay the contractors in cash, at the completion of each section; because by issuing debentures to the contractors it might interfere with the quotation and value of our bonds on the London Stock Exchange. They were quite up to £108 now, and the contractor might undersell the market, and bring down the price. He thought that would have an injurious effect upon the colony. As to the price at which the contractors offered to do the work, he thought it was very cheap; and, if the work were thrown open to public competition, he questioned whether we should get it done as cheaply, as these contractors, having their own timber-station, were in exceptionally favorable circumstances for performing the work. The hon. member for the Gascogne complained that there was no information in the report as to the number of population in the Southern districts, which this line would serve. If the hon. member would look at *Hansard* for last year, when Mr. Dobson's proposals were under discussion, he would have seen the information he wanted. He then informed the House that at that time there were 2,000 people in the Wellington district, 1,100 in the Vasse district, 800 at the Murray, while the people in other parts made up a total of about 5,000, or about one-eighth of the population of the whole colony. These Southern districts had always been a neglected part of the colony, although the country was far superior to that in the Eastern Districts. He hoped the House would be unanimous in showing the Government that there was a very strong feeling in favor of this proposal, and that a great responsibility would rest upon the Governor if he threw it out.

MR. LAYMAN was understood to say that he was very much surprised at the course which the Government had taken in this matter. The hon. member for the Gascogne said the report did not give sufficient information. That was not the

fault of the project, but the fault of the select committee. It showed that the subject had been badly handled. The hon. member. Mr. Morrison, had mixed up the question of Responsible Government with the scheme of McNeil & Co. He did not see where it came in at all. He thought that, in the present circumstances of the colony, they ought to go on, and not stand still until they got Responsible Government. No one knew when that would be. As to a land tax, he thought it would be a very fair tax, so long as the land taxed was only that which was tapped by the railway. But he did not think it would be at all fair to tax other lands, that would not be benefited in any way by this railway.

MR. CONGDON said he had listened with a great deal of attention to the debate, and he also recollected the discussion on the same subject last year. On that occasion he opposed the proposal, on the plea that, in his opinion, it was undesirable that so large an undertaking should be carried out without tenders being called. But in this case he had come to the conclusion, taking into consideration the great amount of depression that existed throughout the length and breadth of the colony, and the necessity for immediate action—although he was still of opinion that the principle of calling for tenders for all public works, and especially large public works, was a desirable one, and although he was further of opinion that, as a rule, all our railways should be undertaken by the Government themselves—still, having in mind the existing depression, and the great dearth of employment, he had come to the conclusion that on this occasion he should support the resolution in favor of the proposal being accepted.

MR. MARMION said it was his intention to support the resolution, and, in doing so, he might say that he placed the responsibility of any error in judgment that may have been made in this matter on the shoulders of the Government. It was useless for them at this stage to endeavor to shelter themselves from responsibility by suggesting that a certain course of policy ought to have been pursued, when they themselves never suggested a policy of any kind. Whenever the House asked them to do something, their cry had been the colony was



in a transition state, that we could not enter the loan market, and that the revenue was failing. Were such statements, coming from the representatives of the Government, likely to induce people to remain here, or likely to increase the prosperity of the colony? He thought this want of policy on the part of the Government had been the cause of the depression that now existed. Instead of submitting a bold and spirited policy, they had ever endeavored to place before the House and the country a gloomy outlook; and the people had listened to them when perhaps they should have listened to their own representatives, whom they must know must have the interests of the colony at heart. They were in a position to know the actual state of affairs better than the members of the Executive Bench, and to know also what the public feeling was. He thought it was the duty of the Government to be moved by this public feeling, and do what they could to influence the Home Government in the same direction. Hon. members knew the extent of that influence when backed by the representatives of the people in that House. The present was spoken of as a transition state, and it might be said there were difficulties in that way to overcome. To his mind these difficulties existed only in the imagination, and were no real difficulties at all, but such as could be removed, as if by a magician's wand. The Colonial Secretary spoke of the exodus of people from our shores as a matter of no consequence. Did not every person who left the colony lessen the revenue of the colony? If the colony, at public expense, introduced 2,000 people at a cost of only £10 each, did not the colony lose £20,000 if all these people left it? Did it not also lose their contribution to the revenue of the colony, through the Customs, which might be estimated at £7 10s. per head, equivalent to another £15,000 a year, which would pay the interest on £350,000, at 4 per cent.? Was that not worth thinking of? Would not this amount, if expended on public works, have retained these people in the colony, and would it not have exercised such influence upon trade, and business generally, that the colony would be again in a position, before long, to borrow a further sum of

money, thus tending to that general prosperity which they all desired to see. But when the Government seemed to do all they could—he did not say that they did it purposely, but by their gloomy views of the future—to drive people out of the colony, instead of encouraging them to remain here, what other result could they expect but a feeling of universal depression? With reference to the arguments made use of for and against this proposed railway, he did not intend entering into them, at the present moment. But that the position of affairs in this colony at present rendered it imperative that some public work should be undertaken was incontrovertible. The Government, however, had refused to do anything, and taken the responsibility upon themselves for the line of action now debated by the House. When it came to the portion of those who now sat on the elected side of the House to exchange position with the members of the Government there was no fear they would shirk their responsibility, and, if they failed to do what was right, they knew what the result would be. Unfortunately, however, they did not occupy that position yet. It had been stated that there was no statistical information in the report of the select committee. He submitted that the select committee was not called upon to give such information; it was the duty of the Government to have furnished it. Why had the Government not shown by means of statistics within their reach that this undertaking was a desirable one? No; they had shirked that responsibility as in other matters. The members of that House were not in a position to obtain this information, but the Government were. He was not an alarmist, as every one knew; he had always endeavored to induce the Government to look the future boldly in the face. He had always preached the policy of progress. He had always endeavored to get the people of the colony to view the future of the colony with confidence. But he would ask the Government whether they had done so? No. On the contrary they appeared to be doing their best to cause people in every part of the world to view the future of the colony with fear and alarm. Thank goodness, they were not alto-

