

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 22nd June, 1898.

Papers Presented—Question: Reports of Railways and Works Departments—Question: Report of Mines Department—Question: Sinking of Piles at North Mole, Fremantle—Question: Sinking of Piles at Main Jetty, Fremantle—Question: Employees at Mundaring Reservoir—Question: Lunatic Asylum, Charges of Cruelty—Question: Expert in Tick Disease—Motion: Address-in-Reply: Mr. Leake's Amendment (re-cast); third day of debate—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: Report on Estates purchased under "Agricultural Lands Purchase Act." *Regulations* in the matter of—Restricting removal of sand, etc., from Garden Island: Special Timber Licenses; Prohibiting the cutting of Quondong Trees (Native Peach) in S.W. Division of Colony; Free Areas, Kalgoorlie and Boulder; Residential Lots; Sale of Suburban Lands, being portions of areas required under "The Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, 1896;" Application for Lots under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act, 1896; The Fertilisers and Feeding Stuffs Act, 1895; The Destructive Insects and Substances Act, 1880; Fishing in Warnbro' Sound (Safety Bay); ditto King and Kalgan Rivers, portion of Oyster Harbour, and entrance to Oyster Harbour; ditto Serpentine and Murray Rivers, entrance to Peel's Inlet, etc.; ditto Koombana Bay; ditto Peel's Inlet: ditto Vasse and Wonnerup Estuaries: Pearlshell Fishery at Sharks Bay, Application for exclusive Licenses; Pearlshell Fishery Act, 1892, extended to waters North of Dongarra; Pearlshell Fishery Act, 1892, extended to waters North of Dongara (Proclamation); Pearlshell Fishery at Sharks Bay, control and management of; Pearlshell Fisheries, Regulations under "The Immigration Restriction Act, 1897;" Stock Diseases Act, 1895, List of Inspectors

under, and *re* giving notice of any diseased stock; ditto, Prohibiting cattle from Queensland and Northern Territory of South Australia; ditto, Declaring Kimberley District, East of 127th meridian, infected area; ditto, Prohibiting the entering of horses and dogs from East and West Kimberley; ditto, Prohibiting vessels cattle-trading from Wyndham and foreign ports to any clean port of colony; ditto, Scale of charges, Owen's Anchorage Quarantine; ditto, sending of Ticks' eggs, etc., through Post Office; ditto, Authorising Agent General to approve of veterinary surgeon certifying to animals from Great Britain; Scab Act, 1891, Declaring Central and Southern Districts Clean; Strictly preserving all Birds on Abrolhos Island (Proclamation).—By-laws and additional By-laws of South Perth Roads Board, Dundas Roads Board, Roebourne Commonage, Murray Roads Board, Brunswick Roads Board, and Swan Roads Board (for Control of Chidlow's Well).

By the DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Fremantle harbour works, plan (No. 5832) showing extent of works constructed and provided for.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION: REPORTS OF RAILWAYS AND WORKS DEPARTMENTS.

MR. SIMPSON asked the Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works: Whether he could inform the House of the approximate date on which the Report of the Departments under his control would be furnished to hon. members.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piessé) replied: Provided the printing is promptly done, it is expected that the Annual Report of the Public Works Department and Railway Department for the year ending 30th June, 1898, will be ready about the end of August.

QUESTION: REPORT OF MINES DEPARTMENT.

MR. SIMPSON asked the Minister of Mines: Whether he could inform the House of the approximate date on which the report of the department under his control would be furnished to hon. members.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) replied: The proofs have nearly all been corrected. In about ten days.

QUESTION: SINKING OF PILES AT NORTH MOLE, FREMANTLE.

MR. VOSPER asked the Director of Public Works: (1) Whether the project of dredging the main channel near the North Mole, Fremantle, to a further depth of six feet had to be abandoned for fear of undermining certain piles recently put down. (2) Whether the said piles were only sunk some four feet into the ground. (3) If true, who was responsible for this condition of affairs?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied: (1) The main channel (*vide* plan 5832, which will presently be laid upon the table) was never intended to run alongside this mole, and the mole does not in any way interfere with the main channel, which can and will be dredged to full width and depth originally designed and shown on drawings, without interfering with the wharf in question at all; but if the piles could have been got down to the depth intended, the sea bottom alongside the wharf at eastern end would have been dredged some few feet deeper than it is at present, in order to give deeper berthage to vessels lying alongside it. It was stated, however, some considerable time back, when inquiries were made on the subject, that the piles could not be got down any deeper than they have been put down. (2) The piles are reported to be driven an average of 10 feet into solid rock. (3) The work was designed by the Engineer-in-Chief personally, and the officers who had charge of the construction were: Mr. J. A. McDonald, resident engineer, and Mr. David Johnston, inspector.

QUESTION: SINKING OF PILES AT MAIN JETTY, FREMANTLE.

MR. VOSPER asked the Director of Public Works: (1) Whether it was true that 200 piles had to be drawn out of the extension of the main jetty at Fremantle. (2) Whether, upon being drawn many of them were found to have been sunk from two to four feet only in the sand. (3) Who was the contractor, and

who was responsible for the passing of the work.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied: (1) No; only 60 piles, broken by vessels lying alongside in heavy weather, have been removed. (2) The broken ends of piles were not recovered; the records show them to have been driven a minimum of 8 feet into the solid. (3) The contractor was Mr. Matthew Price, and the resident engineer was Mr. J. A. McDonald, and the inspector Mr. David Johnston.

QUESTION: EMPLOYEES AT MUNDARING RESERVOIR.

MR. VOSPER asked the Director of Public Works: (1) The number of officers of the Public Works Department employed on the Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme at Mundaring; (2) What was the number of working men there employed.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied: (1) Engineers, surveyors, and supervisors, 8; clerks and bookkeepers, 2. (2) Wages men, 255.

QUESTION: LUNATIC ASYLUM, CHARGES OF CRUELTY.

MR. VOSPER asked the Premier: (1) Whether it was true that charges of cruelty to patients were laid against a certain person at the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum in December last, and again recently. (2) Whether those charges had been investigated. (3) If not, why not?

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: The case which occurred in December last has been dealt with by administering a strong caution, which was considered to meet the circumstance. The "recent" case is still under investigation.

QUESTION: EXPERT IN TICK DISEASE.

MR. WALLACE asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands: (1) Whether Mr. Hancock was engaged as a stock inspector, or as an expert in tick. (2) On whose or what recommendation was Mr. Hancock engaged? (3) To what districts was he ordered, and what instructions were given him?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell) replied:

(1) Mr. Hancock was engaged as an expert in tick matters, and on his arrival was temporarily appointed an Inspector to give him the powers conferred under the Stock Diseases Act, 1895. (2) He was selected by the Minister of Agriculture of Queensland to come to Western Australia, and recommended by Mr. P. R. Gordon (the Chief Inspector of Stock of that colony), who, in a letter to the Chief Inspector of Stock of this colony, stated: "Mr. Hancock has left for your colony, and I may mention that he is a man of great experience in inoculation and ticks." (3) He was ordered to the Kimberley district, and instructed as follow:—(a) to report whether any ticks which may be found by him are the true cattle tick (*ixodes bovis*); (b) whether the country and climate are favourable to the propagation of the tick; (c) whether the cattle are likely to contract the disease known as tick or Texas fever; (d) whether by microscopical examination he found any germs of the disease in the blood of the Kimberley cattle; (e) what in his opinion is the most advisable plan of preventing the spread of the tick, and coping with the disease should it be found present; (f) what he considers caused the death of the 80 head of bullocks near the Red Butts in 1896.

MOTION: ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

AMENDMENT BY MR. LEAKE.

THIRD DAY OF DEBATE.

Debate resumed, on the motion made by Mr. Gregory, and seconded by Mr. Hubble, for the adoption of an Address-in-Reply to the Governor's opening speech.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): When the House adjourned yesterday, I intimated that I should move an amendment to the Address-in-Reply, and I specified what the nature of that amendment would be. On reconsideration, however, I have altered the wording of the amendment, and I was induced to do so more particularly by certain action which was taken in another place yesterday afternoon. The amendment which I am about to submit is one which covers much more

ground than the one I mentioned yesterday, and aims a more direct blow at the general policy of the Government; and if such a question is debated, as it will be debated in both Houses of Parliament, we shall then be in a position to ascertain directly the opinion of Parliament as a whole. The amendment, therefore, that I now submit is this, to add the following paragraph to the Address-in-Reply:—

We, however, desire to express our disapproval of the proposal for the reappropriations contained in paragraph 26 of your Excellency's Speech. This course is, in our opinion, one which should not be followed, as it practically commits the colony to an expenditure without previously having made due provision for payment; and we feel it would be unwise at the present time, directly or indirectly, to increase the indebtedness of the colony by reason of further loans, or do any thing that would necessitate so doing, until we have exhausted the present loan authorisation.

