

Select Committee, and were prepared to sit even to-morrow night for that purpose.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY assured hon. members that he did not know the employees of the Printing Office had a holiday yesterday. He had not been consulted in regard to that holiday, and by whose orders it had been granted he could not say.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: But what had the printers been doing to-day, that they could not print off the report?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY said he did not know. If his attention had been drawn to the matter that morning, he should have insisted on the report being printed in time. He would have the matter strictly inquired into, and would take care such a thing did not occur again, or, if so, the offenders would be visited with penal consequences.

Question put and passed, and the order postponed.

SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT—POST-PONEMENT.

Order read, for consideration of Select Committee's Report.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that that the order be postponed until the next sitting of the House.

HON. R. S. HAYNES said he was afraid there were so many Bills on the Notice Paper for Tuesday, that this measure would not be reached.

HON. A. B. KIDSON protested most strongly at the consideration of this Bill being further postponed until Tuesday, and said that if necessary the House ought to meet on Monday to deal with it.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: There was no business for Monday, or he would have proposed to meet on that day.

HON. R. S. HAYNES: Monday was a holiday.

Question put and passed, and the order postponed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at half-past six o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 8th November, 1900.

Hampton Plains Railway Bill (private), Message as to Crown Lands—Loan Estimates, Appropriation Message—Papers presented—Lands Resumption Amendment Bill, Council's Amendments—Annual Estimates, Committee of Supply, Railways vote (resumed) passed, Division; Works vote (progress)—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

HAMPTON PLAINS RAILWAY BILL (PRIVATE).

MESSAGE, CROWN LANDS.

Message from the Administrator received and read, assenting on behalf of Her Majesty to this Bill being proceeded with, in so far as it affected Crown lands.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

APPROPRIATION MESSAGE.

Loan Estimates presented, showing expenditure out of loan funds proposed for the year; also, Message from the Administrator read, recommending appropriation for the same.

Ordered that the Message and Estimates be considered at the next sitting.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Premier: 1, Acclimatisation Society Committee's Report, annual; 2, Auditing of Railway Accounts, Telegrams from other Australian colonies.

Ordered to lie on the table.

LANDS RESUMPTION AMENDMENT BILL.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of two amendments in Clause 1, made by the Legislative Council, considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

On motion by the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, the Council's amendments agreed to without debate.

Resolution reported, report adopted, and Message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Resumed from 6th November.

RAILWAYS AND TRAMWAYS DEPARTMENT (Hon. B. C. Wood, Commissioner).

Vote — *Railways and Tramways*, £840,571:

MR. HOLMES: The object he had in moving to report progress the other night was to obtain certain information from the Commissioner of Railways.

THE PREMIER: Move for a return.

MR. HOLMES: Returns had been moved for by him, and questions asked for the last six weeks, but only evasive answers were received, and now he was further from obtaining the information than at the starting point. The reason given for entering into the arrangements for the purchase of water from the Jobson company, to his mind, was that at the time the Railway Department were paying £6,000 a week for water. We found from the General Manager's report that outside the Jobson company the Railway Department only paid £4,750 for water for the whole year. We were told the reason the Railway Department entered into this swindle, for he could call it nothing else, was that at that particular stage the Government were paying £6,000 a week for water. This information about the £6,000 a week for water was given by the late Commissioner, and members could find it on page 1145 of the present *Hansard*. The late Commissioner said that the figures which he (Mr. Holmes) had quoted were not correct, that the quantities of water purchased were wrong. On page 1143 of *Hansard* the Commissioner gave the correct figures. He said that the dam in question was only capable of holding 3,121,000 gallons of water, yet the return laid on the table of the House showed that 5,627,518 gallons of water were purchased from the company.

MR. PIESSE: The dam was emptied; the rains then came and filled it, and it was emptied a second time.

MR. HOLMES: Another reason the late Commissioner gave for entering into this contract would be found on the same page of *Hansard*, and it was that the whole of the supply of water was to be delivered within one month. It was a peculiar coincidence that this particular dam on the goldfields, which was capable of holding 3,000,000 gallons of water, should be filled in a month.

THE PREMIER: It was very inconvenient for members to ask for information when they were speaking to matters

before the House. If Ministers were always on the alert, which he did not suppose they were, they would not be able to follow what members were asking for; and the rules of the House provided that if anyone wanted information there were two ways of obtaining it—by asking questions, or if papers and documents were to be supplied, to move a motion. It was the duty of Ministers to supply the information as soon as possible, and he could assure members that although he had been sitting in the House all this time, he was absolutely ignorant of what the hon. member (Mr. Holmes) wanted.

MR. HOLMES: The right hon. gentleman walked out every time.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member were more polite, he (the Premier) might stay, but since the hon. member was so rude, he would not stay to listen to what the hon. member had to say. If the hon. member would ask for the information, by motion or otherwise, the particulars would be supplied in double-quick time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The information had been asked for in the ordinary way.

THE PREMIER: Then it had been given. The parliamentary rule was clear. If members asked for information, and did not get what they wanted, they should ask again. If members did not put a question sufficiently clearly, or did not get the information desired, the question could be put in another way, which would make it more clear what was desired. As far as the Government were concerned, we had no object to keep back information. The proceedings of the Government were an open book for everyone to look at, and as far as he (the Premier) was concerned he would allow anyone to see the whole of the proceedings of the country. If he had anything to hide, it would be a bad state of affairs. If the hon. member would put on a piece of paper, without a motion, what was required, he (the Premier) would try and get the information.

MR. HOLMES: A return had been moved for by him, but the return did not furnish the particulars required. When the House adjourned the other night, he (Mr. Holmes) supplied the Commissioner with what was required, and he had told the Commissioner if the returns on the table were compared with the General Manager's report, it would be seen that

there was a very gross mistake somewhere: the two sets of figures did not compare. In regard to this matter of water, when he (Mr. Holmes) was speaking, the Premier interjected that the Government were paying £1,000 a day for water, and the late Commissioner, following up that argument, said the amount was about £6,000 a week.

THE PREMIER: That was the information received.

MR. HOLMES: At this particular time the Government were paying £6,000 a week for water, whereas the General Manager's report showed that outside the Jobson Company only £4,750 worth of water had been supplied to the Government. There was no doubt that the Premier had been informed that the Government were paying £1,000 a day for water. He was not imputing any motives to the Premier, but what he (Mr. Holmes) complained of was that Ministers took statements from some of their principal officers without trying to verify them.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The returns which the hon. member asked for were on the table of the House, and were absolutely correct. In regard to the department paying considerably more to the Jobson Company for water than was paid to other people, he (the Commissioner) understood that £2 per thousand gallons was paid to the Jobson Company, and 7s. or 8s. to other people.

THE PREMIER: Other people had not the supply.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The water supply of other people had run out, therefore a bigger price would have to be paid to Jobson, and at the time the department was under great pressure for water. A sum of £11,000 was paid to Jobson for 5,500,000 gallons of water, and for 12,000,000 gallons of water the department paid £4,750, which was so much better for the department. The total quantity of water supplied to the department was 17,700,000 gallons, for which an average of 18s. 3d. per thousand gallons was paid.

MR. HOLMES: The department purchased twice the quantity from other persons for half the cost.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: So much the better for the Government.

MR. HOLMES: So much the better for Jobson.

THE PREMIER: Other people had not the water.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The General Manager's report was correct.

MR. MORAN: How much was paid to Jobson?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Jobson received £2 per thousand gallons.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Was that not paid to take out a bad debt.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It was not for a bad debt: it was for the convenience of the Railway Department.

MR. PIESSE: A few evenings ago he had said that the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) had almost tired the patience of members, but even at the risk of wearying members one might go over the subject again. An arrangement was made with a company, which the hon. member called the Jobson Company, but which was not the Jobson Company, but the W.A. Goldfields Firewood Company, of which Jobson might be part owner, for the conveyance of certain water from a dam constructed at what was known as the 42-Mile—32 miles from the railway between Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie—to a point eight miles from Kalgoorlie. Trucks were supplied by the Government, and water tanks to convey the water. The contractors found their own engine, and conveyed the trucks from a point on the railway which he (Mr. Piesse) had mentioned, to the dam. Water was pumped into the tanks, which were conveyed back to the railway at a cost of 6s. per hundred gallons. If this company had kept the truck tanks more than twenty-four hours, they would have had to pay the Government the ordinary demurrage charge of 8s. per truck. They conveyed over two million gallons of water at the price of 6s. per 100 gallons; then rain came and filled that tank again, also filled tanks along the railway line. After some little time, an understanding was come to for the sale of more water from the same tank at 2s. 6d. per 100 gallons, equal to 25s. per thousand. It was found that the rate at which the company were then supplying water to the Government was

far cheaper than the Government could possibly haul the water for from the Burlong Pool (near Northam) ; therefore it was to the advantage of the Government to purchase water from the company at that time. The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) had referred to the capacity of the tank and the total quantity of water which the company sold to the Government out of that tank. When the company commenced to supply the water, they emptied the tank in the course of eight or nine days. Then heavy rain fell and filled that tank again, also filling other tanks along the Government railways. In consequence of that rainfall, the company were able to supply a further quantity at 8s. per thousand gallons ; and as the Government were then using water out of their own tanks, they would have been exhausting their supply if they had gone on using it, and rather than do that they purchased water from the company at this lower price. As to the 12,000,000 gallons purchased from other companies for a little over £4,000, he had pointed out before that most of this water was supplied by the Coolgardie Water Supply Company. Their dam was filled with about 5,000,000 gallons ; and having increased the capacity, they were able to impound about 7,000,000 gallons, and they started to supply the Government railways at 10s. per thousand gallons. When it was found the Government were getting short of water again, that company gradually raised the price up to 17s. 6d. a thousand gallons. They afterwards reduced it to the former figure, when the supply became more plentiful. With reference to the statement that the Government had been paying £1,000 a day for water, he did not tell the House (as Commissioner) that this was running on for a long time, but that for a few days they were buying water at the rate of £1,000 a day, equal to £6,000 a week while that rate continued. It was at that time the heavy fall of rain occurred, and all the tanks along the railway got a supply. He made a remark to the Premier at the time, that if the rainfall continued it would cost the Firewood Company a thousand pounds a day, which they had previously been receiving for supplying water to the Government. This arrangement which the hon. member had

unwarrantably termed a "swindle" was made by the department with a company whose members were well known, and who came to the rescue of the department at a time when water was very scarce, for otherwise the whole of the railway system would have been hung up for a few days, perhaps for a week, and it would have been necessary to take off eight engines and a large amount of rolling-stock for conveying water from the Burlong Pool. Considering the advantages which the Government derived from this arrangement, they avoided the stoppage of railway traffic, and obtained a *quid pro quo* for railway material supplied to the company on credit. Had the company demanded 18s. a thousand gallons at the time, the department would have had to pay it, rather than stop the traffic ; whereas the company charged only 6s. a thousand gallons for water, and they also supplied water from their condenser at the same rate of 6s. a thousand gallons. Hon. members who knew the cost of condensing water on the goldfields would see that this charge was very low. The hon. member had asked why the department had not obtained the usual guarantee of payment for the rails and sleepers sold to the Firewood Company. The arrangement was made within a very short time. Mr. Teesdale Smith came to the Commissioner's office, and the arrangement was fixed up within a few days. The Government were in want of water, and were glad to get it, and they said "Here are the rails and sleepers ; you can take them and supply us with the water we want." On the very day that the company finished the construction of their railway line, one engine with a passenger train was unable to start from Coolgardie for want of a supply of water ; and seeing that there was such pressure for water, it must be evident the Government made that arrangement with the company in the best interests of the railway system and the colony. There was no scandal about it, and if inquiry were made in any way, it would be seen there was no scandal in it. All that was done was in the best interests of the country ; and had it not been for the foresight of the Government and the enterprise of the members of the Firewood Company in making their railway line when they did, it was difficult to know what the consequences would

have been to the Railway Department. The hon. member, as a business man, should know there was no intention of helping this company at the expense of the State. This was a limited company, with eleven shareholders who were well known, and whose names could be obtained at any time. He (Mr. Piesse) knew those names, and he must say that no one connected with the Government had a shilling of interest in that company. The hon. member and the Committee generally should be well satisfied with what had been done in this matter. Unfortunately the Government were not able to obtain a guarantee at the time for the amount credited to that company, but they did their best under the circumstances.