gether successful in their efforts. Outside the colony, one of the best tests of the feeling entertained as to the hopefulness of its future was the prices at which its bonds were quoted on the London Stock Exchange. At the present time our Four per Cents. were worth from £108 to £109, or within about 10s. of the Victorian Four per Cents. Did that not show that people at home felt that the colony could offer good security for all the money it might seek to borrow, and that it need have no hesitation in asking for a loan at the present moment? It was nonsense to imagine that this huge colony should not adopt a policy of progress, or should hesitate about it, simply because things looked gloomy at the present moment. He was strongly in favor of something being done, and, he thought, it were well if it were done quickly. They had been twitted from the Treasury bench for not pushing forward Responsible Government, and the Governor himself had told them that the present constitution was played out. They had also been told there need not be any lengthy period of transition,—these words were uttered by the Governor himself in his own hearing. He thought the Government should endeavor to realise the present serious position of affairs, and not allow people, whom we had introduced at the expense of this colony, to go away to help to swell the prosperity of the other colonies. The crisis was not an alarming one, if faced boldly and courageously, by the adoption of a sound policy of public works. With regard to the proposals now before the House he thought they were fair proposals, and, he thought, superior to the proposals which were submitted to them before. As to the question of whether the line was likely to pay or not, he intended to shift the responsibility of answering that question to the shoulders of a member of the Government in that House, their own professional adviser, the Commissioner of Railways, who, when the subject was under discussion last year, said: “He sympathised exceedingly with the hon. members proposing this railway, and considered it would be the very best line in the colony. He considered that it was better than the Eastern Railway, or any of the other

“lines of the colony, and that it was necessary it should be made as soon as possible. Looking at the large belt of country locked up by the land grant railways, it appeared to him that the Southern Districts were the only part of the colony where colonists could now go to take up land.” That was the opinion of the Commissioner of Railways. Now, if this railway was such a very desirable one, and the offer made to construct it was admittedly a fair and reasonable one, and the position of the colony was as it had been described, with hundreds of people in want of employment, and hundreds leaving our shores for the same reason, why in the name of Providence did not the Government take upon itself the responsibility of doing something, when they themselves had been instrumental in bringing about the present state of affairs? It seemed to him puerile to adopt such a line of argument as that adopted by the Government. He was strongly in favor of the proposal himself, and so he believed was nearly every other private member in the House; and he should hold the Government responsible if they neglected to act upon the advice of the House to undertake this or some other public work.

Mr. RICHARDSON said he did not intend to take the high political ground of many of the speakers in dealing with this question, but endeavor to approach it in a severely practical form, for he thought it was a severely practical question they had to deal with. Some hon. members had doubted whether it was desirable to open up these Southern Districts by rail—whether it would pay to open them up. Pre-eminent among these was the hon. member who spoke the other night when the question of referring these proposals to a select committee was under discussion—Mr. Randall, who did not think the country was good enough. The hon. member was candid enough to admit that he did not know much about the country, but still he did not think it good enough. All he (Mr. Richardson) had to say was this: if it would not pay to open up our country with railways, then, there could be no mistake about it, we lived in a very poor country indeed. He thought himself there could not be another country

in the world, inhabited by civilised or English people, of which the same thing could be said, or where it was not considered desirable to resort to railways for purposes of settlement. If he had thought that this colony was not worth opening up by steam communication, all he could say was he would have cleared out of it long ago. If he thought that to embark upon railway construction for the purpose of promoting settlement and the development of the country was going to ruin us, and plunge us into liabilities we could never hope to meet, truly it must be a rotten country indeed. He took it that no farming men coming here from any part of the world could be persuaded to settle amongst us, in any numbers, unless we could satisfy them that we believe the country is worth opening up, and that we intend to open it up, by means of railway communication. As to the desire for more information as to the probable traffic, etc., expressed by some hon. members, it was a rather difficult thing to give it, in a practical condensed form. The community was a scattered one, but it was estimated that there was a population of 5,000 people in these districts. He would remind the House that a population of 5,000 in a rural district, with their producing and consuming powers, was a very different thing from a population of 5,000 in the town. Five thousand settlers, engaged in cultivating the soil, constituted a very important element in the community,—much more so than the numbers indicated. According to the last Blue Book, it appeared that the total area of land under cultivation throughout the colony was about 86,000 acres; and, of this, there were 15,000 acres under cultivation in the districts that would be more or less served by this railway,—and it must be borne in mind that this result was without the aid of railway communication, and where it was impossible for the greater proportion of the settlers to send any agricultural produce into the market, with any hope of successfully competing with other producers. The cost of getting it into a central market would eat up all their profit. There was therefore very little encouragement to these people to cultivate their lands, and the return he had referred to might be