I trust that hon. members will see their way to support me in this amendment, and thus endeavour to put a stop to what appears to me to be an unnecessary as well as a dangerous expedient. It is difficult in these matters, situated as we are and treated as we are by the Government, to arrive at conclusions after mature deliberation, and for the simple reason that we are not given that necessary time for deliberation before we have to debate the various items in the Governor's Speech. The present Government have resorted in the past and still adhere to their Parliamentary tricks of secrecy, suppression, and surprise.

THE PREMIER: Good!

MR. LEAKE: They have adopted secrecy in their silence in the recess, in their failure to take advantage, as is done in the other colonies, of opportunities within a reasonable time of the meeting of Parliament to announce their policy; thus leaving everything of public moment and interest until the last moment. They invariably, by way of surprise, depart from their announced policy of the previous session—for instance, I might mention in this connection their policy of loans and their railway policy—and, again, they create, or attempt to create, some little surprise by letting off their Parliamentary fireworks under the auspices of His Excellency the Governor,

just by way of a prelude to the work of the session. This has the advantage to them of preventing that criticism, both inside the House and outside in the press, which is so essential to the consideration of matters of great public concern. We had a display under the auspices of His Excellency the Governor, by the direction of the Premier, when we were favoured with a Speech of 31 paragraphs, which are now before the House; and I think the most unenviable person on the occasion of the opening of Parliament was His Excellency the Governor, who was forced to read that long, wearying and uninteresting Speech, prepared for him by an unreliable Premier, assisted by several incompetent colleagues. It makes one feel indignant that Parliament should be offered such an affront as has been done by this Speech being delivered to us, this Speech which contains no unusual information either of facts or policy, until we get down to the last five or six paragraphs. It amounts really to no more than extracts from the diary of the Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works, dealing with public works and railways; and whatever we get of the real part of the Speech is unquestionably stale, and very, very stale news. And amongst that which is stale, we find reference to tanks, reservoirs, harbours at Bunbury and Fremantle, and the Coolgardie water scheme. We might really call it politics and water. That is what the Speech contains. It is diluted to the greatest possible extent, more, perhaps, than is usual with the hon. the Premier and his illustrious colleagues. Following this dose of politics and water we find reference to matters in respect of which the Opposition gave the Government their orders last session. I refer to the question of tick and the food duties—the proposed amendment of the tariff. The Government got their directions then, and I am glad to think—I do not often congratulate, and I shall not now—our commands have been followed as closely as the Government dared; and we commend the Government for having done what we told them in that direction. As to what amendment they propose in the tariff, it would be for the moment dan-

gerous to speculate, nor shall I be led to trespass on ground where I see a notice up of danger to angels. There is a curious absence of matters of great public interest in the Speech. There is little reference to proposed domestic or social legislation. We might from the debates of last session have expected some promise of consolidation in regard to the liquor law; and we might also have expected some reference to a Bill having for its object Civil Service reform. That matter has been referred to by one or two hon. members who have spoken already; but, because it is a matter of great public concern, I suppose that is the reason why the Cabinet avoided that question. Then we might have expected some reference, appreciative or condemnatory, of the action of certain persons in regard to the alluvial question. Can anybody say, with all reason and fairness, that that is not a matter which might have been referred to in the Speech of the Governor? The Government might have said a word or two, either in an apologetic strain or in an explanatory strain, or they might have given expression to the hope, or to their intention, that steps would be taken to avoid a recurrence of such an unfortunate episode; but we find nothing of the kind.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We might have expected to see the umbrella.

MR. LEAKE: I do not believe the story. There is no doubt that the trouble arose from the fact that the warnings which were given on this side of the House, when the Goldfields Bill was passed in 1895, were disregarded, and when that clause in reference to the framing of regulations was under consideration. A reference to *Hansard* will show that what I say is correct. I warned the House that they were giving the Government too much power, because whilst they were acting, quite properly, in giving power to Ministers or the Governor-in-Council to frame regulations for the carrying out of the Goldfields Act, yet they overstepped the bounds when they declared that when these regulations were made by them in recess without Parliamentary supervision, these should have the force of law, which would be irrevocable and beyond criticism by the highest tribunal in the country. That

was the danger pointed out. That is the danger which happened. We find that the Government passed a regulation which was admitted on all sides to be *ultra vires*, yet they acted on it, and thereby did a grave injustice to many persons whom it was their duty to encourage in a lawful calling. And it seems strange that, whilst they were pushing about for so much matter to fill the columns of this paper, called a Speech, they really could not have referred to such an important matter as the alluvial question. We gather, however, when we pass through those preliminary paragraphs, that the real intention is to hoodwink Parliament and the public, and to divert if possible their attention from the real effects of the policy which Ministers intend to pursue—that policy of loan. It is their intention to pursue that course by which they have lived; that course which has kept them in power: that course which has placed them in the questionable and shaky position in which they now find themselves, namely, that policy of borrow, borrow, borrow. They will be begging next. They have stolen several times; and as I shall show later on, beg, borrow, and steal seems to be their policy. One might suppose, and I can realise, how easy it might be to fall into the trap which has been laid for members on this side of the House by this Speech. That little trap is contained in paragraph 23; and, as it is too good to paraphrase, I will read it all:

The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure will be placed before you as soon as possible. The revenue for the past financial year was £2,842,751, but the expenditure was only £3,308 less, so that unless it is desired to delay the many urgent and necessary public works now in progress or about to be undertaken, it will not be possible this year to remit any duties or otherwise reduce the anticipated gross amount of revenue. Notwithstanding this large expenditure, I am glad to be able to inform you that at the end of the financial year there was a credit balance of £315,362 on the current account of the colony.

Compare that, as you may, with the Governors' Speeches of the last six or seven years, when invariably with a flourish of trumpets we heard the Premier announce from his seat in this House, or through the medium of His Excellency

the Governor, that our balance to credit amounted to so much, that the revenue had increased, and that we had never had a deficit—compare that with the announcement in this Speech, that the financial credit of the colony is satisfactory and that the revenue will be very large: does that tell us anything? How much? we want to know. And what are the details of the expenditure? They should give these particulars to us. Considering that the financial year will end on the 30th of the current month of June, it should be easy to give us definite information, showing if not within a thousand or two, at any rate approximately, the state of the colony's finances. I would like to remind hon. members of the criticisms which were passed on this matter by the member for East Perth in this House yesterday afternoon. In an excellent speech, one of the best which that hon. member has delivered to this House for close reasoning and clearness of expression, he pointed out how prone Ministers are to evade the real financial question. I do not intend to depart from my usual custom and indulge the House with a long list of figures; but I do ask hon. members to bear in mind what was told them yesterday by the member for East Perth with regard to exports and imports, and so forth. It is dangerous to criticise in the absence of facts, or to anticipate facts which we know will be before us in a few days' time, and I am not going to say now what I think about the revenue. But I do not fancy I am wrong in saying there will be announced to us, after the 30th June, that there is a deficit on the year's transactions of something like £200,000 as compared with the estimates of revenue and expenditure. The Premier knows that the members of this House are aware of it, that they anticipate it, and he thinks that very likely with that knowledge in their possession they will be induced to criticise and declare that the colony is absolutely in debt, and so on. I am not going to take that pessimistic view, for I have every faith in the vitality of the colony and the soundness of its resources, and I am moreover firmly impressed with the possibility of the Premier being possessed at the end of next year of a large surplus—that is

if this House takes care to restrict his spending powers to something like a reasonable limit. We must remember that whereas last year he had voted for him one million of money for public works and buildings; that in face of that million he has a deficit of only £200,000 for this year; that if we are not asked to vote the same amount this time he will have a splendid margin, and of course be able to show—and we are pleased to think it is so—the possibility of a surplus at the end of the next year. So that, in talking about a deficit, I do not want it for one moment to be understood that I am attempting to decry the financial condition of the colony, or to think that we are hard up, or cannot pay our way; but it shows this, that they did not know, that they had not the necessary knowledge or intuition to govern this colony in the way in which it ought to be governed; that they have never been able to estimate the revenue or expenditure, for they are either in the clouds or away down below sea-level. We find that the proportion of the increase in the revenue is far less now than it was last year, say at per month; that the revenue is merely holding its own with that of last year. But what I do want, and I challenge the Ministers to give us at the earliest possible date—nay, during the course of this debate—a more definite announcement as to the financial position of the colony than is contained in this paragraph 23. They are afraid to do it. I say they are afraid to do it. There is no doubt about that, because they have to admit that they have made a mistake, and that, if it were not for the enormous revenue we anticipate for next year, we should be absolutely in debt. They have overrun the constable by about £200,000, and they do not like to tell you that. They like gilt-edged tales. They have no surplus at all. Hon. members will recollect in what an airy style the Commissioner of Railways pooh-poohed the idea of his not being able to reach his estimate of railway revenue at the end of the financial year, when we were discussing the Reappropriation, or what has turned out to be the misappropriation, Bill of last session, when they snatched £390,000 odd from other loan appropria-