MR. MORAN: What would it have cost to convey the water from Burlong Pool over the Government railway?

MR. PIESSE: It would cost about twice as much.

MR. MORAN: Then the department got the water from this company for about half what they otherwise would have to pay.

MR. HOLMES: It was only now, at the point of the bayonet, that he had been able to obtain a side-light on this transaction. He could not compliment the late Commissioner, nor the officers of the department, for allowing the railway system to drift into the hopeless state of collapse which the ex-Commissioner admitted it had been in, for it appeared the department had to keep a large engine waiting at Coolgardie station with passengers who could not go on, because there was not a supply of water for the engine.

THE PREMIER: We might have to do it again, too.

MR. HOLMES: The Government had their own tanks; they had rails and sleepers and rolling-stock; and in order to connect those tanks with the railway, why did not they lay the rails and sleepers? What he objected to was that this company had obtained £16,000 of credit.

MR. PIESSE: No; £11,500.

MR. HOLMES: Taking the several items shown in the return on the table, they obtained about £16,000 of credit, and no bond or security was taken by the Government for that amount. All that the Government obtained for the material

they sold to the company was about £12,000, and this amount the company paid in water within the first month. The tank was there, and if the Government had laid down their rails and sleepers to connect the tank with their railway system, they could have brought their own water where it was wanted. As a business transaction, it did no credit to the late Commissioner, nor to the officers of the department.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member's reasoning would be good, if it were based on a right foundation; but we must remember that the reason why the company were able to build this railway was on account of a large contract they had for supplying firewood and timber to certain mines, extending over some years; and they found that by running a railway in that direction they would be able to tap the timber country and supply the large contracts they had entered into, while also being able to obtain water for their own engines in a waterless country, and able to supply water to the Government at a price that would pay them. That was very different from the Government building a line 32 miles long to tap a tank containing a few million gallons of water. The hon. member (Mr. Holmes) had said the ex-Commissioner (Mr. Piesse) characterised him as a business man. He (the Premier) much doubted the hon. member's business capacity if he would advise Parliament to build a 32-mile railway to tap three or four million gallons of water, the supply of which was dependent on the rainfall.

MR. HOLMES: The whole of the water had been sold to the syndicate for £15.

THE PREMIER: The material was sold for what it was worth, and payment was taken in water, and a good thing too; seeing that water could be bought cheaper from the syndicate than it could be brought from Government tanks. It was easy to be wise after the event. When a war was over, people frequently condemned the generals, forgetting that, in times of danger, the officer responsible for acting had to come to an instant decision. So in this case. But for a continuous rainfall, what would have been the position?

MR. HOLMES: The Government would have paid more for water.

THE PREMIER: No; there was a contract price.

MR. HOLMES: But the syndicate reduced the price.

THE PREMIER: Yes; the department, having made a good bargain, provided that they could cease to take water at any time. After the rainfall there was water in the Government tanks at Bullabulla and Boorabbin, and the syndicate, knowing that, reduced the price. If the Commissioner had contracted to take water from the syndicate's tank for a year or two, at so much a hundred gallons, his action might be complained of; but nothing of the sort had been done, for the department stopped taking this water as soon as their own tanks were full. Even now, thousands of pounds were being paid to a company having a catchment area at Coolgardie; and why? Because it was a good deal cheaper to buy from that company than to bring the water by rail from Government dams. As with Jobson's company, it was a case of "Hobson's choice."

A MEMBER: Jobson's choice.

THE PREMIER: Had the rain not fallen, the department would have been glad to buy the water from the Jobson syndicate even at an increased price, otherwise the goldfields railway service must have ceased, for the rolling-stock would probably have been insufficient to carry water from Northam, and the supply at Northam might have failed, in which case water must have been brought from Bunbury. The Jobson syndicate had built their line, not for the sake of water, but for timber; and what did it matter whether the Government were paid for rails and materials in water or in cash? If any Government official or any Minister were personally interested in the matter, an objection might fairly be raised; but seeing the responsible officials were doing the best they could for the country, there was no ground for complaint, except by saying that too much had been paid for the water, or that there had been an error of judgment.

MR. HOLMES: The Government had sold the water to the syndicate for £15.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member well knew that the Moore River, which ran all the year round, was worth scarcely anything if put on the market for sale; but it would be worth millions if it were at Coolgardie.

MR. KINGSMILL: The Government were the original owners of the syndicate's dam.

THE PREMIER: Therefore, it was the height of absurdity for the hon. member, who posed as a business man, to say the Government should have built a 32-miles line at a cost of £32,000, in order to get this unreliable supply of water.

MR. PIESSE: The rails alone would have cost £1,000 a mile.

MR. A. FORREST: And the total cost would have been £52,000.

THE PREMIER: According to the hon. member (Mr. Holmes), the syndicate had had to spend £30,000 in building a line to get the water sold to them for £15; but they really built that line to get the timber, and having done so, they had the water as an extra asset. Before leaving these railway estimates, he must say there had been a good deal of criticism on the departmental administration. One would think this department, of all others, was the worst managed and the greatest burden to the colony, so much so that public opinion was aroused, and the activity of hon. members brought into play with a view of making this terrible incubus less burdensome. But what were the facts? The Railway Department were not only doing the most good for the country—being, as it were, its very life-blood—but were carrying on business without being a burden to the colony at all. The people had the advantage of rapid and certain means of communication without taxation.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: And with very few accidents.

THE PREMIER: And still, this department was singled out by the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) and others, for more than ordinary criticism. Of course, in a big department, spending nearly a million per annum, earning nearly one and a quarter millions, and having thousands of servants, things were no doubt done which ought not to be done.

MR. MORAN: Criticism should do no harm.

THE PREMIER: But about this criticism there was much acidity, as if there were some great wrong to be redressed and the department had become an incubus. Something had been said about £63,000 odd having gone astray, and not being accounted for.

MR. HOLMES said that had not been stated by him, but by a Government supporter.

MR. MOORHEAD said he had not stated the money had gone astray, but that it could not be accounted for.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member would tell him of any £63,000 in the colony's accounts which he (the Premier) could not account for, the details would soon be furnished.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The money might be used to build new Houses of Parliament.

THE PREMIER: If the expenditure could not be accounted for, the money must be in the Treasury. Whatever might be said of the revenue not being sufficiently audited by the Auditor General—though the audit, as he had just ascertained by telegram, was the same as in the three other colonies to which he had wired—it was certain that every item of expenditure in the country was audited by the Audit Department, so there was no difficulty in seeing in detail every penny spent. Rightly or wrongly there had been a certain custom in vogue. In the year ending 30th June, 1898, the sum of £63,681 was spent out of consolidated revenue on improvements to existing lines, which expenditure might fairly have been charged to loan. That was part of the public expenditure of that year.

MR. MORAN: There should be no doubt as to whether that should be charged to loan or to revenue.

THE PREMIER: But the Railway Department, having made money, did not desire to show too much profit: they decided to use some of their earnings in improving their estate.

MR. MORAN: That did not affect the principle.

THE PREMIER: The Railway Department had always asked for something out of their revenue. The department generally set out revenue as so much, expenditure so much, and then they asked for so much out of the revenue to improve the railways of the colony. That was properly chargeable to capital account. Government gave the Railway Department that year £63,871, and this amount was charged to capital account: it would not be fair to show it otherwise. Coming to 1898-99, that year the department spent

£32,821 in the same way; and coming to the last year of all, the year ending the 30th June last, it would be found the department spent £17,261.

MR. MORAN: Did the department charge that to capital?

THE PREMIER: It would be charged to capital: it was an expenditure on the railways; it was not maintenance, but improvements. This year there was on the Estimates a sum of £15,000 for the same purpose. The Railway Department wanted £95,000 out of revenue this year, but he could not afford to give them this £95,000: he simply gave them £15,000. These grants were all paid from the consolidated revenue, and took the place of loan money. It saved the colony spending loan money on these works, as the Government did not propose to build railways out of revenue. During the last three years these amounts totalled £120,000, an amount which might fairly have been paid into revenue.

MR. MORAN: Did the department charge interest against that?

THE PREMIER: The department charged interest on all these amounts, he supposed. In the three years £120,000 had been taken out of revenue and spent on works that might fairly have been charged to loan, and the £120,000 might have been used for revenue purposes. He came to the question as to what the people of the country owed to the railways. On the 30th June, 1897, the profit of the railways was £358,282; in 1898, £179,531; for the year ending 30th June, 1899, £269,171; and the last year, £371,952. Interest and sinking fund had to come out of that amount, as that was the gross profit.

MR. HOLMES: How much was the loan expenditure for that year?

THE PREMIER: It was not possible to say off-hand. The estimate for this year again showed a considerable profit; so that this department to which we owed so much, and which had done and was still doing a great deal for the country, seemed to be the one picked out for all this very harsh criticism.

MR. MORAN: The people treated the railways very well.

THE PREMIER: That was a matter between the persons who used the railways and the Railway Department. The rates charged were not higher, he was

informed, than those in other colonies, excepting on some few articles. He (the Premier) knew a few things, but not everything like the member for East Fremantle, who not only was a business man, a merchant and financier, but a railway manager and railway expert as well. We could not all be so clever or so wise as the hon. member; still we knew a little about some things, and we ought to congratulate ourselves, as he thought a majority of members did and had done this session, that we had an institution in this country doing so much good for everyone. The rates charged were not higher or not as high as in many cases elsewhere, and we had to deal with conditions and circumstances that no other country in Australia, he was going to say in the world, had to cope with. We began on the right lines by making cheap lines to start with, improving them as time went on. We did make a mistake in laying 45lbs. rails: we might just as well have laid 60lbs. rails, and saved taking the rails up again. Then there was an error in judgment in putting down old rails from Northam to Southern Cross. The department did not realise what the traffic was going to be. The conditions of this country, although favourable for making railways, were not favourable for working them, owing to the nature of the country. If the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) would look into the matter fairly, with a desire to arrive at a right conclusion, and not think that everyone wished to be dishonest, if the hon. member gave credit to the Government and the late Commissioner for a sincere and earnest desire to look after the interests of the country and to look after the interests of the people, the hon. member would see the trouble and adverse conditions that the Commissioner and the Government had to contend with. We did not know when it was going to rain, and we did not know how we were going to carry on the traffic. If the hon. member looked at the matter from that standpoint, instead of blaming the Government he would give them credit. The hon. member knew there was nothing kept back. If there was anything in the Government service which was not above-board, if there was any officer or anyone doing wrong, he would get short shrift from the Government, who did not want

to shield anyone who was doing wrong. That had not been the way we had lived before the people of the country. We had lived and held up our heads with pride and honour for 50 years, and we were not going to bow our heads in dishonour now because the hon. member said certain things. He (the Premier) defied the hon. member, or anyone in the country, to point to anything in the career of the Government that was wrong or not above-board. If the hon. member would do that, he (the Premier) would thank him for it, because such a man should be "no longer an officer of mine."