regarded as the minimum return,—the result of adverse circumstances. He would also point out that the average yield in these districts was from 12 to 15 bushels to the acre, which was very much higher than the average yield in other districts. While trembling with fear at the idea of competing with South Australia in wheat-growing, and while lamenting the fact that large importations of wheat were introduced here from that colony, the fact remained that the average yield in South Australia was from four to seven bushels to the acre; yet here were districts, in our own colony, which, in the face of enormous difficulties, produced from 12 to 15 bushels. Yet it was said the country was not good enough to be opened up by railways. That was an argument which, it was obvious on the face of it, would not bear water at all, when they found South Australia, with its comparatively paltry yield, ramified with railways. He believed this quantity of cultivation would be trebled, at the least, given railway communication. To his own knowledge, the want of this means of communication was causing agriculture to languish in these districts. We asked immigrants to come here and settle on our land; but what attraction did we offer them? Perhaps a man with a small capital of £100 or £200 takes up a small block of land, with the view of becoming a producer of corn. He finds the land yields well, but he also finds that he is 100 or 120 miles away from a market—could we expect that man to set to work to cultivate his land, with any will, or with any idea of profit? The first thing he would have to do would be to lay out a large amount (to a man of his means) in procuring an efficient team to cart his produce to market; so he gives it up as a bad job. But show that man that there was a railway within 10 or 20 miles of his homestead, and you convert him at once into an active and industrious producer. Yet, without giving them this means of communication, we expected people to settle on our lands, and to compete with imported wheat and flour. Any hon. member desirous of information as to the capabilities of these districts, if he would consent to take a tour of inspection with him around the districts, would very soon become satisfied as to the desirability of

this railway. He could show him three or four swamps even that would compete with all the importations of potatoes from the other colonies; and he could show patches of country that would produce three or four times the yield of wheat and other cereals compared with South Australia; and thousands upon thousands of areas of land—not exactly agricultural land, but well adapted for fruit growing. He had known 10 and 11 tons of beautiful luscious grapes got out of one acre. Surely this ought to satisfy the most sceptical that this was a country that wanted opening up, and that it was simply from the want of a railway that these articles were not produced, and the land remained idle. It had been asked where was the interest to come from to pay for this railway? Why, the whole amount of interest, when the first two sections were completed, would not be more than between £5,000 and £6,000 a year. Yet hon. members would come there and vote away thousands, under heads we could very well do without, and which were sheer extravagancies, or, at any rate, could in no way be regarded as a necessity. They would vote away these sums without a murmur; but, when an important reproductive work came on the board, they began to wonder where the money was to come from. Some hon. members thought that this question of the payment of interest was not the only one in the way; they thought the line would not pay its working expenses. He believed himself it would, after it had been opened a few months; and he would make a strong point of the fact that the working expenses on this line would be nothing, in proportion, like the working expenses of our other lines had been, for this reason—the main expense, at the head station, at Perth, would not be increased at all. We should not need another Commissioner, we should not need another General Manager, we should not need another Traffic Manager, we should not need to increase the departmental staff at Perth at all. All that would be needed extra to work this line would be a few engine-drivers, a few stokers, two or three guards, and two or three station-masters. So that the working expenses would be nothing compared to what the working expenses were on our first lines. Nor

would the wear and tear be anything compared with the wear and tear on other lines; there would be no severe gradients—none at all worth talking about, on the whole of this line. If any hon. members still thought it was undesirable to further open up the country by railways, and that we had already plunged into debt too far in that direction, let them put this question to themselves: if they had the opportunity and the option of getting back all our borrowed money expended on railways, and wipe out our railway system altogether, would they say, Aye? He did not think any hon. member—not even the hon. member, Mr. Randell, who had consistently opposed the construction of every railway in the colony—would, if the option were afforded, wish to go back to the old days of Letch's vans and river steamers. The Colonial Secretary, dealing with the financial position of the colony, had referred to the fact, and made a point of it, that the revenue for the first quarter of the year was £5,000 less than the revenue for the corresponding quarter last year; and the hon. gentleman very ingeniously multiplied that by four, to show what our deficit was likely to be at the end of the year. But, if he was not mistaken, he believed the deficit, or a great deal of it, was in connection with the land revenue. [The COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: I didn't say so.] Whatever the cause of the deficit was, it was not likely to last much longer, for at the present time a very large portion of our best land was shut up from purchase or settlement in any way, by the two land-grant railways, which tied the hands of the Government, and crippled the land revenue to a very large extent. When these lands came to be thrown open for selection, no doubt our territorial revenue would not only resume its sway, but largely increase. Once these locked-up lands were thrown open, and we had railway communication established, he believed himself that our land revenue would be doubled, in the course of two or three years. The Colonial Secretary also stated that the exodus of people from our shores was not a matter of much concern, inasmuch as those who went away were not a very desirable class. He did not agree with the hon. gentleman. He did not think any description of good honest labor

could be regarded as an undesirable class to retain in the colony. Responsible Government was another lion which they were told was in the path. This appeared to be the trump card of the members of the Government, whenever any project of importance was brought on the board. He regretted exceedingly the attitude of the Government with regard to this project. While admitting that the line was a desirable and a necessary line, and gave every promise of being a reproductive line, they still, for some inscrutable reason, set up their backs against it. He thought it would have shown much better policy on their part, and that they were more in unison with the wish of the people of the colony, if they had joined with the members of that House in getting over any difficulties there might be in the way, instead of making use of their position to block every effort of the representatives of the people. There was another thing we should not lose sight of in connection with this proposal,—we had already opened up all of our Eastern Districts to railway communication, and the cost of the upkeep of these railways had been cheerfully borne by all sections of the community, by the settlers of the Southern Districts, and by the settlers in the far North. In addition to this, it must be borne in mind that, so far as the Southern District settlers were concerned, they paid these taxes although in doing so they were offering a premium for railway communication to enable other people to undersell them, by giving those people improved facilities for bringing their produce to market. They had done so for the simple reason that they hoped their own turn would come next, and that the favored settlers of the districts already blessed with railway communication would not begrudge them the same facilities when that time arrived. But now they found they were to be put off, with some lame excuse or the other—that the time was inopportune, that the revenue would not stand it, that the colony was in a transition state, and other excuses, which he thought ought not to have been put forward. After this, if the Southern Districts were refused this great boon, which they had waited for, for years, he thought those districts would have very strong grounds indeed to complain of