tions. He then said, "We will pay it back," and when asked "how?" he said "We will do it." Again I wish to point out that the prediction made from this side of the House has been realised, and it was that whilst the Premier based his calculations on the assumption that the population was increasing at the rate of 3,000 per month, he was told that the three thousand was not likely to be maintained. When I pointed that out to him last year, I was called a croaker, a traitor, and playful little references of that kind were made to me. Six or seven months have passed since then, and what is the result? Instead of the population continuing to increase at an average of 3,000 per month, the croaker's prediction is correct; for we find—and the right hon. gentleman can find it out for himself if he likes—that the population has increased at the rate of about 1,100 per month only since last June. In face of all that, we are asked to go for a further loan, to incur heavier responsibilities, with everything falling, with the population and revenue decreasing, and difficulties increasing. The sources of revenue which we have lived on hitherto have been customs chiefly, and railway receipts. The customs revenue is not maintained at its former high level; for whilst perhaps not below the receipts of previous years, yet it is not increasing in the same proportion with the increase up to last year; and the railway receipts, another great source of revenue, are decreasing to such an extent that the Government find it necessary to actually increase the rates of freight upon the goldfields railways.

THE PREMIER: Is that a correct statement, that they are decreasing?

MR. LEAKE: I may put it in another way, and say they are not maintaining their proportion of increase.

THE PREMIER: Very different, that.

MR. LEAKE: At any rate, whatever happens, the Government are increasing the railway rates because they need more revenue, and they are not doing that for the benefit of the trading or the goldfields community. They do not put these rates up in order to increase freight, and in order to increase the traffic on the railways, but because they have got to

keep full the pockets of the Commissioner of Railways; and I want this House to prevent it. In face of all these difficulties—the non-increasing customs revenue, the non-increasing railway revenue, the additional expense to be incurred for the upkeep of the works and buildings erected last year out of revenue—in face of all that, we find that the Commissioner of Railways is about to take over several lines of railway. It was pointed out yesterday by the member for East Perth (Mr. James) that those lines will possibly, and I may say probably, prove to be non-paying lines. There is the Cue line, and I do not think any member will say we are going to make a profit out of that. Mind you, I am not condemning the line; I am pointing out this as a matter of fact which touches on the financial position of the colony. There is the Greenhills (York) line—is that going to pay anything for working expenses? There is the Menzies line—will that pay anything for working expenses and interest? The same may be said of the Collie coalfield line and the Bridgetown line. Though we may admit these lines are necessary for the development of the country, yet they are not going to be lines out of which large amounts of revenue will be derived; so that, with all these extra burdens upon his shoulders, we are asked to lay a still heavier burden upon the Commissioner of Railways as well as upon the country; for we are asked to approve of lines to Leonora, to Bonnie Vale, to Norseman, and to Goomalling. Some hon. member stigmatises the line from Northam to Goomalling as a railway to Gomorrah. Then, in addition to these lines, which will probably be non-paying for some time to come, we find a characteristic breach of faith to the farmer or the producer in the fact that the Government propose to abandon the Marradong railway. That was one of their trump cards last session—to have an agricultural railway through Marradong (Williams district) to open up that country. Surely if any line is to be constructed, one would have expected the Premier would not have been guilty of such a breach of faith as is involved in the abandonment of the Marradong line in favour of these new places. I have something to say upon

each of these railways. Take the Norseman line. That, I venture to predict, will be the most expensive of the whole lot, because there will be very little to be derived from freight during the construction, and, therefore, the contractor cannot rely upon being recouped for his expenditure out of the traffic receipts, and he will have to base his contract on what he estimates is the real value of the work of construction. And consider how the expenses on that line are aggravated by the fact, firstly, that the department will have to haul all their sleepers and rails over the Government lines to Coolgardie. That is obstacle No. 1. Then this railway will run from a dry country, through a dry country, to a dry country.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS :
Which one are you alluding to?

MR. LEAKE: Norseman—with particular emphasis, to Norseman. So that there will be an additional expense there; and it is not improbable, if we may judge by our experience of last summer, that they may have to haul water for that line all the way from Northam to Norseman. I ask the House to pause before we give an unqualified support to this policy of further expenditure and extravagance, until we have seen the result of the extravagance of last year. We have not yet felt the pinch, nor derived the benefit, if there is a benefit, from the expenditure of last session; and should we, in face of the warnings before us, go blindfolded for this extravagant policy of loan and public expenditure? If there is to be a line to Norseman at all, my opinion is that it should go from Esperance. It has many advantages over the Coolgardie-Norseman line, because it will be cheaper. Mind, I do not commit myself to the necessity for that line; but I simply say that, if there is to be a line to Norseman, it should start from Esperance, because it would be cheaper. They would have fresh water to work with from the coast, and the material could be boated to the coast, and shipped as they went along. They would have the advantage of back freights upon the line when it was constructed. It would give the mines there an opportunity of sending refractory ores to the sea-coast to be treated, where

there is abundance of water, and many other advantages would be derived. Moreover, it would maintain in existence the town of Esperance, and would perhaps justify the expenditure of the past, which I am credibly informed amounts to something like £60,000. And we must also remember that, besides the expenditure of that large sum of money, which must have been done with the idea of encouraging settlement, they also put up or cut up Crown lands there, and sold them to the highest bidder at the best possible price. Esperance was never regarded as anything but the port for the Dundas goldfields, and unless the Government are going to abandon Esperance altogether, any development in that district should have for its object the benefit and advantage both of Esperance and of Norseman.

MR. HUBBLE: The benefit of South Australia.

MR. LEAKE: Of Western Australia. Go and study Geography. Further, the country between Esperance and Norseman is not of any great consequence, nor is, I am told by those who know, the country between Norseman and Coolgardie. It is true the country is auriferous, but hitherto it has not been proved to be a good mining district. It is not a paying auriferous country. Therefore, if any line is built to Norseman with the idea of opening up mining country, I am told it should go from Norseman to Kalgoorlie, and not to Coolgardie. The idea of the Norseman-Coolgardie line is to persevere in what seems to me to be that most damaging doctrine of centralisation. It is one of the worst forms of policy that we or any other legislature can either adopt or encourage. It is not fair to the other parts of the colony that all trade should be diverted to Perth and Fremantle; and not only that, but that trade should be diverted from its natural channel or natural outlet. The natural channel for trade with the Norseman goldfield is the port of Esperance; and if this House affirms the principle of the construction of a line to Norseman, then I say that line should go from Esperance. Whilst upon this subject, I should just like to ask the Premier, and I do ask

him, a single question, which can be answered by a "yes" or "no." With regard to this Norseman railway, is it intended that Norseman shall be the permanent terminus?

MR. SIMPSON: Answer the gentleman. It is only a simple question.

MR. LEAKE: He dare not answer it. I knew it. The right hon. gentleman dare not answer it. I will point out in a moment why. He has not the courage of his opinion.

THE PREMIER: You need not hammer the table.

MR. LEAKE: Not even when he is supported by his colleague, the Minister of Railways, does he dare to answer the question; and for this reason—if he answered "No," it would mean that the railway would be continued to Esperance, and then he fears that the Perth and Fremantle interests would consider themselves in danger of being wiped out, so that he would no longer receive their support. On the other hand, if he answered "Yes," we know it would cost more than the other line, and that it would ruin Albany as well as Esperance; and, moreover, it would practically deplete the Treasury with regard to the receipts of the Great Southern Railway. That is the position the right hon. gentleman is in, and that is why he does not like to answer the question. I wonder how the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piessé), whose interests are bound up in that Great Southern line, can sit so quietly and view the danger that is in store for him if one of these alternatives is accepted. But I suppose he is like a lot of other men on the Government side of the House—he has got to do what he is told. I point this out, and I take the hon. gentleman's own argument with regard to this Norseman railway when I do this, that if that railway goes to Norseman it will have opened up a section of the line to Esperance. You cannot get away from that fact. Look ahead if you can, and assume you have got your railway from Coolgardie to Norseman. What will be the agitation of the future? The agitation on the goldfields will be to extend that line to Esperance, and thus the fear which is apparent to many at the present moment will be realised. Esperance will then be opened up as the port for the whole of

the goldfields. But if you start the line from Esperance to Norseman, you keep the trade within your colony; you do not cripple Esperance; you do not materially injure Albany or the Great Southern Railway; and you, moreover, serve Norseman. There will be greater danger, there will be greater difficulties, in extending the line from Norseman to Coolgardie, than from Norseman to Esperance. The agitation will not come for the extension from Norseman and Esperance, nor will it come from Coolgardie and the goldfields, because these places have already got communication with the coast. Will you answer the question now, sir? Is Norseman to be the terminus?