MR. PIESSE: Taking the amount paid to the Jobson people for water as £11,532, we should consider what it cost to convey the water to the railway. The Government would have to convey 4,300 tanks of water, or at the rate of 20 tanks to the train, 215 train loads of water; or taking the distance at 350 miles, it would mean 75,250 train miles, which at 4s. 4d. per train mile would amount to £16,800. However, taking the £11,532 paid, there was a credit to the country of £4,955 in the train mileage alone. One must also remember that the Government would have to take away from the traffic a great many engines, also trucks; therefore less goods would be carried. In conveying goods on the goldfields line the Government would receive more than 4s. 4d. per train mile; therefore it would be seen that the department made an immense saving by taking the water and entering into the contract with the Goldfields Firewood Company. Taking the value of a tank of water at £3 8s. and the cost of conveying it at £5 8s., there was a saving of £2 12s., which in the aggregate was a saving of £8,500. That was an immense advantage, because it prevented the taking away from the traffic, engines and rolling-stock which were required for other purposes. There had been a considerable saving even if one took the train mileage basis.

MR. HOLMES: It was to be regretted the Premier had lost his temper in this matter.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was mistaken altogether.

MR. HOLMES: In asking for information, he was perfectly within his rights. If the information had been

supplied early, the Government would have heard less about the matter; but he had stuck to his point for the reason that when he made up his mind he intended to attain the object he had in view. He was sent to Parliament by a section of the community to represent them, and it was for that section to say whether he (Mr. Holmes) carried out his duties rightly or wrongly. Without attempting to follow the Premier through the figures quoted, which could be challenged at every step on the Estimates, the Government expected to derive from the Railway Department for the current year £100,000. That was the net revenue after providing sinking fund, interest, and everything else.

THE PREMIER: It was pretty good, too. The hon. member would be satisfied with nothing.

MR. HOLMES: These were the figures presented to the Committee. The Premier had admitted that the officers of the Railway Department wanted £95,000 of money this year.

THE PREMIER: Out of their own revenue.

MR. HOLMES: A sum of £95,000 of their own revenue to bring rolling-stock and railways up to date.

MR. PIESSE: Not rolling-stock.

MR. HOLMES: We had been living in a fool's paradise. We should have to spend £95 of loan money to make £100 of profit on our railways. This House had been led to believe the net profit on the railways for this year would be £100,000; that we had done such good work with the railways that the officers' salaries should be raised, and we should spend a lot of money in various directions. But if the Premier had carried out the wishes of those officers in whom we had so much confidence, instead of having £100,000 of surplus revenue, he would have taken care to bring the railways up to a proper state of efficiency.

THE PREMIER: It would save £90,000 of loan money, that was all.

MR. HOLMES, referring to Item 8 (Salary of General Manager of Railways, £1,500), moved that the amount be reduced by £250.

MR. MORAN: All members would agree that it was unfortunate for the Government and for the railway officers that this increase should be put down in

the face of all the railway scandals that had been floating about the country. Still now that the Government had recommended this increase, we could not as business men refuse to vote it, because if we declined to vote this increase now, we should be passing this verdict on the General Manager, that while we admitted the position he held was worth £1,500 a year, we also said we must censure the General Manager to the extent of £250 by reducing the item to that extent. In recommending the House to increase this item at the present time, the Government had seemed to be tempting the House and the country; but on the other hand, members of this House would agree in exonerating the General Manager from those scandals in regard to which it would be wrong to censure him now, untried, and he should get the benefit of the doubt. We should not censure him before the country and before his employees, by cutting down the proposed increase; not because the country could not afford the increase, nor because the position was not worth the amount set down, as no member of the House took those grounds. Therefore the only other ground was that Mr. Davies must be held guilty until proved innocent. To pass this increase now would not affect the full inquiry that was to be held into these railway scandals.

THE PREMIER: The Government were not desirous, as some persons seemed to think, of increasing salaries, but, on the contrary, had to be very economical in the expenditure in order to keep the country in a solvent condition. In regard to the increase of this salary it was not a new matter, for this question of an increase had been going on for a good while. Last year the General Manager was recommended by the then Commissioner of Railways for an increase of salary; and he (the Premier) resisted it because the colony was in the trouble of a deficit, and although he admitted the General Manager deserved well of the colony, still he thought the General Manager had not done badly after all. He then refused to increase the salary of the General Manager, although it was strongly recommended. The General Manager was disappointed by that refusal last year, and thought that he (the Premier) had not sufficient confidence in

him nor sufficiently appreciated the work he had done. A promise was then made, though not binding on the Government, that the question of increasing the salary would be taken into consideration when the next Estimates were being prepared. The result was that the increase was now recommended to the Committee; and in coming to this conclusion the Government were of opinion that anything derogatory to the General Manager which had been put forth by a portion of the public Press was to be regarded in this light, that the same writers had been traducing many other persons who were entitled to the greatest respect. The Government also considered the position and the amounts paid in other parts of Australia and elsewhere; and they found that in Queensland the amount paid the General Manager of Railways was £1,500 a year.

MR. PIESSE: A Bill had been brought in this session to increase it to £2,000.

THE PREMIER: In New South Wales there were three Commissioners, one receiving £2,500 a year and the other two receiving £1,500 a year each, so that the Commissioners there cost £5,500 a year. In Victoria, Mr. Mathieson received £2,500 as General Manager; and in South Australia, a colony more like our own, though having a less revenue and rather less mileage, the General Manager received £1,500 a year. Therefore the amount paid to the General Manager in this colony was the lowest in Australia, and the Government thought this justified them in asking members of the House to consider the proposed increase. In the old country, where one would rather expect positions of this kind to be paid for at a less rate, we found the payment was actually better than in Australia, in many cases. Take, for instance, some of the smaller railways in Great Britain. On the Furness Railway (North of England), 139 miles in extent, having a revenue of under £500,000 a year, the Manager received £2,000. On the Cambrian Railway (Wales), with only 250 miles open and a revenue of £220,000 a year, the General Manager received £1,200. On the Highland Railway (Scotland), with a length of 450 miles and a revenue under £500,000, the Manager received £1,500. We must remember, too, that the Waterford-Limerick Railway (Ireland), with a length

of 200 miles and a revenue of £200,000 a year, paid its General Manager £1,300 a year.

MR. CONNOR: They were all relatives of the directors, on that line.

THE PREMIER: Then the Great Southern Railway in this colony, which when worked by a company was not paying a dividend or scarcely any, and which had 240 miles open with only two through trains a day, paid its General Manager £1,500 a year. Coming now to our own colony, with 1,400 miles of Government railways open, in addition to the Midland Railway, with which the General Manager had a good deal to do, and a revenue of one and a quarter millions, we had been paying the General Manager only £1,250 a year. Therefore it seemed to him we should not be doing anything wrong by making this increase. Having regard to the great responsibility which the General Manager must necessarily have, and that he might easily lose us tens of thousands of pounds, let us put him on good terms with Parliament, let us recognise his great responsibility in the important position he held, and give him some proper encouragement. In the four years last past, the profits on our railways—although our policy had not been to make profit, while we did not want to make a loss, and had always made some little profit—we had made a gross profit of nearly £1,200,000; and out of that came the interest and sinking fund, though in regard to a sinking fund the railway financiers would say it ought not to be charged against revenue, because a railway had necessarily to be kept in a proper condition of working and equipment in order to carry on the traffic, and at the end of 20 years a railway should not be worse but equally as good as at the beginning, being always in course of renewal and improvement. Looking at all these facts, Parliament should encourage this officer, who had great responsibility and had worked well.

MR. WILSON agreed with the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) that the two great points to be considered were the worth of the position, and whether the country could afford the increase. An able man as General Manager was well worth £1,500, and if Mr. Davies were not worth that sum, better get someone else. As one of the

Select Committee which investigated the Perth Ice Company frauds, he (Mr. Wilson) did not think any blame attached to the General Manager. Even if there were, the Royal Commission on the railways would doubtless judge the General Manager with other officers, and if he were blamable he should be dismissed. Whether Mr. Davies had always agreed with other responsible officers was a matter of detail, not worth considering. He hoped the increase would be passed.

MR. CONNOR supported the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes). Better look the position in the face. While not alleging that Mr. Davies had done anything wrong, he (Mr. Connor) must say the public on the goldfields were complaining, and there were many rumours there in reference to what was known as "the Jobson swindle." He had personally heard these remarks in railway trains and hotels on the fields, where it was publicly stated that the General Manager was interested in that syndicate.

MR. A. FORREST: Utterly incredible!

MR. CONNOR: Very likely; but this thing should be thoroughly ventilated, and hon. members should not vote the increase blindly, in the face of opinions freely expressed on the goldfields. He would not say the General Manager was not worth the increase. True, that officer's experience before he came here was on the very short line of a very small company; and he came here, not as General Manager, but as Chief Traffic Manager.

MR. A. FORREST: And why should he not get promotion?

MR. CONNOR: There was another report on the fields regarding a hotel built at Kalgoorlie, in which it was said the General Manager had an interest—that a station costing thousands of pounds had been built close to the intended site of the hotel. If so, the increase was not justified. He would not blame Mr. Davies, or say he was unworthy of the increase; but seeing the Royal Commission were about to be appointed to inquire into the general working of the railway accounts, for which Mr. Davies was responsible, the increase was inopportune. Who was responsible for the accounts, if not the General Manager?

THE PREMIER: The General Manager was responsible for the collection of the revenue.

MR. CONNOR: The Perth Ice Co. frauds showed that the revenue had not been collected.

MR. HOLMES: One of the Select Committee, the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), said the office-boy was responsible.

MR. CONNOR: Who was responsible for the office-boy? If sheeted home, the blame must attach to the head of the department.

MR. MONGER: Nothing of the sort.

MR. CONNOR: The Premier had said we did not require to make a profit on the railways.

THE PREMIER: No; that we had not sought to do so.

MR. CONNOR: After the Customs revenue was handed to the Commonwealth, it was on the railways the colony must depend.

THE PREMIER: Three-fourths of the Customs revenue would be returned.

MR. CONNOR: The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) had said, because the Government proposed this increase it must be passed.

MR. MORAN: Such a thing had never been said by him.

MR. CONNOR said he had taken down the hon. member's words. If that principle were just, why not pass the Estimates *in globo*? If this item should be passed without cavil, then no item could fairly be discussed.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): It was always interesting to hear the last speaker, who a few evenings ago, without seeking an explanation, jumped to the conclusion that the General Manager was to blame in respect of certain charges made against an officer in the same department. If groundless charges were brought against high railway officials, there would in future be difficulty in getting good men to fill such positions. If even one of the charges were true, the General Manager should be dismissed; but as for Mr. Davies not being worth £1,500, it was worth that sum to stand the abuse of hon. members.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was an extra.