the injustice with which they had been treated. He thought, as a simple act of justice, they ought to have their fair share of railway communication. Give them that chance, and we would hear the last of the lamentations about the importation of cereals and other produce from the other colonies. This railway would be their deathblow.

MR. RANDELL said he regretted he was unable to support the proposal. He did not mean that he could not support it *per se*, but he could not do so in the present circumstances of the colony. He looked upon the opinions of the hon. member for the North (Mr. Richardson) on this subject as being worthy of anyone's respect, especially from a practical point of view, and with his intimate knowledge of the country. The hon. member had given more information to the House than had been afforded either last session or this. But he did think the hon. member had taken a very rosy view of the capabilities of the Southern Districts, which, with the little knowledge he possessed of those districts, he was unable to agree with. He had not been much farther than Pinjarrah, nor very far into the country, on either side of the public road, leading to that district; but the opinion he formed of the country was that it was very inferior country. The hon. member had spoken of swamp land capable of supplying the whole colony with potatoes, and of land capable of producing any amount of fruit; but the hon. member had not said how much of this land was still unalienated and open for sale, to cottage occupiers and others. [MR. RICHARDSON: Thousands of acres]. The reasons which were set forth in favor of the undertaking were, principally, two—that it would open up the resources of the districts, and would put a check upon the exodus of people from the colony. Very great stress had been laid upon this last point by the select committee, and it formed a very prominent portion of the report. They spoke of the laboring population rapidly leaving our shores, and of the interests of the country imperatively demanding that this or some other public work should be entered upon, to prevent anything like disastrous collapse. This question of the exodus of the laboring population had already been touched upon, and he agreed

with much that had been said by the Colonial Secretary that those who were leaving us were not a class likely to have settled here under any circumstances, with the view of helping to develop the colony's resources. The hon. member for Fremantle had gone into a somewhat elaborate, if fanciful, calculation of the loss which the colony would sustain by the departure of 2,000 imported immigrants from amongst us. The hon. member estimated that each of these persons contributed to the Customs revenue, by the consumption of dutiable goods, to the extent of £7 10s. per annum,—equivalent to a sum of £15,000, which the hon. member said would pay the interest on £350,000. He did not think much of the hon. member's figures, nor did he think his argument would hold water. We had to send money out of the colony for the purpose of enabling these people to be clothed and fed, and what advantage then did we reap from imported immigrants of this class? Unless we could induce people to settle down, and assist in the development of the country's resources, we in no way added to the effective strength of the colony by spending money in the introduction of immigrants into it. As to the beneficial results that might be expected from the opening up of these districts by railway, he thought there was no good ground for such expectations. He noticed from the evidence of the promoter of the scheme, Mr. McNeil, that his firm certainly expected to reap some beneficial results from it, for he said "the contract would pay us very well; we should get our timber station connected with Perth, we should benefit by the traffic over our own line from the Albany road, and we should make a profit on the consumption of timber required for construction." Here was a very formidable list of benefits which the contractors alleged they expected, but there was not a word in the report to show what the beneficial results to the colony would be. Nor did he himself see that it would very greatly benefit the contractors. The only fresh markets it would open for their timber would be Perth and Fremantle, and he thought these places were pretty well supplied with timber, and they could reach Fremantle as cheaply now by sea as they could by rail if this line were

constructed. As to their deriving much benefit by the traffic on their line from the Albany road, he differed from them on that point. He thought the Beverley-Albany line would absorb a very large amount of that traffic. The sandalwood that came into Perth from that direction came mostly from the Beaufort and the Arthur River districts; and the Beverley-Albany line reached to within a distance of some 50 or 55 miles of those districts, so that it was not likely, when that railway was completed, the Jarrah-dale line would be made much use of. He looked upon that purely as a baseless argument, put forward to induce that Council to enter upon the work. He thought they might take the expression of a contractor's patriotic views for what they were worth. Contractors, as a rule, did not care for the country's interests, but their own interests. He did not feel competent to deal with the financial aspect of the question; but it struck him there would be a difference of opinion between the contractor and the select committee as to the value of our bonds. He agreed with the Colonial Secretary that if the work were to be constructed at all, we had much better go into the loan market and get the money ourselves. He believed it was better for the Government to construct their own lines, than have them constructed for them on the principle here indicated. He noticed that nothing had been said about compensation. If he were assenting to the work at all, he should make it conditional that no compensation in respect of lands resumed should be asked for as regards any rural land through which the line passed. This railway, if it benefited anybody, would benefit those through whose land it passed, and he thought the least which the owners of such land could do would be to offer to surrender that portion of the land required for the purposes of the railway. If the Government had been firm, and insisted upon this when the Eastern Railway was about to be constructed, they would have saved a large amount of compensation. He believed they would have obtained the whole of the land on that line, free of compensation. Indeed, the settlers themselves expressed their willingness, in the first instance, to give up their land, until they found that they were actually going

to get the railway. It had been said that evening that this work would be for the benefit of the whole colony. He did not think that statement could be borne out in the slightest degree. He could not see how it would benefit any of our Northern Districts, nor our Eastern Districts—on the contrary it would enable the Southern settlers to enter into competition with the Eastern Districts. Reverting to the argument that it would have the effect of retaining people in the colony who would otherwise leave it—an argument upon which a great deal of stress had been laid in the course of the debate, but upon which he placed very little value himself—let him ask this question: when the line was completed, what then? Should we have to enter upon some other work in order to retain these people here, and, when that was completed, have the same argument put forward again? What were we to do?