MR. SIMPSON: He is still silent.

THE PREMIER: These interjections only encourage rudeness.

MR. LEAKE: What a pleasure it is to think the hon. member has realised the correctness of his situation! I throw these suggestions out to members who are interested in Perth and Fremantle. I do not say that I approve of the arguments myself, because unfortunately they tend to exaggerate the policy of centralisation. If we have got a good port in another part of the colony, we should give it a lift, and develop it as much as possible. If we have two or three, so much the better, because if distress or difficulty arises, each can come to the assistance of the other. I want to refer to the Bonnie Vale Railway, and of all the veritable jobs that have been perpetrated in this Assembly, and there have been a few, I think this outstrips the whole of them. It is only a dodge to catch the vote of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), and the Premier has caught him. We heard yesterday it was the hon. member's intention to leave the Opposition and go over to the Government side. I am sorry the hon. member is not here, because I may say that since he has sat on this side of the House he has never supported the Opposition—that is, he has been in the habit of speaking one way and voting another. He has now been secured, and I notice that the Premier has secured another quondam member of the Opposition, the hon. member for North Coolgardie.

MR. GREGORY: What is that?

MR. LEAKE: The hon. member moved the Address-in-Reply; and if he did not previously pose as a member of the Opposition, he was at any rate an opponent of the Government, because last session he was one of those interested in the reduction of the food duties, and it was the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) and the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) who altered the wording of the motion of censure last session, and then—

MR. SIMPSON: Ratted.

MR. LEAKE: And then, with remarkable treachery, voted against it. I only hope those two gentlemen whom the Premier has secured will be more loyal to his side of the House than they were to the side they deserted. I say no more upon that. This reference to or this cry for a railway to Norseman and Bonnie Vale sounds like the echo of Coolgardie's wail for Government relief. That is what it amounts to. The people up there have been living for some time past on Government expenditure—I am sorry to think that it should be so—but I do not think this cry for relief should be answered in the way in which it is proposed in the Speech, that these two railways should be offered as a sop or a bribe to the hon. member for Coolgardie. There is this remarkable fact about these lines, that there has been no general demand for them. There has been a slight local demand, an agitation down in Esperance and Norseman for a railway from Esperance to Norseman, but that is all. In the outside districts it has not been a matter of great public concern. Nor do I think that sufficient development has taken place along an expensive route to justify more than the construction of a light line or tramway at Government expense, or by private enterprise. I have only referred to the Bonnie Vale and Norseman lines, but there is a line proposed to Mount Leonora, and I am inclined in referring to that to say that if it is to be built, it is a question more of ways and means than anything else. Inasmuch as the ways and means are not present, I have made up my mind not to support that line from Menzies at the present time. If it can be proved that it is to be a main trunk line for the development of goldfields, to which and

through which it may run, it may be justified, but there are not the ways and means to carry it out. Then there is the Goomalling line. It was said last session of that, and the Marradong line, that if they were to be built at all they would have to be constructed out of revenue. On that score no doubt the Premier will be true to his pledges, and will not take money from the loan funds for the Goomalling line. In addition to these railways we find there is further expenditure contemplated in connection with deep drainage, and the city water supply. I have a right to assume, considering all the circumstances, that we shall not get this works programme through for at least one million of money. Am I right in that, Mr. Commissioner of Railways? There again is silence. I am asking this question to assist me. Will the railways, the sewerage, and the drainage cost a million of money. If not, how much will they cost? The Director of Public Works will not answer my question, which prevents me from arguing in the way I should have liked. It is the policy of suppression and concealment all over again. Unless Ministers give the information voluntarily, the House does not get it at all. My opinion is this—and I know that I am supported, not perhaps by a majority in the House, but I know I am supported by the best thinking men outside in the mercantile community—that this railway extension policy can surely wait. We have had enough of it for the time, and we should watch for the results of our past expenditure before incurring fresh liabilities. I only say this by way of caution; I am not condemning a policy of public works. I approve of a policy of public works, as well as a policy of railway extension, because in this country we can only open the lands and resources of the colony by railways. But there is a limit to which we should go, when one recalls the difficulties, and the cost of watering, and I believe the cost of watering some time ago was £70,000 a year. If that is so it behoves us to go carefully.

MR. A. FORREST: The water will be taken up there soon.

MR. LEAKE: But the Government are going to misappropriate the money. Last year the Government took from loan

moneys £395,000, which had already been appropriated, and we are asked to take upwards of one million this year.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no.

MR. LEAKE: Well, how much then? Correct me. It is only fair to the House and the country that we should know. I have got down here two hundred miles of railway, or something like that. What will be the cost per mile? If you have the ability, tell us that. Or can the Commissioner of Railways? I never saw such a stubborn or incompetent lot in my life.

MR. JAMES: It is what I told you last night. The public officers are not employed by the country, but by the Government.

MR. LEAKE: We are told there was to be a stop to our borrowing policy. We were told only last November that our borrowing capacity only amounted to two millions a year, yet we are asked to incur a further loan policy, before we have raised the amount required for our approved works. It seems to me that this savours altogether of that elementary system of finance which we know as pocket-picking. It is no better than that. It is a scandalous shame to know that our Treasury and finances can be depleted in the way attempted by this policy. In the face of that, we cannot get any information upon the subject of the condition of the finances. It is a strain on the loyalty of those who support the Government on the other side of the House. Apart from the question of a vote of censure, why do not the supporters of the Government combine in a caucus meeting, and go to the Premier's office—they did it before, and they have driven him. I say to the Government supporters, go to the Premier shake your fist at him and say, "If you strain our loyalty as you did over the food duties we will go against you!" The member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) with two or three other members on the back seats did it last time.

MR. WOOD: I would like to know your authority for saying so.

MR. LEAKE: We understand how these things are done. Do you deny it? There is silence. Then it is a scandal and a shame that these things are allowed to go on. If this sort of thing continues, in

a short time hon. members will have to choose between the Premier and their constituents. In addition to the works I have mentioned there will no doubt be a further sum for the Bunbury harbour work. We may be sure of that. This work, I am certain, has not been carried out to the satisfaction of the Premier yet. I do not say that an amount will be down during this session, but it will be there next session. The Premier may no doubt be able to make the revenue and expenditure meet, and I am happy to say that the revenue will overlap the expenditure at the end of the next year, but the Government will not have sufficient revenue to go on with these public works. They will be forced into the loan market against their policy of seven months and twelve months ago. What did the Governor say in the last Governor's Speech, in paragraph 21? This has been mentioned by the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James), but that hon. gentleman only referred to one or two phrases. I will read the whole paragraph:—

The progress now being made on the gold-fields at Pilbarra, Norseman, East Murchison, and other outlying places, will soon render it necessary to consider the best way of providing better means of transit to those localities. My Ministers are not prepared at the present time to ask Parliament for any further power to raise money by loan; and as it will be necessary to make provision on this year's Estimates for many works not hitherto charged to the consolidated revenue, they are unable this session to make any proposals with the above object in view. Taking into consideration the numerous public works already in progress, and the immense public expenditure that is going on, my Ministers are of opinion that it would be unwise just now to incur any large new obligations.

And the Speech was delivered on the 13th October, only eight months ago, and it was only following up the statement that was made by the right hon. gentleman in the March preceding, when he spoke at Bunbury. I think the 16th March last year was the last occasion on which any important public utterance was made by the Premier outside of Parliament. I have here a paper called the *West Australian*, which I think seldom misquotes the Premier, and in large type we find this: "A Stop to Borrowing." This is what the Premier said at Bunbury:—

I have no intention at the present time of asking Parliament to increase the burden of the

loan taxation. I think that we have enough. When we have spent what we have it will be time enough to review the condition of affairs of the colony, and see what population has come here. Certainly, until the population increases to a large extent, I don't think that I will be found advocating a further loan. Our future policy in regard to things will be exactly the same as in the past.

At that time the Premier's estimate of the increasing population was 3,000 a month. You will find that in *Hansard*, and now from the returns of his own department we find the increase is only 1,100 per month. What is to justify this departure from the policy that was announced in Bunbury and affirmed in the Speech of last session, and further affirmed in the debates in the House in October last? I am going to refresh the right hon. gentleman's mind by one quotation. I am now going to quote from *Hansard*, from the Budget Speech, a speech which is always very carefully revised by the Premier before it is printed. The Premier said:—

In regard to the borrowing of money for new projects, and to the demands made upon the Consolidated Revenue Fund, hon. members must recognise every day, and as the people of this colony ought to recognise and must recognise, that works which will not pay must, for the present, stand aside. Unless hon. members are prepared to say, in regard to new works, that they will be remunerative and will pay, such works must stand aside for the present. Some necessary works, such as hospitals and other like institutions, are not intended to pay; but railways and works of that character are on a different footing; and even if it can be shown that these works are likely to pay, it may not always be convenient, financially, that they should be commenced.