MR. A. FORREST: All who used the railways knew how excellent was the service, both for goods and for passengers.

True, there were frequent errors in matters of detail, but it was impossible for the General Manager to see that 5,000 men were carrying out their duties every day. It was not possible for anyone to do it.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. member was giving his experience.

MR. A. FORREST said he was the worst-treated person in the community. Never a truck left Fremantle unless a sovereign was sent down to the Railway Department, and his (Mr. A. Forrest's) firm had to pay cash on delivery, and cash before the truck was sent out. He was under no obligation to the Railway Department, and the General Manager was not a particular friend of his. The General Manager got all he could out of the public, and gave very little in return; still he treated the highest and the lowest alike. To get a man to manage our railways for £1,500 a year, when the railways returned an income of one million and a quarter, was very good indeed. The General Manager favoured no one; he gave no one an advantage in regard to trucks; everyone had to take their fair share. We did not want at the head of affairs in this country a man who would give some people all the haulage power and others none. The General Manager protested strongly against a reduction of the rates on the railways, and we knew full well that the question must be considered shortly, because we were carrying certain goods on the railways at a non-payable rate. Was that brought about by the influence of certain people?

MR. DOHERTY: Timber.

MR. A. FORREST: Coal chiefly. When the Federal Government was at work, it would be found that we should have to make up our revenue by increasing the rates on the railways.

MR. HOLMES: Why not increase them now?

MR. A. FORREST: Because we were going out of power, and something should be left for others to do. When the hon. member (Mr. Holmes) was Commissioner of Railways, he would put up the rates and not carry goods for nothing. He (Mr. A. Forrest) thoroughly believed in the small increase to the salary of the General Manager, who was a most competent officer. There was no man, he

believed, in the country who could carry out the duties as satisfactorily to the House and the people of the country, as the present General Manager. It was all very well for people to travel in the train and be continually grumbling and crying out against the General Manager, because he did not do this or that, and saying the country was being robbed on the Boulder line; also saying the General Manager had a public-house, and was trying to divert the traffic into Eden Street. He (Mr. Forrest) while at the Boulder the other day had a look at this hotel, and he was never more surprised in his life. It was the only building in the street, and could not affect Hannan Street property. It had yet to be proved that the General Manager had anything to do with this hotel. He (Mr. Forrest) had made inquiries, and was told that Mr. Davies had no interest in the hotel. Then we were told that the General Manager was interested in a wood contract. He (Mr. A. Forrest) had gone out to see this line, and he could have bought the whole thing for half what it had cost. The proprietors had spent £53,000 for the purpose of delivering wood at the Boulder, and if this wood was not delivered to-morrow, the whole of the mines in the Boulder would stop. The manager of the Lake View Consols informed him (Mr. Forrest) that if anything happened to this 32 miles of railway, it would mean that the whole of the mines at Boulder would have to stop working. We did not want that to happen.

MR. DOHERTY: What about coal?

MR. A. FORREST: When the rates were reduced, and the hon. member for North Fremantle was Commissioner of Railways, perhaps coal would be carried to the goldfields. Another line was to be built for the purpose of carrying firewood to the mines. The present railway carried 600 tons of firewood per day, which meant a revenue of £50 a day to the railway. All this was due to the energy and ability of the General Manager. If a division took place, it was to be hoped the minority would be so small that we should never hear anything more about decreasing the salary of this officer.

MR. GEORGE: The main question that had to be considered was whether the position of General Manager of the railways was worth £1,500 or £1,250.

If the position was worth £1,500 a year, and the Committee admitted it, then the question to consider was whether the present occupant was worth the money. If the present occupant was not worth the money, the only thing the Government could do was to give the officer the "sack" straight away. Was that the desire of the member who had moved the reduction in this salary? If it was desired to get rid of the General Manager, let the Committee understand it distinctly, and go about it in a way to bring the desire to pass; but to admit on the one hand that the salary of £1,500 was not too much for the position, was not too much for the man who was earning for the railways one million and a quarter a year, and then to move for a reduction, certainly brought the question down to a personal attack on the general manager himself. The position of general manager in connection with the railways was equally important as that of Engineer-in-Chief of Public Works. The Engineer-in-Chief was underpaid, so was the General Manager. Whether we should get rid of the General Manager or not was another question. We had a concern which one man was responsible for. It was a gigantic trading concern, there being nearly 1,500 miles of railways, and the General Manager was responsible for keeping the working expenses within reasonable bounds. Was anyone mad enough or prejudiced enough to imagine that if the railways were under the control of a private company that company would get a manager for £1,500 a year? Railway systems in the old country with nothing like the mileage of the railways here, had managers who received from £2,500 a year to £5,000, and these officers were not considered over-paid. They were treated with respect. So long as we had Government railways in the colony those at the head of affairs were liable to be barked at and carped at by anyone.

At 6.30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

MR. GEORGE (continuing): Following up his previous remarks, he again asked hon. members to put the occupant

of the office on one side, and consider whether the position of General Manager was worth £1,500. The report on the working of railways for 1890, as compared with the results of 1900, showed that in 1890 there were 188 miles of railway open, that in 1900 there were 1,350 miles open and now running far back into the interior of the country, every mile adding something to the responsibility and care necessary for producing a satisfactory result. Looking also at the revenue, it would be seen that in 1890 the revenue was £45,000, as compared with over £500,000 received in 1899 and £1,250,000 in 1900; so that within the ten years covered by those dates, practically the revenue had over-topped that of 1890 by £1,200,000. This large difference showed how great was the increase of duties since Mr. Davies became the Chief Traffic Manager ten years ago, when he was engaged to take the position as one experienced in the commercial working of railways, at a salary of £800 a year. Either the payment of that salary was grossly excessive for the smaller mileage and the smaller revenue, or the present salary was greatly inadequate for the greater mileage and greater revenue, and therefore inadequate for the increased responsibility of the position. He said this while leaving the actual occupant of the position out of the question, and regarding only the broad facts of the case. Supposing the Government were advertising now for a person experienced and competent to control the railways of this colony, with an open mileage of 1,355 and a revenue of £1,250,000, would it be likely that a suitable man, having the necessary experience, could be obtained for a salary of £1,250 or even £1,500 a year? It was possible of course that some experienced railway man, having his own reasons for seeking a change, might come here to take the position; but it was not likely to be so, and the field from which experienced men of this class could be drawn was circumscribed. It would be foolish, of course, to take from the ranks of ordinary railway servants a person to fill a position of this kind; therefore it was necessary to go to a class of men who were not only well paid in England and other countries, but who were well appreciated for the responsible work they performed. It should

also be borne in mind that it was well understood amongst those engaged on the great trunk railways of the world, that a general manager of Government railways in a British colony was not always well appreciated; that in fact he might expect within a short time to be considerably depreciated, for he became subject to all sorts of criticism and to much abuse from a portion of the public Press, and was also liable to be pulled up by members of Parliament for anything he might do or might leave undone of which they did not approve. It was necessary that a man to fill such a position must have a stiff backbone, a strong jaw, and an iron constitution.

MR. MITCHELL: Then the member for the Murray (Mr. George) was well qualified.

MR. GEORGE: Yes: but not so well qualified as the member for the Murchison (Mr. Mitchell). If such a manager were to connect himself with all manner of businesses in the colony, he would be open to animadversion and misrepresentation from many quarters. Managers of great trunk railways in the old country were not desirous of coming to a colony to fill such a position, because it did not offer to them such conditions in regard to social standing and remuneration as would a similar position in the old country. Taking all these facts into account, it did appear that the present General Manager of Railways in this colony was not adequately paid, when his salary had been increased by 50 per cent. from the amount received ten years ago, while his responsibilities had been also increased in a far greater proportion. Having got a General Manager who had been in charge of the railways all these years, should we treat him in a niggardly and mean spirit, or should we not recognise the merit and skill with which the work had been done? The member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) had said that in view of the Ice Company's frauds this increase was inopportune. The Select Committee who inquired into the Ice Company did not call the General Manager.

MR. HOLMES: They left that for the Royal Commission.

MR. GEORGE: Then why did they call the Chief Traffic Manager instead of leaving him for the Commission? The

Select Committee must have recognised that the General Manager was not to blame, else why had they recommended the dismissal of two subordinate officials? They had evidently concluded that the fault lay, not with the system, but with the manner in which it was carried out. The General Manager would not be overpaid at £1,500 or even £2,000 a year. Whether the present holder of the office were worth such a salary was for hon. members to decide. Compare his position, however, with that of the Engineer-in-Chief, without reflecting on the latter officer. Here we had two heads of huge departments, one essentially a spending and the other an earning department. The expenditure of the Works Department was about equal to the revenue of the railways; and all would admit it was much easier to spend a pound than to earn that sum; nevertheless the Engineer-in-Chief received £1,500—which, by the way, was inadequate—while the General Manager of Railways was paid much less.

MR. DOHERTY supported the last speaker. We should deal with the position and not with the man; and if the position of General Manager were not worth £1,500 it was not worth anything. Why should hon. members deal in this House with alleged shortcomings of public officers? It had been said the General Manager was improperly connected with certain speculations. This unproven statement was no reason for refusing the increase. The General Manager should have an opportunity of defending himself against such accusations, and doubtless would emerge triumphantly from the pending inquiry. No doubt he was blamed by persons suffering from petty grievances, small losses of goods, or breakages, which occurred on every railway in the world. Moreover, as the ex-Commissioner said, our Railway Department paid less in claims than any other. The question of the alleged improper conduct of the General Manager should be discussed on a separate motion, and not on the Estimates. If Mr. Davies were interested in the Jobson Syndicate, the sooner he left the colony the better; but it was unfair to accuse a civil servant who, by the rules of the service, was prevented from defending himself against either

hon. members or the general public. To reduce the item would be to point the finger of scorn at the General Manager, without giving him a fair trial; therefore pass the increase and immediately institute the promised inquiry, when, if the General Manager were found guilty of being connected with such speculations, his resignation should reach the Commissioner within an hour.

MR. CONNOR protested against the maxim, "Pay the position and not the man." That was a very dangerous principle.

MR. HOLMES: Hon. members placed a wrong construction on his utterances. A Select Committee had inquired into the matter of the Perth Ice Company and the department, and had recommended that two subordinate officers be dismissed and the conduct of the higher grade officers investigated. If the General Manager's salary had appeared on the Estimates unaltered, and he (Mr. Holmes) had moved its reduction, that would have been condemning the man unheard. But it was proposed to give Mr. Davies an increase; and until he had been exonerated he should be satisfied to receive the same salary as before. Personally he (Mr. Holmes) believed the position of General Manager was worth £2,000 a year; but it was unfair to the service and the public to raise the salaries of officers into whose conduct an inquiry was pending.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: The position of General Manager was honestly worth £1,500 a year, as the responsibilities were great, and the department was managed in a satisfactory way. The General Manager should not be held responsible for all the little faults. Nothing had happened which would warrant anyone in saying that the railways were mismanaged.

Amendment put, and negatived on the voices.