MR. MARMION: Trust to Providence that something may turn up, in the meantime.

MR. RANDELL said he had heard of a gentleman named Micawber, who was always expecting something to turn up. Hon. members knew the result. He hoped the hon. member for Fremantle was not a disciple of that illustrious man. They had been told it was the Government who ought to have furnished the statistics, to show that this line, if constructed, would be a reproductive work. He took it to be the duty of the promoters of any project, those who initiated it, to show the reasonableness of the scheme, and the foundation upon which they based their application for support. If it was the opinion of the majority that this line should be undertaken, it was not in consequence of their belief that it would be a reproductive work, so much as from a desire to retain people in the colony, and to relieve the existing depression which was injuring trade,—injuring mostly the merchants and traders of the colony because of the shrinkage of business, resulting from the decrease of population in these two towns. So far as the country settlers were concerned, it would not benefit them in the slightest degree, excepting perhaps a few people on the projected line. He noticed that the novel idea had been started in the *West Australian* newspaper that

this would not be a loan but a liability. That appeared to him to be a distinction without a difference. We should have to pay interest upon the debentures, we should have to provide a sinking fund, and the money would have to be repaid some day or the other. In the meantime we should be laying burdens upon the shoulders of the people of the colony,—burdens which, he submitted, those who were advocating this project were bound to show the people were able to bear. They had not yet shown—except by a mere expression of opinion—that the colony would be able to bear this additional burden.

MR. MARMION: Will the hon. member show that they are unable to bear it?

MR. RANDELL: That is a negative, and I believe you cannot prove a negative.

MR. RICHARDSON: How much a year would the burden be?

MR. RANDELL: Never mind how much. It's the last straw that breaks the camel's back. The hon. member for Perth (Dr. Scott) had told them that their duty was not to legislate for the future, but for the present,—to legislate for existing circumstances. A creature of circumstances was about the most miserable creature we could have. He thought there should be some foresight, and some consideration of the probable ulterior results of our efforts. If, in a moment of panic, we rushed into any measure that might be laid before us by any speculative or adventurous spirit, we should find ourselves very soon in difficulties, out of which we might find it impossible to extricate ourselves. He was fully desirous of supporting the Government in the position they had taken up on this question. It had been said that the Government should yield their own opinions in this matter to the opinions of the advocates of this scheme. He presumed the Government had good grounds for holding the opinion which they did. They had more sources of information than we had available—not perhaps purely local ones; but they ought to be in a position to read the financial barometer as readily as we could read the atmospheric barometer on our walls; and, if they thought the circumstances of the colony did not warrant a prudent and careful Government in em-

barking upon this scheme, he thought it was their duty to resist it, and, so far as they could, to carry that House with them. He would only add that he did not take the same view of the committee's report as some hon. members did. Nor could he see that there was very great weight attached to it. It consisted of some nicely-pointed sentences, but it had carefully avoided touching upon the real question of whether this line was a work of urgent necessity. They said: "Your committee deem it unnecessary here to make any statement as to the abstract policy of railway construction in the direction indicated." That was a fine sonorous sentence, but he did not know what it meant. In what "direction?" They said that question was fully dealt with during the winter session of last year. He did not remember that the abstract policy of constructing this line was gone into last year. He presumed the abstract question of the desirability or otherwise of constructing the line would mean whether the resources of the district were such as to render it desirable to open it up. They had heard little or nothing of the resources of the district until the hon. member for the North spoke that evening. The committee seemed to make a great deal out of the opinion of the Commissioner of Railways, who said he considered the offer a favorable one on the whole, and cheaper than that made by Mr. Dobson. But he found that the Commissioner also said that, eventually, there would have to be a capital expenditure equal to the amount of Mr. Dobson's offer, before we had an efficient and well-equipped line. He thought the report was deficient in the lack of information it supplied,—information which the House ought to be in possession of. He thought the committee were bound to have set before the House clearly and distinctly what would be the result to the colony of embarking upon this undertaking, and, so far as they could judge, what would be the probable earnings of the line, and such information as that. Taking all things into consideration, he felt himself unable, in the present circumstances of the colony, to pledge its revenues for this undertaking. It might be, perhaps, as good as some others that had been suggested, but not so good, he thought, as

some. He thought there were works, possibly, that would be reproductive; but they were very few and far between in this colony. The hon. member for the North had charged him with having been consistently opposed to every railway that had been constructed in the colony. He did not think the hon. member was quite right there. He did oppose—though not in the House at the time—the construction of the Geraldton-Northampton railway, and he believed that line was generally referred to as a "white elephant." He had been in favor of the Bunbury railway, believing it would be the commencement of a line extending into what he really did believe to be a good district; and he should have been happy that evening to support a proposal for the extension of that line—which he considered of greater importance than a line from Perth to Vasse—had he thought the finances of the colony would have borne it, and we were in a position to go into the money market ourselves. It was true that he did oppose the Perth to Fremantle railway; and he confessed he had been agreeably disappointed in that line. No man in the colony, when that line was built, ever anticipated the traffic which had sprung up between these two towns. But, after all, this line did not open up the resources of the colony one iota. It gave facilities for travelling, and for the conveyance of imported goods; and that was all it did, beyond fictitiously increasing the value of land in Perth, which some hon. members had found out, to their cost. He would say no more, but simply state that he would support the amendment brought in by the leader of the Government, which he thought was a fair and reasonable compromise, and which indicated that, if circumstances should arise which in the opinion of the Government would warrant the undertaking of this line, they would be prepared to do so, by means of a public loan.