The Premier had told us before that the borrowing capacity was two millions per annum. We do not know how much yet he has borrowed on Treasury bills through the medium of the "kites" he has been flying lately, the A.M.P. Society, and so on.

MR. WOOD: Fine "kites" they are.

MR. LEAKE: Then the Premier says, in regard to the Goomalling railway:—

With regard to these projected railways to Marradong and Goomalling, I may say these lines have not yet been submitted to this House for approval, except as to the surveys; and the Government do not propose to make provision this year for proceeding with the construction of these two railways, but only for the surveys. I do not think it is reasonable, or within our financial arrangements, for us at the present time to undertake the construction of these works; and all along it has been in-

tended that these two railways—certainly the one from Northam to Goomalling—should be constructed out of revenue. I am sorry I am not able to make any further promise to my friends in regard to these lines, as there is no room on the Estimates for the works.

He says here again:

We have, of course, no anxiety whatever with regard to our consolidated revenue, for we have not spent as much as we have received.

The Speech cannot say that this year.

But we have been spending a great deal of loan moneys all over the colony, and on other public works here, there, and everywhere; and, as hon. members know, we have not raised any money in London from loans for some time past.

The next is a quotation I particularly want hon. members to listen to, and the amendment which I have proposed really adopts the words, or almost the very words, certainly the effect of the words, of the Premier himself when he delivered his budget speech last November. Listen to this, and I will read it slowly for the benefit of the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest):—

In regard to our public indebtedness, hon. members will have seen the published accounts. Our indebtedness is increasing—there is no doubt about that—and I think that, until our population increases, we should be careful not to increase our borrowing authorisations. I do not mean to say it may not be necessary for us, to some extent, to increase our borrowing authorisations; but what I wish to impress upon hon. members is that, until we get rid of the authorisations we already have, it would be unwise, in the interests of the country, to have any more borrowing authorisations; therefore I shall set my face against them, for the present.

That date is the 16th November, 1897. What I wish to impress on hon. members, and to impress on myself too, is that "until we get rid of the authorisations we already have, it would be unwise, in the interest of the country, to have any more borrowing authorisations; therefore I shall set my face against them, for the present." That is what *Hansard* says; that is what the Premier said; and yet although he will not answer my fair questions as to the state of his finances, we find him coming into this House and telling hon. members that, notwithstanding his former emphatic statement, notwithstanding the words of caution which he himself and we on this side uttered last session, he is going again into the money market for a

further loan, in order to float himself for a still further term in office. That is the position of affairs. You (the Premier) cannot live without a loan. You cannot do it. You have been kept in office since 1890 only by your borrowings. You have seen the writing on the wall, and you have been cautioned clearly enough. You have been hampered by your incompetent colleagues, and now they are dragging you down, as they must assuredly do. The only thing to keep you up is a loan, and we have to pay for it; the country has to pay for it, and we have to pay taxes. But everybody is not in a position to pay taxes, as is the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), who now interrupts me. We know perfectly well that the Government cannot get on; that unless they have a loan they cannot construct these works. It is idle to suppose that we have got enough revenue to construct goldfields railways, an agricultural railway, and sewerage works in Perth, out of revenue. We must have a loan, and Ministers are going to reverse their policy of last session, and say in effect, "We will go into the loan market again." They may quibble, and they may juggle with the phraseology of my amendment and the utterances of the Premier last session; but is there any hon. member who will not say that the approval of these works does not pledge us to a loan in the near future? They are going to take this money from works to which it has already been allotted. The member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) put the case very clearly and explicitly yesterday. The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) said, "If you have two accounts in a bank, and one is in debit and the other in credit, you take from one account and pay to the credit of the other"; but he forgot to point out to the House that the account from which the Government propose to appropriate money this time is a trust account, and they must repay it before they can ask us to re-appropriate money this session. They should show that they have refunded the £390,000 which they took from other appropriations last year. If they do not do that, it will be no answer; but perhaps they have, and that is a condition precedent to any further reappro-

priation. Until the existing authorisations have been exhausted, we ought not to incur further responsibilities; and we ought not to trust the Commissioner of Railways with this money. That he can get rid of it I do not doubt; but are we to allow him to play "ducks and drakes" with the money which we raise or which we borrow? We have seen enough of that hon. gentleman's expenditure. I have heard enough this session to suggest to me that there will be some difficulty in his getting through the session with all that he asks for; and I can promise most loyal support to anybody on the Government side of the House who wants to prevent him from getting this money. That Minister is overburdened with a load of responsibilities, and, as it was termed yesterday by the member for East Perth, by his fatuous self-satisfaction. Now, we are not going to stand it. The time has come for us to speak straight out, and declare emphatically that we will not leave any stone unturned, that we will overcome every obstacle, to prevent a recurrence and continuance of this wasteful and extravagant and ruinous policy. Because our colony shows signs of financial vitality and elasticity, must we strain it to the utmost, to the breaking point? I say, no. There is abundant opportunity for good work in the administration of the colony's affairs, and above all in the reduction of taxation; therefore let us by all means assist the Government this session in abolishing some and reducing others of the duties on food. Let us do all we can to remove the burden of taxation, and at the same time set our faces firmly against all attempts to increase taxation. Are we here to legislate, are we here to administer, or are we sent here merely to keep six men in power? And who are the six men? We have got two men who can do nothing but spend money—they are the Premier and the Commissioner of Railways. We have got an Attorney-General who, I venture to submit, does not know the law of the colony. He has not been here long enough. We have got a Minister of Lands who is the only redeeming feature in the Ministry. We have got a Minister of Mines who knows absolutely nothing about the subject, who has never displayed any political intelligence or administrative

ability either when he sat on this side of the House as a prominent member of the Opposition, or since he has sat over there as a supporter of the Government. And we have also a Minister of Education who, much as I respect him—I respect them all as men, but I am talking of them as politicians—admitted a short time ago that he was too feeble, too incapable of continuing to perform the duties of a member of Parliament, but who now avows himself ready to undertake the responsibilities and the burdens of administration in another channel. That is the Ministry we are asked to keep in power at any price, and to put our hands in our pockets for providing money to maintain there.

MR. A. FORREST: It is a hard case you are making out.

MR. LEAKE: Yes, it is. We know the Minister of Mines and the Minister of Education, for they were in this school for some time; but we have done with them now, and we wish you joy of your bargain. I know there are many things I have left unsaid, but what I have said I have endeavoured to say with some point; and if I have by chance convinced any hon. members on the Government side of the House of the soundness of my position, I hope they will vote for principles and not for men. This question, I presume, will not be treated as one of no confidence, although what I think of it is quite another matter. It does not rest with me to declare how it shall be treated; but we were told yesterday, when an amendment on the Address-in-Reply was announced by me, that it would not be treated as one of no confidence. I have exercised my privilege by altering that amendment before moving it to-day, thinking it would be better to bring forward a more easy proposition for the understanding of hon. members on the Government side of the House, and to ask whether or not, in so many words, they are prepared to declare to the country that they will do all they can to increase the indebtedness of the country, for that is the question. Shall we increase our liabilities or shall we reduce taxation? That is the issue before the country; and those of you who are true to political principles will, I venture to think, hesitate before you declare in favour of unqualified support of the Governor's Speech which is now before us.

You will consider what view your constituencies and what view the country will take of the position in which you now find yourselves. I move this amendment, this additional paragraph to the Speech, and whether or not it is treated by the right hon. gentleman as a vote of no confidence I do not care, although I think he ought to treat it so. I admit that. It leaves you gentlemen on the Government side, who are generally afraid to vote for the Opposition, to vote for once according to the dictates of your political consciences.

MR. SIMPSON: I second the amendment.

Amendment and question stated to the House by the SPEAKER.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I think the hon. member for Albany should be grateful to members on this side of the House for the very patient hearing we have given him. If it had not been so, I do not think he would have had any great cause to complain, because in many parts during his speech he was distinctly rude and insulting to myself, to my colleagues, and to members on this side of the House.

MR. SIMPSON: The same old game.

THE PREMIER: I do not think that is what we desire to see in this House, and especially from a gentleman who knows better, as the member for Albany does. I think he should assist all of us, and I do not mean to say I do not make mistakes, for I confess I do sometimes; but I think he should assist rather than otherwise, as leader of the Opposition, in preserving decorum and dignity in our proceedings. I regret to say that has not been the case. He has thought fit to advertise himself as the one and only man in this community who is fit to govern this colony; but we all know the hon. gentleman; we have known him from his youth up, and we do not know any good work up to the present date by which he will be remembered by the people of this colony.

MR. LEAKE: Don't be rude.