MR. HOLMES called for a division.

THE CHAIRMAN: Only one voice had been given for the Ayes.

Question—that the total vote, "Railways and Tramways," be agreed to—put, and negatived on the voices.

MR. HOLMES called for a division.

MR. CONNOR: Was this division on the item or on the total vote?

THE CHAIRMAN: The item had been decided.

MR. CONNOR asked how he was to vote.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member had time to cross over.

MR. HOLMES: There had been a misunderstanding. It was the intention of himself and other members to vote against the item. The Chairman had ruled that only one voice had been given with the Ayes. When the question was put a second time by the Chairman, a division was called for.

MR. VOSPER: Could a division be taken on the vote, as there was only one member on the side of the Noes?

THE CHAIRMAN: The votes had not been counted yet.

Question again stated.

THE CHAIRMAN: There being only one member on the side of the Noes, there could be no division.

MR. HOLMES: Had the whole Railway vote been passed?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes.

MR. HOLMES: Members would understand that now.

MR. VOSPER: A moment or two ago he came into the Chamber to take part in the division, but he did not know that the division was on the whole Railway vote. Many members were under the same impression as he was, that the division was being taken on the amendment to reduce the General Manager's salary. A grave mistake had been made. There were many points in the Railway estimates which should be discussed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Before putting the vote, he had paused a good while.

MR. PIESSE: The Chairman had given the Committee plenty of time, on three occasions to-night.

MR. VOSPER: Could a member move the recommittal of Railway Estimates?

THE CHAIRMAN: That was a question for the House.

THE PREMIER: Notice must be given.

MR. VOSPER: Notice could be given.

Vote—Public Works, £149,053 6s. 8d.:

MR. WILSON: Some information was required from the Premier in regard to promises made for different electorates. A promise was made to a deputation from a portion of his electorate in regard to road construction, by the Director of Public Works of a sum of money.

THE PREMIER: What for?

MR. WILSON: The Perth-Albany road, £2,000.

THE PREMIER: There was something for that on the Estimates?

MR. WILSON: First of all with regard to the Belmont Roads Board, a deputation asked the Director of Public Works for £2,000 for the construction and upkeep of the Perth-Guildford road, and that £2,000 was definitely promised. A deputation from Victoria Park also waited on the Director of Public Works for a sum of money for the same road, a portion of which ran through the Victoria Park municipality, and £1,000 was promised in that case, making a total of £3,000 for this road. The Estimates showed a total sum of £750 for this work.

THE PREMIER: There was a sum of £600 for the Perth-Albany road on the Estimates.

MR. WILSON said he was dealing with the Perth-Guildford road.

THE PREMIER: There was £750 down for that.

MR. WILSON: A sum of £3,000 was promised by the Director of Public Works.

THE PREMIER: Was the hon. member sure?

MR. WILSON: Yes; a definite promise was made.

THE PREMIER: A loan would have to be raised to get this amount, as it could not be paid out of revenue.

MR. WILSON: The hon. member could raise a loan, he could fly kites, or get an overdraft; but when a Minister made a definite promise, that promise should be kept.

THE PREMIER: A sum of £750 was granted last year.

MR. WILSON: Already £250 had been given to the Victoria Park municipality for this work. In regard to the Perth-Albany road, the Victoria Park municipality was definitely promised £2,000 for the work, and a sum of £600 to repair that road from Perth through Cannington, Kelmscot, to Armadale was on the Estimates. The South Perth Roads Board was promised £1,000 for the Suburban Road. There was nothing, he believed, on the Estimates for that work. A letter dated the 30th June, 1900, was received from the Public Works Department in regard to this matter,

informing the Victoria Park municipality that it had been decided to place on the Estimates £2,000 for the Albany road and £1,000 for portion of the Guildford road, not included in the Belmont district.

THE PREMIER: No doubt the Director of Public Works put the amount on the Estimates.

MR. WILSON: And the Premier had struck it off. £500 and £250 had already been made available for these works. Because the Director of Public Works had retired from office, the Premier played ducks and drakes with that Minister's estimates. It was not fair to the electorates to deal with promises in this way. The promise of a Minister who had resigned office was just as sacred as the promise of a Minister in office.

THE PREMIER: So it was.

MR. WILSON: It was impossible to understand why the people of a district should be treated in this high-handed manner. It was absolutely necessary that a large sum of money should be spent on the main thoroughfares, especially those around the metropolis and the chief cities of the colony. The roads he had mentioned were going from bad to worse, and if they were not repaired immediately a large sum of money would have to be spent in reconstructing them. The late Director of Public Works recognised the state of affairs, and came to the conclusion that the requests were reasonable and just: the Minister went so far as to give payments on account. Did the Premier intend to carry out the promise given by an ex-Minister? The amount could be placed on the Supplementary Estimates.

THE PREMIER: Where was the revenue to come from?

MR. WILSON: That was not for him to say. When members on the Opposition side filled the Treasury benches, then it would be time for them to look after the revenue. He was not going to suggest to the Premier how revenue should be found. The Premier was bound to keep promises made in the name of the Cabinet. He wanted a satisfactory reply. The body in charge of the roads had been put to great expense. The Premier had received a letter from the Victoria Park municipality, couched in strong terms.

THE PREMIER: That was in return for good treatment.

MR. WILSON: Promises had been made in writing, and liabilities had been incurred by the municipal council. The Minister's written promise was contained in a letter from the Public Works Department, dated 30th June last, as follows:—

Sir,—Adverting to my recent message relative to your representations on behalf of the Victoria Park Municipality, I have the honour, in confirmation thereof, to inform you that the Hon. Minister has decided to place on the Estimates £2,000 for the Albany road, and £1,000 for that portion of the Guildford road not included in the Belmont Roads Board District. Of these amounts, £500 for the Albany Road and £250 for the Guildford road will be made available after the 1st proximo. I have the honour, etc.,

M. JULL,

Under Secretary for Public Works.

That letter was addressed to him, as member for the district. On the 29th of October the town clerk of Victoria Park wrote directly to the Premier as follows:—

Sir,—I have the honour, by direction, to inform you that in June last, after a lengthy correspondence, a deputation from this council waited upon the late Director of Public Works with reference to the upkeep of the Albany and Guildford roads. As a result of the representations made, the late Minister wrote to Mr. Frank Wilson, M.L.A., promising the council the sums of £2,000 and £1,000 respectively for the two roads. We received £500 and £250 on account: and my council, having relied upon the written promise of the representative of the Government, now finds itself with a liability of nearly £2,000, which it has no hope of liquidating, as the balances due to it do not appear on the Estimates. Had the council entertained the least suspicion that the ex-Minister's promise would not have been fulfilled, they would not have been satisfied with the comparatively paltry grants made. Seeing that the promise was made in writing, I am instructed to request that you will have the amounts claimed reinstated in the Estimates without delay. In making this request, my council do not overlook the fact that only a limited amount of money is available to meet the requirements of the whole colony; but in this case they have been misled into incurring liabilities which, without such a definite guarantee from the Government, would not have been incurred or even contemplated.

My council trust that you will give these matters your personal consideration, when the justice of the requests made must be apparent.—I have the honour, etc.,

C. W. KENT, Town Clerk.

THE PREMIER: Was there any answer to that letter?

MR. WILSON: No.

THE PREMIER: Then they should wait until the answer reached them. They would get an answer.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, they need not expect to get an answer for a month.

THE PREMIER: They would certainly get an answer. The hon. member was a great bouncer, no doubt.

MR. WILSON: Fair-play and justice were wanted by him.

THE PREMIER: Those in the hon. member's district had always got justice. When they found the Government did not carry out the promises made, it would be time enough to complain. The Government had never broken faith with them yet.

MR. WILSON: The Government had broken faith with them now.

THE PREMIER: Surely there were other votes in the Estimates out of which something would go to that district.

MR. WILSON: Of course there was a general vote for the maintenance of existing roads; but this was a special grant promised for remaking roads which required remaking, and if the money was not provided this year, double the amount would have to be provided next year. To be serious, he was determined to do his utmost to stop this vote for Public Works going through, until he got some satisfactory answer in regard to these promises. The promises were given to him personally; in one instance in writing, in reference to the £3,000; and when a member representing a district had taken trouble and spent time in laying its requirements before a Minister, and had got definite promises, the least the member and the district could expect was that these promises should be carried out. Another matter affecting Victoria Park was that the building of a post office had been promised two years ago. The land was purchased, and it was struck off the Estimates by the Premier.

THE PREMIER: When was it struck off?

MR. WILSON: Two years ago. This year he waited on the Colonial Secretary, and asked him to receive a deputation on the question. He stated the business, and after discussion the Colonial Secretary promised him definitely that the amount would be reinstated in the Estimates this year. But what did the Estimates now show? Another promise

broken! Of course, he had communicated to his constituents the reply he got from the Minister, and told them the amount would be reinstated on this year's Estimates, and they were satisfied with that; but now they would think he had been playing fast-and-loose with them as their representative, and all because the Premier could not keep the promise made by his colleague.

THE PREMIER said he knew nothing about this promise.

MR. WILSON: Then the Premier ought to know something about it. If the right hon. gentleman had said he (Mr. Wilson) should have gone to him about this matter, he would have been glad to do so, and if a promise had been made by the Premier, one knew it would be kept. But a promise by another Minister should be as sacred as one given by the Premier.

THE PREMIER: It was to be regretted there had been any misunderstanding about this matter. He was not aware these promises had ever been made. It was the desire of the Government to carry out all the promises made by the late Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works. No doubt many things were struck out of the Estimates at the last moment. The Works Department had instructions to go through them again, and see what could be done without. Of course it was more pleasant to leave those items in the Estimates than to strike them out; but it was necessary that the Treasurer should have a balance, and when the Estimates had been reduced to the lowest by the departments, there was still over £200,000 of proposed expenditure in excess of the estimated revenue. In these circumstances he had to do as well as he could by bringing to bear his knowledge of the requirements of the various districts, and in reducing expenditure, because some reduction was necessary. It was an unpleasant duty, but it had to be done; and he could assure the hon. member that every definite promise made by the late Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Piesse) would be kept by the Government.

MR. VOSPER: Did that apply to Kanowna as well as Victoria Park?

THE PREMIER: Many promises were made by Ministers conditionally, and it

was no use attempting to bind Ministers to pay money for this or that, when a promise to provide the money must necessarily depend on the money being available. All promises made to place money on the Estimates must surely be conditional on the money being there. Sums of money for various works could not be put on the Estimates, if the Government had not got it, unless they deliberately went in for a deficit. Some other instances of promises made had been brought under his notice, and he had stated in reference to them that the Government would endeavour to keep all promises which the late Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works had made before he left office. He (the Premier) would endeavour to do this to the utmost of his power, and would treat all such cases in the same way as if the hon. member (Mr. Piesse) were still a Minister. Other votes were provided in the Estimates by which the Government could find money sometimes, on a pinch, especially for the fulfilment of promises. There were very few cases indeed in which promises had been made and left unfulfilled; but when definite promises came to his knowledge, he would do what he could towards their fulfilment. Such promises were usually made to the effect that the Minister would see what he could do to comply with the requests put before him; and in these cases the Government had not always been able to carry out the desire and intention which Ministers had expressed; but during the last ten years he hoped no one could say the Government had definitely promised to do a thing, and afterwards did not do it. It was better to obtain promises in writing: then there would be no misunderstanding.