MR. PEARSE did not know that he could contribute one word to this very important subject, beyond saying that the scheme had his entire support and sympathy. He believed himself that if there was a line of railway in the colony that would pay, it would be the two first sections of this line, as now proposed. There was plenty of good agricultural



land, good garden ground, and land that would produce any quantity of fruit. The climate, too, was excellent; and he did not know what more they required. He was sure if the scheme were entered upon at once, it would do much to help us to tide over the present depressed state of things, and do a vast amount of good.

MR. HENSMAN said that when this matter was debated last session it happened that he was absent, by reason of an accident, and he had no opportunity of speaking or voting on the subject. It was such an important question that, although he should not detain the House many minutes, he should not wish to give a silent vote upon it. As he understood it, the motion now before them asked them to affirm, generally, the report of the select committee, and that it would be open for the Government, if they should enter into a contract, to take notice of some points mentioned by the hon. member, Mr. Randell, in framing that contract; and that the House, in adopting this resolution, did not pledge itself to every detail, but left it to the Government to act to a certain extent on their own discretion, to the best of their information and knowledge at the time. He regretted that they should have had an important matter of this kind debated for hours, and that the Government should not have assisted them in the matter. So far as he could make out the arguments of the Colonial Secretary, they might be summed up in two propositions: first, that what the resolution proposed was a policy of "desperation and despair," and, secondly, that it would be wrong for this Government to leave it (in the words of the Colonial Secretary) to their "successors." If it be the act of desperate and despairing men, in a young colony like this, with this vast area at our command, to make a railway this short distance, whereby the colony would be pledged to pay, in 1890, £5,400 in the shape of interest, together with some compensation—which would certainly not be large—if it be the act of despairing and desperate men to open up what on all sides was admitted to be one of the most fertile, temperate, and excellent parts of the colony—all he could say was, no severer indictment could have been preferred against any

Government—a Government that a few years ago had a large balance at its command. If, in two years time, this colony was not likely to be in a position to pay a few thousand pounds, and to meet the subsequent claims, the sooner they made up their minds that it was a colony rapidly going to sink off the face of the earth, as an English colony, the better. Then, the second objection of the Government was that it would be wrong towards their successors to pledge them to this work. This Government had no successors, and never would have, in the sense of those that might be placed in the same position. They were the very last of their race. They were about to depart from the scene,—that was to say, except those of them who might wish to throw in their fortune with the colony. Therefore, it was no argument for them to say they wished to protect their successors. Their successors would be the people themselves, who would elect their representatives and their own Ministry; and, if the people of the colony, and the elected members of that House, who had amongst them men of practical knowledge, were in favor of carrying out this scheme, it was nonsense for the Government to say they did not wish to do wrong towards their successors. The Colonial Secretary had told them that there would be no utility in considering whether the scheme would be of benefit to the colony. Why, that was the very thing they had to consider. The resolution affirmed that it was desirable. The question was—was it right to undertake it at the present time? If he did have any feeling in favor of it last July, that feeling would have very much increased at the present time, because there was but one opinion that the colony wanted a great public work of some kind, if we could only get hold of the right one. There was one argument he had heard used in the course of the debate—that the work, if undertaken at all, ought to be put out for public tender. At first, that appeared to him rather a taking argument. But they must bear this in mind, that they had the evidence of the Commissioner of Railways that, in his opinion, the prices are reasonable, and that the offer, reviewed as a whole, is a favorable one. The promoters, too, were themselves interested in the construction of the line

apart from any profit they might make—for purposes of their own. One thing had occurred to his mind: this question was not one for the Governor alone. He need not say more on that subject. If ever there was a question in which it was imperative for the Governor to act upon the advice of the Executive, it was this. Whether the Governor had consulted them or not, we must look to those who formed the Executive to take the responsibility. The Governor, in his despatch of the 2nd September, said: "It will be seen that it has been proposed to construct the railway under what may be termed a modified form of the guarantee system. After careful reflection, I must say that I myself would much prefer that the guarantee system should be avoided altogether, and that the railway should be built in sections by the Government, as the necessary funds can be raised by loan." To a certain extent it was mockery to ask them to adopt the present proposal, the Governor himself having thus spoken against this system; but the question arose, what did the members of the Executive Council who had seats in that House say? Perhaps some of them did not care what view might be taken of their conduct, out of doors; but there might be some of them who did. They must know they were not there as voting machines. They were there as representing the Government, and the House must hold them, in a case like this, responsible to it, sitting there as they did as advisers to the Governor. The Governor could not act constitutionally in a case of this kind without their advice. Let them tell the House whether they were sitting there to vote as they were told, or to exercise their own independent judgment. They had not much more time to sit there, and it would not only be a graceful but an independent thing, if they had an independent opinion on this point, to let the House hear it. The country looked up to them, and would remember this matter. He did not approve of the form of the motion before the House. It was the Government, and not the Governor, who had to take this question into consideration. It was for the Governor to consult his Executive, and, unless that was done, he was not acting constitutionally. He hoped the hon. member for Plantagenet would con-

sent to alter the wording of his motion, so as to make it read "for the favorable consideration of the Government." The hon. member, Mr. Randell, seemed to speak in support of the Government. He did not want to follow the hon. member through his speech, but he should like to refer to one or two of his arguments. The hon. member said this railway would not benefit the whole colony, but only the districts through which it ran. That was an argument that might be used against every railway. Primarily, no doubt, it would only benefit the Southern Districts; but, anything that increased the producing power of the country benefited the colony at large.