THE PREMIER: That is not rude. Before I go further, I should like to take the House into my confidence with reference to the position the Government take up in regard to the motion which the hon. member has made. I do not propose to

treat his amendment as one of want of confidence in the Government. I will give my reasons; and I hope we shall be able to keep to the decision at which we have arrived in this respect. This is not a new Parliament. We have had two sessions—in fact we have had three sessions—although one was a very short one. During the last session, when we were fresh from the country, we had a trial of strength with the hon. member and those who assist him, on a motion to amend the Address-in-Reply. I gave the hon. member, on behalf of the Government and members on this side of the House, every opportunity of saying all he had to say against the Government—against their policy and their administration; and we all know the result. The House decided by a large majority that they were not ready to trust the hon. member and his colleagues with the administration of the Government. Our policy at that time was before the country, and we had a majority in this House on our general policy. Now, it was upon the question of extensions of railways or starting-points of railways that the hon. member last night intended to make his point; but I note that he has changed his mind, showing clearly that he had not thought the matter out. In fact, I think that until a very short time before he moved it he could not have considered the matter.

MR. LEAKE: You gave us no time.

THE PREMIER: There was plenty of time.

MR. LEAKE: From Thursday till now, and you have had the whole year to do it.

THE PREMIER: Do not interrupt.

MR. LEAKE: I beg your pardon.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member has changed his opinion of the motion which he proposed yesterday, and which, fortunately, on the spur of the moment, I decided not to treat as one of want of confidence. I say that questions as to short extensions of railways and of starting-points of railways are not vital questions which the dominant party in the Legislature should permit to be turned into motions of want of confidence. We are not going to be trapped, neither the Government nor their supporters are going to be trapped by the hon. member

springing upon us, whenever he chooses, motions of want of confidence. We will not treat his adverse motions as such, unless he is prepared, and then I will give him every opportunity, to say by a direct motion that this House has no longer any confidence in the present Government. If the hon. member will do that, then I will give him every opportunity of saying what he has to say, and of taking the verdict of this House upon it.

MR. LEAKE: I am satisfied if you let your listeners go free and vote as they please.

THE PREMIER: We are not going to be trapped by side issues, such as the starting-point of a railway, or as to whether a railway should be extended in some direction, or whether there should be a reappropriation from an existing loan for some other purpose. We are not going to be trapped by side issues to advertise the hon. member and his coadjutor there (Mr. Simpson), for their own advantage. We are not going to do it, and therefore I give the hon. member fair warning that, unless he is prepared during this session to bring down a motion showing that this House has no longer any confidence in Ministers, I shall not treat the question as a motion of want of confidence.

MR. LEAKE: You know you cannot carry all your measures.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member has sought to make a good deal of capital by quoting what I said in March of last year, and again in quoting what I said in regard to this colony not increasing its loan authorisations. Well, as a matter of fact, the proposals of the Government do not at the present time increase the loan authorisations of the Ministry. On the contrary, they are made with the very object that I stated last year we desired. I said that we did not desire to increase our loan authorisations at that time. I am, of course, aware, and anyone is aware, that if we reappropriate money from a vote, and that money is required for the work for which it was voted, the money will have to be found hereafter by a new loan. That, of course, goes without saying, and I will deal with that matter shortly. I should like to say a few words before I go any further in regard to the Governor's Speech, which has been so severely criticised by some hon. mem-

bers, with great want of courtesy, I think—with very great want of courtesy indeed. Surely anyone who reads that Speech with a desire to be fair must acknowledge that it is a clear statement—must acknowledge that if it goes into some details which hon. members know all about, this is not a matter which should grieve anyone very much, because if you find a paragraph which you know all about, you, at any rate, can skip that paragraph, and let others, who do not know as much as you, have an opportunity of reading it. I know very well that this Speech, and those parts of it which have been termed ancient history, will be very pleasant reading to many persons throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia, who will have from an authoritative source an account of what has been done through the year, and what we propose doing. Surely that Speech, as placed before hon. members, does not deserve the contemptuous treatment it received from the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). He said it was beneath contempt. It was useless and worthless, and whichever way you turned it was no good—there was nothing in it, and that it was an insult to Parliament to submit such a Speech for its consideration. Now, the hon. member must recollect that the persons who framed that Speech are members of this House, entitled to as much consideration and as much courtesy as anyone else; and I do not think that if anyone else presented a speech to hon. members, we would be justified in treating him with contempt, and in saying his speech was worth nothing, and that, in fact, it was an insult to place it before us. The hon. member, in trying to speak contemptuously of that Speech, only did himself harm, because he merely brought contempt on himself; and I think it unworthy of him, and I am sorry he is not present to hear me say so. I say that Speech is a record of work done, and it is a record that we ought all to be proud of, whether we are in this House or whether we are not. I think it is a marvel that we have been able to carry out the numerous works—some complete, and many of them nearing completion—which are enumerated in the

Address; and although they are not new to every member in this House, I make bold to say that a great many of them are new to very many members here. It would be idle for anyone to maintain that everyone in this House knows all the works the Government have been carrying out during the year that is past. I say they did not know of them all, and that the information in that Speech was information to nearly every man in this House to some extent.

MR. GEORGE: That comes out in the general return.

THE PREMIER: It has not come out before. Now I would like to ask whether that Speech of His Excellency the Governor—the programme of the Government in fact—has been treated fairly by the Opposition. I should like to ask if the remarks which have been made by the speakers opposite—and I especially refer to those sitting on the front bench, those who think they know more than anyone else, and have aspired for a long time, it has been a long wait, I must admit, by cajolery and by insult to gain these benches—I say, have their remarks been made in a fair and reasonable spirit? What was said by the Opposition members about the great Coolgardie water scheme? Did they have anything to say in regard to it? I believe they passed it by altogether. One of the greatest works—yes, the greatest work that has been undertaken by this Government—a work that has been approved of twice over; approved of first by both Houses of Parliament without a division; again approved of by this House without a division; and I think a work which we are all very anxious about; a work in regard to which we often had fears at one time, and which we were forced to undertake in the interests of the goldfields and in the interests of this colony. No one will suppose that it was a pleasure to me to have to introduce that great work to the notice of hon. members, and to use my influence with them to get it carried. It was one of the most unpleasant and responsible duties that could be thrust on anyone; because we might fairly have expected that in that immense auriferous territory which we possessed there might have been found a

sufficiency of water for the requirements of the place. But, no; we have been compelled to deal with this question, and to embark this country upon an expenditure of two and a half millions of money, or something like it, in order to try to give comfort and relief to the people, and to assist the great mining industry on the Coolgardie goldfields. But these gentlemen, who take such an interest in the affairs of this country, never even said one single word in regard to this great project which is being carried out at the present time, and which will soon be in full progress. No, no. That is not of so much importance as is the hurling of insulting epithets at myself and those who sit with me on this bench. What about the railways which are nearing completion? Not a single word was said about them.

MR. LEAKE: We called them "white elephants."

THE PREMIER: The hon. member knows just as much about them as he does about white elephants. He does not know the colony. He has not travelled about it. He has no knowledge in regard to it; yet he speaks in this House as if he had. What about the Fremantle harbour works? Did the hon. member say anything about this great work we are carrying out with considerable difficulty, because of the immense expenditure required—an expenditure of which we cannot see the result at the beginning, because we have to spend a large amount of money in casting rock into the sea; this great work which was commenced in 1891 or 1892—1892, I think—and which has been carried on continuously ever since, and which receives the approval and elicits the admiration, too, of everyone who comes to the colony? Had the hon. member anything to say in regard to that great project? Not a single word; he and his supporters passed it by, only making some joking remarks in regard to the consistency of one or other of the hon. members on this bench.

MR. GEORGE: How much will it cost?

THE PREMIER: Well, we will tell the hon. member that in due course. This great work—a monument to the enterprise of this people, a monument to the enterprise of the Legislature of this colony

—was passed over by those would-be leaders of public opinion without a passing remark. I am surprised to see my old friend, the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Solomon), still sitting over there. I should have thought he would have walked out of the House when he heard the hon. member talk about Fremantle and centralisation, and of the dishonesty of people in that part of the colony who desired to gobble everything up for themselves in Perth and Fremantle.

MR. LEAKE: When did I use the word "dishonesty?"

THE PREMIER: I think, at any rate, the hon. member must feel he has got into strange company; into company not in any way in sympathy with himself or with the people he represents.

MR. VOSPER: Why do you not hit someone your own size?

THE PREMIER: I say, no word came from these would-be leaders in regard to this great project now nearing completion, which has evidences of its success before us and which is going to place Perth and Fremantle on the high road of communication between the old country and this. One would not know from them that such a work had even been commenced or was in hand.

MR. LEAKE: There is no dispute about the Fremantle harbour works.