MR. WILSON: The word of a Minister ought to be as good as writing.

THE PREMIER: Yes; but there was often a difference of opinion about a promise made verbally, and a promise in writing was more definite. It would be unfair to expect a Minister to fulfil promises which it was said he made, if he had no recollection of making them. The best thing was to get the promise in writing. He did not often complain of the hon. member (Mr. Wilson), but really the manner in which the hon. member had addressed him this evening

in regard to this matter was not such as might have been expected from him. The hon. member had no instance on record in which the Government had broken faith in the past. In regard to Victoria Park, no one had been more anxious than the Government to put those roads in good repair; but the Government were limited by the amount of money at their disposal. Every year the Government placed as large a sum as they could on the Estimates for roads and bridges throughout the colony, as well as in the district referred to. He could assure the hon. member that this definite promise made by the late Commissioner of Railways would certainly be kept. He (the Premier) would not say the Government would pay the money in a moment, but they would do as they had done hitherto: they would undertake to pay the money, and would pay it in instalments as might be required. The desire of the Government was to keep faith with this House, and with every member of it, as well as keeping faith with the country.

MR. GEORGE: The member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) should be satisfied with the explanation he had obtained from the Premier; and he (Mr. George) was going to take a leaf out of the hon. member's book, and bring under the Premier's notice a matter affecting the Murray district which required consideration. The roads board had paid to the Government £500 towards building a bridge which was supposed to cost £1,200; but they found afterwards that although the Government got their £500, the cost of the bridge was only £650; so the roads board naturally wanted their money back, and they asked for it in order that they might use it in completing the road to the railway. He had the promise of the late Commissioner of Railways that the money should be given back; but he found on the Estimates not £500, but only £300 for this purpose, and apparently the Premier had taken the other £200 from the amount. It was not good enough for the Government to pay 12s. in the £ when they were indebted to the roads board in that district £500, and offered only £300 in payment. Referring to another item further down, £700 had been promised to himself and a deputation. They did not think it necessary to

get that promise in writing, and they did not even take shorthand notes of the promise made to the deputation, because they knew the word of a Minister was as good as his bond; and no doubt the original sum of £700 which had been promised was put on the Estimates and struck off again. He (Mr. George) brought the matter about the Drakesbrook Roads Board under the notice of the late Commissioner, but there was not a word about it in the Estimates. The late Commissioner (Mr. Piesse) had never broken his word to him.

MR. A. FORREST: Then he was not fit for his position as a Minister.

MR. GEORGE: Because a Minister of the Crown could not tell a lie and would not break his word, it appeared on the authority of the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), that the Minister was not fit for his position. Seeing however, that the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) had achieved a remarkable success this evening, he (Mr. George) must follow suit, and inform the Committee that unless he received a satisfactory answer concerning the complaint he had made, he would stop the Estimates from going through.

MR. GREGORY said he had a grievance of a similar nature.

THE PREMIER: We would have to get the late Director of Public Works to explain all about these promises. He (the Premier) was Treasurer of the colony but giving away money like this would create a difficulty in the finances.

MR. GREGORY: The late Commissioner of Railways and the Colonial Secretary, while visiting Menzies some time ago, promised £500 to the municipal council to assist in the erection of a town hall for Menzies. The hall had been built at a cost of over £2,000.

THE PREMIER said he was going to keep that promise.

MR. GREGORY said he had written to the department on the matter, but the department had not had the courtesy to reply.

THE PREMIER: How long was it since the hon. member wrote?

MR. GREGORY: Over three weeks.

THE PREMIER: These promises had been made during a visit to Menzies of the ex-Director of Public Works (Mr. Piesse) and the Colonial Secretary (Hon.

G. Randell). There was no record of the promises, and inquiries had to be made, with the result that the ex-Minister stated he had made a definite promise. In regard to the complaint of the member for the Murray (Mr. George), he (the Premier) never knew the money was owing, but thought the request was for a grant to improve the road from the new bridge to the township.

MR. GEORGE: It was the roads board's own money.

THE PREMIER: Well, at all events, £300 would be paid on account. This system of coming to the Government for special grants, and then wanting as much for the local roads board as if there had been no special grants, could not continue. The Victoria Park municipality wanted just as much money for roads as if they had not received these grants, the practice being to get as many promises as possible of special grants, and then to draw from the Treasury the usual amount for the local roads, with the result that some districts had more than they should, whilst others got nothing.

MR. GREGORY: The Government did not assist those districts which helped themselves.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member's district was served fairly well.

MR. GREGORY: But not its roads board.

MR. A. FORREST: It got too much, and always abused the Government.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member (Mr. Gregory) evidently thought someone in the Premier's Department desired to slight him by not replying directly to his letter. Was that likely?

MR. GEORGE: Much time was required to get an answer.

THE PREMIER: Because many inquiries had to be made.

MR. WILSON: As usual, the Premier found fault with complainants. The roads referred to in Victoria Park were main roads, serving the whole population of Perth and Fremantle.

THE PREMIER: How did they serve Fremantle?

MR. WILSON: The traffic came through to Cannington and Guildford; therefore the Government should provide funds for keeping these roads in repair. The ex-Minister had admitted the request was reasonable, and his promise should be

kept. How could the Premier justify the reservation that none but promises in writing should be fulfilled?

THE PREMIER: Conversations were difficult to substantiate.

MR. WILSON said he would submit some proof of these promises.

MR. GEORGE thanked the Premier for having placed it on record that the Pinjarra-Marradong road would be repaid £300 this year, and the other £200 as soon as possible. The Premier, however, had ignored the promise of £750 made by the late Director of Public Works.

THE PREMIER said he knew nothing of that.

MR. A. FORREST: A Minister could not bind Parliament.

MR. GEORGE: If the items were on the Estimates, Parliament could deal with them. If not, hon. members could not insert items; therefore the Minister's promise was binding.

THE PREMIER: Better get the late Director to say what he had promised. There might be different versions of the same story. If the Minister had made the promise, he (the Premier) would try to have it fulfilled.

MR. CONNOR: In August last the House debated the question of the explosives magazines near Fremantle, and the Premier promised something should be done, and the magazines fenced in. On the strength of that promise he (Mr. Connor) had withdrawn his motion. The removal of these buildings was absolutely necessary. There had been an instance of a swagman lighting a fire under one magazine, and had an explosion resulted, South Fremantle would have been wrecked. At Wyndham, in his electorate, there was a great and growing trade with the East. Wyndham was the only port north of Derby from which stock could be shipped under favourable conditions. The water supply was insufficient, and a diamond drill was required. There must be a bore.

THE PREMIER: There were plenty of bores here—the member for the Murray (Mr. George), for instance.

MR. A. FORREST: The dynamite stores at South Fremantle were highly dangerous to residents; and frequent visitors like the last speaker and himself naturally objected to being blown up. The magazines should be removed a mile

or two down the coast. Situated as they were, near the landing place for wild cattle, a disastrous explosion might easily occur. In the interests of shipping, something more than was provided on the Estimates should be done for Wyndham. Both there and at Derby the mortality amongst cattle was great for want of water. He hoped that this Government, and the future Government represented by hon. members at present on the Opposition side of the House, would not forget there was a place in the North which deserved their attention. In regard to the magazines, he asked the Commissioner of Railways to take prompt action in removing them from Owen's Anchorage.

THE PREMIER: The matter was discussed last session, and he then said he would look into it and see what could be done. He made inquiries, and was not aware that the magazines had not been fenced in. He thought instructions were given a long while ago to have them fenced in; but there had been a great difficulty in finding a suitable place to remove the magazines to. Some of his (the Premier's) friends, thinking that perhaps we might ask them to remove their places, said, "Remove yours," although the Government were there a long time before those people came and interfered. However, he was quite willing for the magazines to be moved; but where were they to be moved to?

MR. A. FORREST: Further down.

THE PREMIER: Numbers of reports had been received. Some said: "Go down to Woodman's Point," but the race-course and quarantine station were there. He suggested the island, but the mercantile community were against that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was the place.

THE PREMIER said he suggested going on to the Darling Ranges, but even that did not meet with approval. People wanted to be able to get at combustibles easily and quickly, and were afraid to have those combustibles anywhere near them. Instructions were given that no other magazines were to be built on the present site. If any had been built since those instructions were given, he would have to ask the reason.

MR. GEORGE: The present ones had been enlarged.

THE PREMIER: There was no right to do that after instruction was given not to build any more. Still the people were in great difficulty because they did not know where to put the stuff. The only thing was to put magazines on the island, and if that were agreed to, we could go to work at once. Supposing, however, it were proposed to carry that into effect, the member for North Fremantle might send a deputation next day, protesting against the removal of the magazines.

MR. DOHERTY: No.

THE PREMIER: That would be remembered. As to what was required at Wyndham, a difficulty existed there. There was no water near the port, and it would probably cost a good many thousands of pounds to find a supply.

MR. GEORGE: Could not a pipe track be put there?

THE PREMIER: No; we had enough on our hands in the way of pipe tracks at the present time. There was a sum of money on the Estimates for survey and exploration, so as to find out what could be done. He quite recognised that something should be done, and in his opinion the cheapest way of all would be to bring down some pipes from Parry's lagoon, 10 or 12 miles from the township of Wyndham, where there was water. A small pump and well gave 200 gallons per day, and the supply was now better than it had been. The Government were glad to do anything they could with the means at their disposal, but it was no use for members to think of adding to these Estimates. That was an absolute impossibility, unless we were going to have a deficit, and he did not think anyone would ask him to add to the estimates to a larger extent than already decided on, for payment of members would swallow up the balance and a little more. Members knew there was a balance of only £7,000, and, if we made any further addition to the Estimates, the balance sheet would show a deficit. He was anxious to do the best he could for all, to assist them in their districts. Whether a member supported the Government or not, was not taken into consideration, although, perhaps, the Government liked those who supported them a little better than those who did not. Still, as he said, the Government never made any difference

in regard to the districts, but tried to do what was just to everyone.

MR. CONNOR: If the magazines were removed from the present site, that site would be a very valuable asset, for it could be sold for settlement. At present the magazines blocked extension of population in that direction, because people would not go near them. If the course suggested were adopted, not only would the sale of the land produce sufficient to cover the expenses of building the new magazines, but would also give a revenue.

MR. HIGHAM: One admitted there was a good deal of dissatisfaction resulting from the proximity of the magazines to the town of Fremantle, but he contended that a great deal more dissatisfaction would exist, if we insisted that these magazines should be shifted to one of the islands. It was quite possible to find within easy distance from Fremantle a site suitable for the magazines, and a site where any possible explosion would not affect the town of Fremantle or any of its suburbs. Under the municipality by-laws only very small quantities of explosives could be handled at a time, and if the magazines were placed on one of these islands, either the trader or the consumer must suffer to a considerable extent. An extension of the Owen's Anchorage railway to the South-West would enable Collie coal to be consumed at Fremantle at a very much cheaper rate, and at the same time it would open up for cultivation and settlement a large area of good garden ground. If provision were made on the Loan Estimates, and that extension took place, there would be many spots on either of which the magazines might be placed without any risk to surrounding population.