MR. RANDELL said he did not use that argument as a substantive argument, but in answer to another argument.

MR. HENSMAN, continuing, said our object ought to be to increase our producing powers and to lessen our importations. The hon. member also referred to Mr. Micawber. He did not think Mr. Micawber was a good illustration of the case in point. Although Micawber waited a good many years for something to turn up, and went through a great many vicissitudes—like this colony perhaps—he eventually came to Australia, and ended his days here as a Resident Magistrate,—a better position than he ever expected. Some hon. members—and he liked their tone—said we were independent of the views of the Secretary of State, or of other people who might throw obstacles in the way. It was not that the Secretary of State knew nothing about this particular part of the world, but that he would be influenced by the representatives of the people and not by what the Governor thought; and he hoped the House would show that it was not going to be put off by such arguments as they had heard that evening—arguments not dealing with facts, but dealing with outrageous phrases such as "a policy of desperation and despair," and words of that kind. What they wanted was some public work to enable the colony to get through a period which was a very serious one. They could not shut their eyes to the fact that there was depression—which many of them believed was but temporary—and that the finances of the colony had been reduced to a very bad state

through mismanagement. Policy there had been none, on the part of the Government now sitting in that House—unless drifting might be considered policy. The House, seeing this state of things, desired to relieve this depression and to check the emigration that was going on, by starting a public work which would be of immediate benefit to the people, and which would open up a comparatively rich tract of country. They desired to see produced within our own borders many things we were now bringing in from abroad. It seemed to him that the amendment that had been moved was one that was rather in the way of mockery than anything else. It began by saying that this was a desirable work, and then it said it ought to be undertaken out of next loan. But when should we get our next loan? If the amendment was going to be put at all he hoped its two propositions would be put separately, otherwise it would put the House in a very foolish position. They all agreed it was a desirable work, but he did not think they all agreed it should be undertaken out of next loan. He hoped hon. members, on the occasion of this important crisis in our history, would, by their votes, show the Government they were in earnest, and determined not to let the colony go to wreck and ruin, if they could help it. They had waited a long time—how much longer he did not know—until they had the representatives of the people carrying on the affairs of the colony. But let them show they were determined, so far as they could, to put this scheme forth as business men, and at the same time with firmness and a determination to show they were not to be trifled with, and that it might go to the Secretary of State with the united voice of that House, which he believed on the present occasion was the voice of the people of the colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. J. Forrest) said that after, he might almost say, the challenge of the hon. member for Greenough, he might state that he had no objection to stand up there, and take his share of the responsibility of the amendment moved by his hon. friend the Colonial Secretary. The hon. member for Greenough ought to know, he thought, that questions of importance of this kind were

not dealt with by the Governor alone, but were the result of consultation with the members of the Executive; and he thought he might say that the amendment of his honorable colleague was the result of the deliberations of the Governor and the Executive Council. The hon. member must also know that, although the members of the Executive sat on that bench, representing the Government, they might not on all occasions individually agree with the resolutions put forward on behalf of the Government. It was not always that half a dozen people discussing public matters were of one mind. But he thought it was the essence of Government that, whatever individual differences of opinion the members of it might have, they were bound by the decisions arrived at—unless it was a matter of conscience. As a general rule the members of a Cabinet were bound by the decision of the majority, otherwise it would be impossible to carry on any Government successfully. Therefore, he thought it was hardly fair for the hon. member to accuse any individual member of the Executive for the particular views he might hold, on all occasions; he may not always personally agree with the views put forward by the Government, but as a member of that Government he would loyally come forward and support the views of the Government as a body. The Government in this matter had gone as far as they could. It would have been very easy for the Government, and no doubt it would have been very popular, to have come down there, and say to the House, "We will accept the scheme, and the work shall be commenced at once." That was a course which would have been a most agreeable one to the Government, and most agreeable to individual members of the Government. Did they deserve all this censure because they did not approve of the scheme in its present form, in its entirety, when they acknowledged the desirability of the work, and said that it should be constructed out of next loan? What was the use of the House running contrary to the views of the Government in this matter? Hon. members must know that, under the present constitution, the Governor could not act contrary to the instructions of the Secretary