THE PREMIER: And what was said about the gold export by the hon. members opposite? Was there a word said in regard to the great change that has come over the colony—in regard to this magnificent export of gold and in regard to our general exports? They did not tell us that the policy of the Government, the policy of this House, and the policy of Parliament, has produced these results—has given facilities of transit throughout the length and breadth of this country, bringing the producer into close contact with the coast, and giving him all the advantages of cheap, easy and rapid means of communication. They have not told us that we are the greatest gold producers in the Australian continent at the present time. No word came from them in regard to that. No; a lot of paltry platitudes took its place. And what was said about our agricultural development?

MR. SIMPSON: You only sneak of what we did not say.

THE PREMIER: Yes, I want to show how incompetent you are for the positions you seek to occupy. What was said about our agricultural development—650,000 acres of land taken up during the last 18 months; and our cultivation, which has increased by over 50,000 acres? No word of congratulation to the administration of the Lands Department. No word of congratulation to the Government in regard to the good work that has been done in this connection. No, Sir, we had nothing in the speeches of the hon. member—nothing whatever but carping and ungenerous criticism. I say it is not worthy of him or of this House.

MR. LEAKE: Well, answer it.

THE PREMIER: And we had from our friend there, the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James)—and I like to call him my friend—a long wail last night. I felt sorry for the hon. member. I have seen him in a good many positions, but I never saw him to greater disadvantage than I did last night. The hon. member knows that there is no member in this House for whom I have a greater personal regard than for himself. He knows that; but I say that speech of his was not worthy of him, or of the constituency he represents, or of the people, or of himself as a native of this colony. He posed as an instructor—posed as an instructor to other members on this side of the House. Surely I may say the hon. member has no right whatever to pose in that attitude in regard to hon. members on this side of the House, who are as good men and as experienced men, and have as much knowledge, as the hon. member, and who are not here to be dictated to by the hon. member. I say that with all respect to him.

MR. JAMES: Even Jove sometimes nods, you know.

THE PREMIER: Why was this wail heard? Why was this most pessimistic and depressing speech delivered? Why was it? One would have thought that this colony had embarked upon schemes which had proved altogether unproductive, and that we were in the last throes of difficulty and of bankruptcy; but what is the fact? That our public works are reproductive, that our railways are paying, and that everything in the colony—every industry in the colony, and I do

not want the hon. member to trip me up on this point, because there are some manufacturing industries with which I am unacquainted; but every productive industry from the soil of the country, whether it is mining, whether it is timber, whether it is an agricultural or a pastoral industry, is paying; and there has never been a time in the history of this colony—to my knowledge, at any rate—when all these industries were in as good a condition as they are at the present moment.

MR. SIMPSON: What about the cattle in the Kimberley district with the tick?

THE PREMIER: The cattle are there, and we will bring them out of it if we can.

At 6.30 p.m. the SPEAKER left the Chair.

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

THE PREMIER: When we adjourned, I was referring to the speech of my friend the member for East Perth (Mr. W. James), and was expressing my regret that he should have made that speech last evening, because he seemed to me, for some reason or other—I cannot make it out—to have lost faith in his native country.

MR. JAMES: No, no.

THE PREMIER: I have no doubt the hon. member has not lost faith, but it was a most pessimistic speech to listen to. I had difficulty in listening to the account he gave, the fears he expressed, the fright he appeared to be in, as to the future of this country. I feel quite sure that the hon. gentleman did not carefully consider the position of this colony at the present time, or he would never have allowed himself to make the speech he did last night. And what was it all about—all these fears which he expressed, all this good advice he gave us, and how he appealed to us with all the eloquence which we know he possesses, not to bring discredit and ruin upon this country? One would have thought that it was in regard to some tremendous loan expenditure, which was going to involve us in trouble and ruin. I do not remember the hon. member on any other occasion, when

we have really asked the House to embark on schemes which I may properly call gigantic, raising his voice in the same way as he did last night. He may have had good grounds when we were embarking on great expenditure, and incurring great liabilities, of speaking in the way he did last night. And what are the proposals of the Government? The whole thing when we come to look into it is a very small matter after all.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back, you know.

THE PREMIER: Don't you interrupt.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, I will.

THE PREMIER: What are we going to do which called forth this warning from the member for East Perth. The Government suggest that they shall extend our existing railways further. In one case from Menzies past Niagara and up to Mount Leonora and Mount Malcolm, a distance of 70 miles through very easy country, indeed I may say altogether level; there are scarcely any undulations, and the country is auriferous all the way and mines exist all along the route. In the other case we propose to extend the railway from Coolgardie to Norseman, a distance of 100 miles, all the way through auriferous country. There are not many mines working now, but the line will pass the place where there were 1,500 men working only a short time ago, but these men have gone away to another rush. Having been on a good many gold-fields, I feel sure that the country will be found to be gold-bearing all the way, and auriferous. I would not go far from Red Hill at the present time to find large numbers of men working, and all around the shores of Lake Lefroy the country is auriferous. And yet, to prejudice hon. members the hon. member for East Perth seemed to be frightened because he said we were embarking on a reckless policy which would bring ruin and discredit upon the country. If I have never done anything to bring ruin on this country, and we have borrowed a good many millions since I have been at the head of affairs, I am sure this will not do so. These railways will pay from the day they are constructed. They will be reproductive works, and how, then, are we going to bring discredit upon

the country? If we had been waiting and waiting, as we have been advised to do by the Opposition, we would be waiting now. What has been the career of the Government. We have been fighting the Opposition to get on, and the Opposition have been trying to push us back year by year. Instead of the Government being behind and the Opposition pushing them along, we have had to carry the Opposition on our backs, and still they persist in saying we are bringing ruin on the country.

MR. JAMES: Undaunted!

THE PREMIER: Yes, undaunted, but not deserted. We are not outnumbered yet. It has been said during the debate that pressure has been brought to bear on me by the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), who, I am sorry to say, is not in his place. I say that no pressure has been brought to bear upon me by the member for Coolgardie in regard to the Norseman railway nor in regard to the line to Mount Leonora. I do not remember that gentleman having mentioned the subject to me—to fix it on my memory, at any rate. We are not dependent altogether upon the advice given by hon. members for our policy, even though it is given by the hon. member for East Perth. We think we know something about it. We have an idea of the country and of the prospects of works being remunerative. Of all the railways we have built throughout the length and breadth of the country, there is not one so far but has proved a good investment. And how much support have we had from the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) in any of our works and policy? Has he ever helped us unless the work was going straight to his constituency? He never helped us at all, but he has taken credit for everything, and for that which he is not entitled to. He has even taken credit, when he has gone to the Murchison, for the route the railway runs *via* Yalgoo, and the hon. member for Central Murchison had as much to do with it as the man in the street. He had nothing to do with it.

MR. SIMPSON: You took credit for the rainfall, one year.

THE PREMIER: The member for Coolgardie was not in any way respon-

sible for advising me in regard to the railways proposed except the Bonnie Vale line, which hon. members know he proposed in this House last session, and he obtained a good deal of support for it. So much for the conspiracies and motives. One cannot do anything now unless some evil motive is attributed to you. What we say is this, that we have to go on building railways wherever they will pay, wherever they will open up the country, and we cannot afford to be standing still, leaving people in isolation and to the development of the country; and especially is that so when we can afford to carry out these works.

MR. JAMES: Would you say a place seven miles from a railway is isolated?

THE PREMIER: The hon. member has had his say, and he can speak again directly if he likes. He has said—and I mention it because I do not wish to be misrepresented, and I will not be misrepresented without correcting it if I can—that there is some deep-laid scheme upon the part of the Perth and Fremantle members to extend this railway to get the traffic, which naturally belongs to Geraldton. Anyone who knows anything about it must see that that is absurd.

MR. LEAKE: It has not been said in this House.

THE PREMIER: It has been said in several places. I did not say it had been said in this House.

MR. GEORGE: It was the man in the street, I suppose.

THE PREMIER: I wish to explode that idea. What are the facts? The railway is to Menzies, and from there to Mount Malcolm and to Mount Leonora it is 70 miles to the northward and we want to tap the country to the north. The people are there, and the gold mines are there. What are we to do? Are we to build a railway 290 miles from Mount Magnet to Lawlers, and so on, or build a line 70 miles in length through easy country? The Government cannot build railways where they like; the railways must follow the people and the gold producing belts. Where the people are, that is where the gold is. The people and the gold will be together, and the railways must go there. It is not a matter in which we are in any way responsible. We are bound to carry a rail-

way from Menzies, because it is closest. From Mount Magnet to Lawlers—I will not say the whole of the way—I do not think there is a single mine.