MR. DOHERTY: The member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) was simply speaking for one or two firms who had magazines at Owen's Anchorage; and the entire population of the Fremantles ought not to run the risk of annihilation for the sake of those firms. Even supposing mine owners had to pay a little more for their powder or dynamite, it was better that should be done than that the people of Fremantle should suffer entire destruction.

MR. MITCHELL: Fault-finding and complaint were getting almost as fashionable as crook-handled walking sticks, and

he thought he might be allowed to make a complaint himself. He was sorry to see there was nothing on the Estimates for a new roads board at Paradise Gully, a board which had been promised by the Commissioner of Crown Lands during a visit to the North earlier in the year. Some information should be given as to whether that promise was to be carried out.

MR. GREGORY: The grant which had been referred to was not applied for by him, but his attention had been drawn to the fact that a promise had been made by the late Commissioner of Railways, and it was pleasing to see that the Premier was willing to give the amount originally promised. Roads boards, such as the North Coolgardie board, ought to be assisted by the Government, especially when those bodies showed a disposition to tax themselves, as had the board in question to the extent of one shilling in the pound.

THE PREMIER: What property was up there—mines?

MR. GREGORY: There were the mines, and the townships of Leonora, Malcolm, and other places.

MR. KINGSMILL: Had the Commissioner of Public Works seriously considered whether the colony would not be better without roads boards? In South Australia the roads were under a Government department, and the plan had worked with wonderful success.

THE PREMIER: Some millions had been spent on roads in South Australia.

MR. KINGSMILL: Not millions; but, at any rate, the roads were more cheaply made in that colony than in Western Australia, and were more easily kept in repair. He had been a member and chairman of roads boards on several occasions, and the impression he got was that, while some boards did a large amount of good, the members were honorary, and could not be expected to take the interest which was actually necessary, and the roads were not looked after as they would be under a regularly organised Government department.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The present system of roads boards gave local control and resulted in some very good work, and this was not the time to make any alteration, because the boards did the work cheaper than it

would be done by any special department.

MR. LOCKE: The amount on the Estimates for roads boards, instead of £40,000, ought to be £80,000, because as a member of such bodies for a number of years he knew they had done really good work, in the Southern portion of the colony at any rate. He hoped this grant would not be attacked, because, as he had said, the amount was not more than half sufficient.

MR. KINGSMILL: There were no serious designs on his part on the roads vote of £40,000.

MR. WALLACE: The amount placed on the Estimates this year for roads and bridges was the same as last year. Excessive rains had fallen throughout the colony and the roads were in a bad state. The Government had met the demands of some districts by giving special votes. When this sum was being allocated he hoped the Director of Public Works would give some of the money to back country places, and not allow municipalities to swallow up the whole of the £40,000.

MR. GEORGE: Would the Minister give some explanation of the item "Postages and private letter box rents," £1,000. Last year £1,800 was voted, but only £1,149, and the unexpended balance was put down as £22.

THE PREMIER: The £22 was owing at the end of the year.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Some explanation was required in regard to the item "Railway fares, £1,000." Last year £2,300 was voted and only £955 expended. What was the amount for?

THE PREMIER: The amount was to pay the railway fares of officers of the Works Department.

MR. GEORGE: The item "Office accommodation rented, £1,000," required explanation. Had not the Government sufficient accommodation of their own.

MR. PIESSE: This amount was for the rents of buildings which were leased in different parts of the city. There was a building which was occupied at the corner of Pier and Hay streets which was rented for public purposes; also several other buildings. This item formerly amounted to £4,000, but had been reduced to £1,000.

MR. GEORGE: It was not on last year's Estimates.

MR. PIESSE: It was under Public Buildings last year.

MR. GEORGE: In view of the retrenchment last year was there not sufficient accommodation in the public buildings for all the public servants?

THE PREMIER: The offices were leased some time ago, and could not be got rid of.

MR. GEORGE: A former member for the Gascoyne (Mr. Sholl) on one occasion drew special attention to the amount set down for payment of rents for offices for public officials, and it was pointed out on behalf of the Government that when the new buildings, which were then in course of erection, were completed the rent question would be remedied. There had since been drastic retrenchment, and still there was this item of rent. For the Premier to say the item represented old leases, showed he was either trying to "bluff" hon. members, or was suffering from loss of memory. If statements made in former sessions were correct, there were no leases.

THE PREMIER: What statements? There were leases, he believed; and if not, more accommodation was required than could be provided in Government buildings.

MR. GEORGE: Nonsense! When the new wing was added to the public buildings, hon. members were told that on its completion the whole staff could be there accommodated. The staff of the Public Works and certain other departments had since been reduced by some 50 per cent., and still there was this item of rents. He would move that the item be struck out.

THE PREMIER: Last year the amount paid was larger.

MR. GEORGE: Then find the item on last year's Estimates.

THE PREMIER: Whatever was said last year was doubtless correct. There was a suite of offices occupied by the Law Department on lease.

MR. GEORGE: That would not come under "Public Works."

THE PREMIER: The Public Works Department paid for all the buildings rented.

MR. PIESSE: Yes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What was the amount last year?

THE PREMIER: To discuss the matter was puerile. This money was not thrown away. He had personally tried to get rid of this expenditure. Some years ago, in the "boom" time, when offices were difficult to get, it had been found impossible to get accommodation for short periods, and leases had to be taken for terms of years. This matter had been threshed out last year. No new buildings had been rented since, and those now rented were being gradually abandoned. The Crown Law Department, the Agricultural Bank, and a few other offices, were rented from private owners; and the leases would expire in a few months. He would not be badgered by the hon. member (Mr. George).

MR. GEORGE: Even the meanest member had a right to information, and the Premier's statements were not as accurate as they should be. The Premier, the ex-Director of Works, and the new Director, had searched in vain for the alleged item on last year's Estimates; therefore it seemed this was a new item.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It had that appearance.

THE PREMIER: It was certainly not new.

MR. GEORGE: To get more information, he moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. PLESSE: This item was for rents of buildings occupied by the Police Department, in the Terrace; by the Agricultural Bureau, in the West Australian Chambers; by the Crown Law Department and the Agricultural Bank, in Hay street; and by the Lands Department, in Cathedral Lane. These were all held on leases which expired in a few months; and as far as possible the officers would then be housed in public buildings. Recently, when it was proposed to erect the building now being erected at the rear of the Post Office, arrangements had to be made for accommodating the officers of the Engineer-in-Chief's Department, and it was suggested that the Government should take over buildings in the city which would have cost a thousand a year. Other arrangements were made, and £500 per annum saved. These rents at one time amounted to £4,000, and had now been reduced to £1,000.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about the expenditure last year?

MR. WILSON: The Committee would doubtless accept the explanation of the late Director of Works; still the member for the Murray (Mr. George) was right in challenging the item, which, as it appeared on the Estimates, would lead members to suppose it was a new vote.

THE PREMIER: All knew it was not new.

MR. WILSON: It was apparently a fresh item, and there was no note of explanation.

THE PREMIER: No doubt it had previously been charged in the "incidental" vote. He would give full information at the next sitting.

MR. GEORGE: Much discussion would have been saved had the Premier said that before.

MR. DOHERTY: The Premier should assure the House that instead of spending £10,000 as was proposed, on this old Legislative Assembly building, new Parliament Houses would be erected on the site of the old barracks, St. George's Terrace. Every member of the House would agree that £10,000 ought not to be spent on this building. He wished the Premier would give information.

THE PREMIER: The House yesterday, or the day before, appointed a Select Committee to look into this matter. The Committee had their first meeting to-day, and hoped to meet again on Saturday, and perhaps they might be able to bring up their report on Monday or Tuesday. Not sixpence would be spent on this building until the House had an opportunity of discussing the subject and coming to a decision about it.

Item, Insurance Public Buildings, Marine Risks, etc., £4,000:

MR. GREGORY: Were the public buildings at present insured, and if so to what extent? Did the Government intend to expend £4,000, as shown on the Estimates? Last year £1,500 was passed by the House for the purpose of insuring the public buildings, but the Government actually expended £35.

MR. PLESSE: The money was paid out of the contingency vote.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The public buildings were insured.

THE PREMIER: They had been insured for years.

MR. PIESSE: They were insured for £870,000.

THE PREMIER: The only thing that occurred to one was that the money was paid last year out of the Contingency vote, and the small sum referred to was a little balance afterwards.

Item, Engineer-in-Chief, £1,500:

MR. GEORGE: One would like to ask the hon. member in charge of the Engineering branch, whether he had ever considered the necessity of dealing with this officer adequately and fairly in connection with the important works he had to undertake. This officer had been responsible for designing and carrying out great public works which had been of immense importance to the colony, and yet his salary was only a miserable sum of £1,500 a year. One would like to know if the Government intended to take this matter into consideration during the coming year. He thought the Engineer-in-Chief deserved a bigger salary.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: What had been said was very complimentary to the Engineer-in-Chief, and if it was the desire of the House, the matter would be dealt with. We could not, however, increase the sum this year.

Item, Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, £500:

MR. DOHERTY: What were the duties required of this officer? Was he an engineer?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: He was not an engineer. He was, he (the Director) believed, Under Secretary to the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. GEORGE: What was his name?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Mr. Salter.

MR. DOHERTY said he wanted to know the qualifications of this officer. Was he a civil engineer?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: No; he was an architect, and he did his work very well. He was thoroughly qualified: practically he was Under Secretary to the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. DOHERTY: Then he should appear on the Estimates as Under Secretary.

MR. GEORGE said he believed this officer was Chief Draftsman. He was all right in his own way, but was in the wrong place.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: He was Assistant Superintendent of Public Works.

MR. DOHERTY: Perhaps the member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse) could give information.

MR. PIESSE: This was an officer who had been some ten or twelve years in the public service. He had been engaged for some time in the office of the Engineer-in-Chief. He was an architect by profession, and was subsequently transferred to the Architectural division. On the return of the Engineer-in-Chief from England, when Mr. McDonald's services were dispensed with, this officer took up the position of Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, and he was acting in almost the capacity of Under Secretary. He did a great deal of clerical work in the office of the Engineer-in-Chief. The whole of the work filtered through him to the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. DOHERTY: The description in the Estimates was misleading.

MR. GEORGE: Mr. O'Connor called this officer his chief clerk. On page 69 we had the Architectural division mentioned, and at the head of the office we had the Superintendent of Public Buildings, whilst lower down we had the Chief Inspector of Works, and if the proper title for this officer was Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, let him go into the Architectural division. We should be very careful what titles we gave to officers, and officers should be allocated to their proper positions.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Engineer-in-Chief was really the Superintendent of Public Works. This officer was a well-known gentleman in Perth, who had been in the service 12 years. The salary had been passed for two or three years, and one was surprised at this matter being questioned. There was no increase of salary, and, as he had stated, this gentleman had been in the service so long, one could not quite understand the reason for this action.

MR. GEORGE: Not a word had been said this evening against the qualifications of the gentleman who held this position; but this gentleman figured on the Estimates as Assistant Superintendent of Public Works. If that was his position, and he was qualified for it, he should appear in the Architectural

division. The matter was brought before the Director of Public Works, who could see the feeling of the Committee.

MR. MONGER: Two members only.