of State. If the House passed this resolution, against the wish of the Government, what would be the position? The resolution would go to the Secretary of State, no doubt; but unless it received the support, and the hearty support, of the Governor, he doubted whether they would get the Secretary of State's sanction, at any rate in the early future. Whatever else would happen, he was sure there would be a great many delays. Would it not be wise, therefore, for the House to join hand in hand with the Government, and let a resolution go home backed by the unanimous voice of that House, and supported by the Governor? He was sure if that course were followed they would be much nearer attaining the object they had in view than by passing a resolution altogether contrary to the views of the Government. He believed himself that this line would be a good line, that it would encourage the cultivation of soil, that it would run through well-watered country, possessing a temperate climate and a fairly fertile soil; and he believed it would be a work that would tend to settle people on the land, and in many ways prove a remunerative work. For one thing, it would save the present cost of our Southern mail service, which meant some £2,000 a year. He was very sanguine, as hon. members must know, of the future of this country, and he did not believe that the expenditure of this money would in any way embarrass the colony. He did not look upon it as a policy of "desperation and despair." Probably too much had been attempted to be made of those words. He did not think his hon. friend could have meant them in the sense which hon. members had put upon them. His own opinion was that it was a public work which the colony would be well able to undertake. But, under present circumstances, he did not see how we could force the Secretary of State to approve of the scheme, until he had every information he might require, and we could satisfy him as to the expediency of contracting a loan for carrying out the work. The Secretary of State had the power, under this constitution, and, until we received his approval, we could not get what we desired. He had been very pleased indeed to hear the speech of the

hon. member for the North. One could listen with pleasure and attention to what fell from that hon. member on this subject, for they knew he was a practical man, who knew the value of land and who had a practical knowledge of working it, and that he was also a cautious man; and, when that hon. member advocated this line as he did, he thought it must be worthy of all attention. He believed, himself, that these Southern Districts of ours would be the future homes of our colonists. They might go to Kimberley or to the Northern portions of the colony to accumulate wealth, but they would come down here to live and spend it. It was not pleasant for him to have to sit there for hours, and be attacked all round. Hon. members seemed to have no feeling at all. He and his hon. colleagues were told they were of no use at all, that they had no stake in the colony, that they had not a sixpence invested in it, but that hon. members on the other side had everything invested in it. He did not think all this was correct. They were also told that they always took a gloomy view of things, and, in short, were everything that was bad, while hon. members opposite were everything that was good. All this was not agreeable to listen to, and he could not say he very much liked it. But, as he said before, it would have been very easy for the Government to have come down, and said they accepted the proposals of the select committee, and would have this work commenced at once. But there were other matters to be considered. There was the financial position of the colony to be looked at; and, although he was sanguine as to the future of this country, it must be borne in mind that, under the present constitution, we must be able to satisfy others than ourselves that we were in a position to borrow, and the principal person we had to satisfy was the Secretary of State. He would, therefore, again urge hon. members to support the Government in the resolutions they had put forward. They would be throwing the whole responsibility upon the Government then, of recommending this work for the approval of the Secretary of State as soon as ever the finances of the colony would allow.

SM. T. COCKBURN-CAMPBELL,  
replying to the charge against the select

committee for not giving any reasons in support of the abstract policy of constructing the line, said that was a charge that could be readily met, the whole question having been gone into last session, when it was admitted on all sides that the work was a desirable one. Besides that, the question of the abstract policy of the line had not been submitted to them at all: the question they had to consider was whether this was a feasible method of constructing the railway. The Colonial Secretary said it was better that all these Government railways should be constructed out of loan. As a matter of fact, if they accepted the present offer, it would be tantamount to constructing this line by loan; but the reason why the committee considered the present offer would be a better means of getting the railway built than having it constructed by the Government out of a Government loan was that the committee knew, as a matter of fact, that it would be an utter impossibility for the Government to construct it at anything like so reasonable a cost. The promoters did not anticipate making profit on the work but upon their timber. The Colonial Secretary spoke about bad times, and talked about "a policy of desperation and despair," while, in the same breath, the hon. gentleman asked them to invite the Government to construct this very desirable work. As to ways and means, he was perfectly certain, if the Government would only take advantage of the great opening which was now manifesting itself before them, in the opening up of our goldfields, they would very soon find themselves in possession of ways and means. The hon. member for the Greenough spoke rather disparagingly of the influence of the Governor in this matter, so far as the Secretary of State was concerned. Unfortunately, that was quite contrary to the experience of those who had had any long experience in the working of this constitution, and it was only in having the Governor on their side that they had any chance of influencing the Secretary of State in this matter; and he hoped that a representation of the strong views entertained by the House on the subject might induce His Excellency to take a favorable view of the matter. As to the form of the address, which the hon. member for Green-

ough wished to alter, he really thought that was quite unnecessary. This was the usual form of these addresses.

The House having divided upon the motion, the numbers were—

Ayes ...	...	...	13
Noes ...	...	...	5

Majority for	...	8
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AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Congdon	Hon. J. Forrest
Captain Fawcett	Mr. Randell
Mr. A. Forrest	Hon. C. N. Warton
Mr. Harper	Hon. J. A. Wright
Mr. Hensman	Hon. Sir M. Fraser
Mr. Layman	(Teller.)
Mr. Marmion	
Mr. Parker	
Mr. Pearce	
Mr. Richardson	
Mr. Scott	
Mr. Venn	
Sir T. C. Campbell, Bart.	
(Teller.)	

The address was then put and passed.

The House adjourned at a quarter to twelve, midnight.

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,

*Tuesday, 17th April, 1888.*

Mail service between Roebourne and Cossack—Mining Bill: second reading; in committee—Reappropriation Bill, 1888: second reading; in committee—Repairs to Roads in the Greenough District (Message No. 11)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at noon.

PRAYERS.

ROEBOURNE-COSSACK MAIL SERVICE.

MR. VENN, in the absence of Mr. Richardson, asked the Colonial Secretary whether it was the case that the mail service between Roebourne and Cossack was still carried by mail-cart tri-weekly, notwithstanding that the tram, or tramcars, were running daily between those two towns?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. Sir M. Fraser): Yes, it is, at a cost of £52 10s. a year. The contract will expire on the 31st of July next, after which the mails will be conveyed by tramway.