MR. GEORGE: The Director of Public Works could see the opinion of hon. members of the Committee, and whether there were one or a dozen members, they had a right to expect the Minister would give this matter consideration, and see that the title given to this gentleman was according to his work. If this officer were fully qualified, why did he not stick in the department where he had a chance of proper classification?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: This was only a question of title, and if the House did not like the title, a motion could be submitted to alter it.

MR. DOHERTY moved that the officer be designated "Chief Clerk to the Engineer-in-Chief."

MR. PIESSE: It would be better to leave the question of the title to the Minister to deal with later on. To call this gentleman Chief Clerk, would perhaps clash with other officers in the department.

MR. DOHERTY: This officer seemed to object to be called a clerk, but he ought to be given his right title. He desired to appear as a professional man, but apparently he was not in his right department.

MR. MONGER: It was suprising that such a paltry motion should have been submitted. It was *infra dig.* for hon. members to vent their private spleen, if they had any, against any individual or particular officer in the Government service, and it was surprising that the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) and the member for the Murray (Mr. George) should have attacked this officer in the way they had. It was an ordinary principle of parliamentary etiquette not to attack individuals who were not in a position to reply, and there was no reason why the title which this gentleman had held for several years should be altered.

MR. GEORGE: The man was not attacked, and not one word had been said against him.

MR. MONGER: There was some little personality somewhere, or nothing would have been heard about the matter, and he hoped the question would be left in

the hands of the Director of Public Works.

MR. MITCHELL: No attack had been made on the officer, but if any at all, on the designation of the office. This gentleman, although he was called something else, was chief clerk in the department, and yet it appeared there was another chief clerk.

MR. DOHERTY: In 1896 the Engineer-in-Chief described this gentleman as his chief clerk, but Mr. Salter appeared to be a wonderful individual, who was at once a time-table maker, an honorary secretary, chief clerk, and assistant superintendent, while all the time he never left the office, and did not know where the public works were.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: This gentleman had been in the service for several years, and had given satisfaction, and there was no reason why he should not retain the title which had been given him.

THE PREMIER: It would be a pity to interfere with the title of this office, because, after all, what was there in a name? This gentleman had had this title for three years, and there appeared to be no reason why it should be altered now.

MR. KINGSMILL: Who was Superintendent of Public Works?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Bell. If the title of this office were objected to as being high sounding, offence might be given to this gentleman, and there was no desire to offend any officer without very good reason. There appeared to be no clashing of interests, and it was to be hoped the title would not be interfered with.

MR. KINGSMILL: Mr. Bell, according to the Estimates, appeared to be the Superintendent of Public Buildings, so that the Premier was wrong in that respect.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Practically the Engineer-in-Chief was Superintendent of Public Works, and then came the Under Secretary, Mr. Jull. In 1896 Mr. O'Connor described this officer as his chief clerk, but four years had elapsed since then. If he could find another title for this officer before the Estimates were passed, he would inform hon. members.

MR. A. FORREST: There was no reason why we should not alter the title of this officer, who did not do the work to bear out the title. Perhaps it would be better to call him Under-Secretary of the Engineer-in-Chief. To call a man Superintendent of Public Works when he was not Superintendent of Public Works seemed to be absurd. He would support the title "Under Secretary" or "Chief Clerk."

MR. WILSON: Hon. members were wasting time. It did not matter what this officer was styled so long as he did his work. The officer acted as a filter, and he was a very good filter indeed to the Engineer-in-Chief. No man could see the Engineer-in-Chief unless Mr. Salter liked. The officer was doing the work he was employed for—to keep members and others from the Engineer-in-Chief when that officer was engaged on important work.

MR. DOHERTY said he would have to press the amendment.

MR. LOCKE: Members should take the assurance of the Director of Public Works that he would look into this matter. It did not matter much to members whether the officer was styled a "filter," Assistant Engineer-in-Chief, or chief clerk, as long as he earned the salary.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result :—

Ayes	5
Noes	19
Majority against				14

AYES.
Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. George
Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Kinganill
Mr. Doherty (Teller).

NOES.
Mr. Connor
Mr. Darlôt
Sir John Forrest
Mr. Gregory
Mr. J. F. T. Hassell
Mr. Hubble
Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Locke
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Monger
Mr. Moorhead
Mr. Pennefather
Mr. Phillips
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Reason
Mr. Throssell
Mr. Wilson
Mr. Wood
Mr. Illingworth (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived.

MR. DOHERTY, referring to item "Engineer-in-Charge (also of general water supply), £100," asked for explanation.

THE PREMIER: The officer received another salary under the Loan Estimates.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The two salaries combined made £700, which sum was not larger than that paid to similar officers. This officer attended to the Coolgardie Water Supply and to the Roads and Bridges.

MR. DOHERTY, referring to item "Resident Engineer, £325," asked where was this officer.

MR. PIESSE: At Roebourne.

MR. KINGSMILL: He travelled up and down the North-West coast.

MR. DOHERTY, referring to item "Jalbarragup, Bridge over Blackwood River and approaches, £520," said this seemed a large amount.

MR. LOCKE: This work had been discussed last year, and deserved more attention than it had received. The Blackwood was the largest river in one of the most fertile portions of the colony, where there was considerable settlement. As the bridge had been built, objections came too late. In addition to this £520, he would ask for £200 or £300 for approaches.

MR. GEORGE: £10 9s. was expended last year, and that might have been in making plans. Were we to understand that the contract would be let for this bridge without a revote? He did not wish to stop the work, but he believed that when a sum of money had been voted by this House, if that money had not been expended at the end of the financial year the vote lapsed.

THE PREMIER: That was what was being done.

MR. GEORGE: Had the Government started this bridge and practically let the contract without getting a revote of the money?

MR. A. FORREST: Since it appeared that Ministers did not care to reply, he would speak. The money was voted last year by this House, and the contracts were let before the 30th June. The bridge had been built and the money provided for this year, although the contract was let last year.

MR. GEORGE: The information was correct, but one had a right to have it from the Director of Public Works.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: One did not know that a member had a right to expect this information

from him, but the Government were always willing to answer reasonable questions. He would have given the information, but his friend, the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) jumped up before him.

Item, Northam, Gairdner Street Avon Bridge, Reconstruction, £1,700:

MR. MONGER: There seemed to be a desire on the part of some hon. members to discuss every item on the schedule. If that were to be the *modus operandi*, there were several questions which appertained to the district of the member for the Murray (Mr. George) to which one would take particular exception. He would like to ask with regard to the item, Northam, Gairdner Street, Avon River Bridge, Reconstruction, £1,700, whether the Government intended to spend only £3 14s. 4d. next year.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That was the amount spent last year.

MR. MONGER: Were the Government going to spend only a similar amount this year?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The only hope one had was that the Government would not want to spend more than the sum on the Estimates. The Government cut their garment according to their cloth, and would see that no more money was expended than was necessary.

Items, Serpentine Bridge on Main road to No. 6 Mill, £200; Serpentine, Lake-man's Bridge on Jarrahdale road, £100:

MR. A. FORREST said he would like to know whether these two works were absolutely necessary.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The works were necessary, otherwise they would not appear on these Estimates. The sum was not very much altogether, being only £300, and it was not at all necessary to dispute it.

MR. GEORGE: The member for York (Mr. Monger) seemed to be in a hypercritical mood this evening, and without any due regard to the privileges of hon. members, he had threatened to stay all night if others wanted to do so. One did not take any notice of this threat, or any threats of any other member, but if we had not the right to criticise the expenditure, why were the Estimates placed before us? Members had a right to ask

for information on every item, and to expect that information to be given decently and respectfully by members in charge of departments. It was not laid down in the Standing Orders that it was the duty of Ministers to give an explanation with regard to these items, but it was an unwritten law that they should do so.

MR. ILLINGWORTH asked for some explanation in regard to the item, "Sinclair's Crossing Bridge, £500."

THE PREMIER said the amount was for a bridge across a place on the Avon River, three or four miles from Newcastle, and on the main road to what was known as Irishtown. The causeway had been in existence there for a long time, but people had great difficulty in crossing in heavy winters such as that just now closed.

MR. A. FORREST: There was a very good crossing at any time of the year, and the causeway had met requirements for 40 years.

THE PREMIER: It had been represented that a bridge was very much required at this point in the winter, though not in the summer, and this was one of the main roads from the agricultural country north to Northam. It would be some months before the work was put in hand, and it was not anticipated more than £500 would be required before the end of the financial year.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The explanation was not satisfactory, not because the bridge might not be a good work, but for the reason we were committing future Parliaments to sums of money. There was a work which was to cost £1,350, for which £1,000 only was voted; another work to cost £1,600, for which only £500 was to be voted; and a third work to cost £2,200, for which only £1,200 was asked. In the first place he desired to thank the Government for giving on the Estimates information which had not been given in previous years, an estimate of what a work was to cost, but we were voting sums of money and committing future Parliaments to larger sums.

MR. DOHERTY moved that progress be reported.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member for the Murray had threatened the House. He had asked for a tumbler of water, and had threatened to speak until all hours of the morning.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could stop all night if he liked.

MR. GEORGE said he wished to speak to a question of privilege.

THE CHAIRMAN: The question to report progress would be put first.

MR. GEORGE said he claimed privilege. Before the question to report progress was put, he had risen to address the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member for North Fremantle had caught his eye first.

MR. GEORGE: As a question of privilege, he wished to refer to the statement made by the member for West Kimberley. Under the Standing Orders of the House he (Mr. George) was entitled to give an explanation. If the Chairman refused him, he would appeal to the Speaker.

Motion (progress) put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave asked to sit again.

MR. GEORGE: Have I not a right to be now heard?

THE SPEAKER: I do not know on what point.

Question—that the Committee have leave to sit again—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at twelve minutes past 11 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 13th November, 1900.

Papers presented—Petition: Patent Bill—Question: Hospitals and Government Funds—Question: Printing Office and Monotype Machines—Question: Locomotive Workshops, Timekeeper degraded—Question: Sparks from Railway Engines—Fremantle Tramways Bill, recommittal, third reading—Payment of Members Bill, second reading, in Committee, Suggestions (2) to Assembly—Land Act Amendment Bill, Recommittal, progress—Noxious Weeds Bill, in Committee, Clause 7 to end, reported—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the **COLONIAL SECRETARY:** 1, Plan of proposed loop line of railway, Kalgoorlie-Gnamballa; 2, Coolgardie Water Scheme Cement Supplies, return as ordered; 3, Statistical Office, Registrar General's Report; 4, Loan Estimates. Ordered to lie on the table.

PETITION—PATENT BILL.

HON. C. SOMMERS presented a petition from the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines, in favour of the Patent Acts Amendment Bill.

Petition received and read.

QUESTION—HOSPITALS AND GOVERNMENT FUNDS.

HON. A. JAMESON asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, The manner in which assisted hospitals obtain funds from the Government. 2, How have such funds been distributed. 3, If any correspondence in connection with the subject has passed between the Government and the recipients during the past three years.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied:—1 and 2, A £ for £ subsidy is given on all subscriptions or donations; the Government reserving to itself the right to limit the total amount according to the importance and needs of each institution, such needs being ascertained from a monthly return made by the hospital committee upon the accompanying printed forms. The sum of £1 5s. paid for each indigent patient treated at the hospital, such patient to be properly certified to as being in destitute circumstances; no subscriber to the hospital