MR. VOSPER: There is Mount Samuel.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member's geography is not very good. Mount Samuel is not in that direction at all. The route which we are taking is the closest, and I may tell hon. members that there is nothing in the statement that we are trying to injure one place to bolster up another. Geraldton, forsooth! Why, who saved Geraldton from losing the traffic of the Murchison goldfields? Who was it but myself, and those who helped me, in resisting the proposal to start the Cue railway from Mingenew instead of taking the present route? I believe that proposal was defeated by only one vote; and, if it had been carried, Geraldton would have lost altogether the Murchison goldfields trade. If anyone likes to look through my record, he will find I have never done anything against the people of Geraldton, but that I have always tried to do the best I could for the people of the whole colony by pushing railways into country where they would pay. As to the proposed railway extension from Menzies to Mount Leonora, the route is not exactly fixed, though it will no doubt go in that direction. During the last 18 months, from the Mount Margaret goldfield there has been exported £100,000 worth of gold, and that does not include any gold from the East Murchison field, from which more than that amount has been exported. We know also that all that country is auriferous, and that it has been suffering from want of better means of communication. The people there have had to cart heavy traffic all the way from Coolgardie during a long while, and since the railway was extended to Menzies they have had to cart from that point. If anyone who has any idea at all of our goldfields says we ought to delay in constructing that work because he does not like to borrow money, nor to reappropriate it for that purpose, and that we ought to leave the people there to go on carting their goods over long distances, I cannot agree with him, for I say that so long as we can afford to build railways in districts that will be payable, the more likely are our goldfields and the colony

generally to be developed. I suppose it will be a couple of years before the line can be completed to Mount Leonora, and I suppose it will be a couple of years before the other line can be extended to Norseman. That is long enough to ask people to wait, when we know we can afford to build those railways. When I was at Menzies, a large number of people waited on me to urge the importance of doing what we could, and as soon as possible, to extend the railway to that district, and give them better means of transit. When we can build a railway through a settled district, when we know the traffic will be considerable and the line be payable, and when we are in a position to do it, why should we not undertake a reproductive work at a time when we can afford it? When I was on the road visiting that district, I authorised the building of a dam there, which, I must admit, has cost more money than I expected; but it is a valuable work, as it will hold some forty million gallons of water. And I think it is really worth while to build a railway to get the use of that water, not only for the railway, but also for the people at Menzies. And what will be the result of our policy in extending these railways? A new life will be instilled into those communities; and, as evidence of that, only to-day one of the most prominent men connected with mining in this colony, and a man with, I think, the largest interest in any English company, called on me, and said he was directed by his company to go out to that district and secure properties, because there was now a chance of progress there on account of the railway we were about to construct. Those people will have to wait a considerable time, even under the best circumstances, although some hon. members opposite would like them to wait still longer—would like them to wait until something turned up. We have every reason to believe, and, in fact, we know, that when we get to Mount Malcolm we get into better watered country, and will be able to supply our railway engines from that source, and also supply the settled population at Niagara and other places in that district. That is a country also capable of some development for pas-

toral purposes, and there will be a chance in that direction. I want to point out to hon. members, in regard to the position of Norseman when connected with the railway route to Fremantle, under the proposal of the Government, that Norseman will be exactly in the same position, relatively, as Menzies is at the present time; that is to say, the distance from here *via* Coolgardie to Menzies by railway will be about the same as will the distance from Perth *via* Coolgardie to Norseman; so that Norseman will be placed in as good a position to develop its resources as Menzies is in at the present time. There is a good deal of controversy in regard to the claims of people who have settled at Esperance to have railway communication with the Norseman goldfield. Sentimental claims are urged upon us on the ground of humanity, and all kinds of grounds are suggested by those who appeal to our sympathies in this matter. I admit that these sentimental claims do appeal to everyone, and they appeal to me, in regard to the position of the small community at Esperance; but we must never forget that we are not building a railway for the people living there, but we are building a railway for the people of this colony, and we must build it in such a way as will best serve the interests of the people as a whole, and be most productive. That is the position the Government have to face. We cannot make railways in any place we like, nor can we make ourselves believe that a railway from Esperance Bay to Norseman would be reproductive at the present time, for there is not the trade to make it payable; and, if the railway were constructed from Esperance, the people at Norseman would still be isolated from the rest of the colony, by not being connected with the general railway system. As to the railway when constructed to Norseman going on to connect with Esperance, there will always be demands for going on. Some persons waited on me at Coolgardie, before the railway from Southern Cross had reached Boorabbin, to urge that they did not want to be connected by railway with the coast on the Perth and Fremantle side, but wanted a line made directly to the coast at Esperance, as they were determined they

would have nothing to do with the people in the old-settled portion of the colony. Before there was a jetty at Esperance, before there was a single soul there, before there was an ounce of gold discovered at Norseman, some of the people then at Coolgardie, out of sheer "cussedness" and nothing else, were determined they would have nothing to do with the people of Western Australia; and the object in those days was to try to get a little principality of their own, connected, not with this colony, but with some other part of Australia. Which ever way we build this railway, do not let anyone think that the agitation will conclude when you get the line to Norseman. There will always be fresh demands, which will be resisted by this part of the colony for a long while at any rate, though the time may come when the necessities of the place may permit of that railway being continued to Esperance; but it is not likely. You must look at these things as they appear to men of common sense pursuing their ordinary avocations. You must consider that the people in this central part of the country are not anxious that their trade should be diverted, and should go somewhere else. It is not reasonable. You must take people as you find them. They are all looking after their own interests; and the time may come when the railway will go on to Esperance; yet we must remember that, if it went there at once, there would be an immediate clamour from Norseman to be joined by rail with their friends in other parts of the colony. The cry of the people of Esperance Bay that they are starving because the Norseman trade is not sufficient for them, and they must go further and get some of the Coolgardie trade, is all very well; but it does not want a prophet to see—a very mole could see it—that the only thing we have to do is to see if we cannot do something for that goldfield. It is this railway or nothing. I say unhesitatingly that at the present time, that is this year, the Government are not able to recommend that a railway should be built from Esperance to Norseman, because we know it would not stop there. It would only be making another agitation to have the line carried on somewhere else. For those places, Esperance and Norseman,

would then be as isolated from the colony as they are at the present time; and they are isolated. They know nothing of the people in this colony. They have never had an opportunity of knowing. The mayor has come here, travelling one hundred miles by road to get on to the railway.

MR. VOSPER: The Esperance people know you, by this time.

THE PREMIER: When you get down by rail to Esperance Bay, where can you go to next? You must go by steamer to Albany to get on to the railway in other parts of the colony.

MR. GEORGE: Why have you spent so much money down there?

THE PREMIER: We had to.

MR. GEORGE: Owing to clamour.

THE PREMIER: No. A lot of people rushed in there—a great many of whom, I believe, have gone away since—and there was a great deal of business done there for a time. The Government have tried to do right and justice to every part of the country wherever there was a demand and a necessity for the expenditure of public money. I know that what I have said will not please everybody, and will not please the poor people of Esperance. But that is not my fault. I have as much sympathy for them as can possibly be entertained by the man who believes the railway ought to go to their port; but we cannot do that. Men who occupy responsible positions have to do what will bring credit to themselves and to those with whom they are associated, as well as to the country at large.

MR. LEAKE: How are you going to make the Norseman railway pay?

THE PREMIER: I believe it will pay. It will not be an isolated railway. The rolling stock can be sent from here. The line will run through auriferous country, and the working will not be under a separate administration. I believe it will pay.

MR. LEAKE: You only believe.

THE PREMIER: Yes, I believe it will pay, if it is carefully managed and does not cost too much. And I think there are hopes that the Norseman goldfield, with increased communication between the goldfields one way and another, will prosper, and that we are justified—and that is all, not more than justified—in

doing this work at the present time. My desire is to try to bind together the people who come to make a living and to seek their fortunes in this colony. That is better, at any rate, than the other plan by which we would have a principality separated from us by reason of the absence of means of communication. I even think a railway from Coolgardie to Esperance Bay would be more justifiable than a railway from Esperance to Norseman alone. Before I leave this question I must say a word concerning my friend the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly). No man could have shown me more consideration, or helped me with more generosity in forming a judgment upon it than he; and I am sure my sympathy goes out to him. It has been a personal trouble to me, and I am sure that if the decision could have been in his favour, no one would have been more pleased than I.

MR. SIMPSON: You have got his vote, his practical sympathy.

THE PREMIER: With regard to the railway to Bonnie Vale, I think some little feeling has come into this matter. I simply cannot think that all the talk that has been made about it can be a genuine expression of criticism on this short branch of six or seven miles, at a place where there are 1,500 people, I may tell you, at the present time; where there are mines at work, and which is altogether a very flourishing community. Moreover, it is on the high road, as we all know, for extension. It goes to the 25-Mile, and on to the cement, and out towards the Wealth of Nations. It will include all that district by-and-by, as it is intended to do. It is not a railway running to Bonnie Vale and stopping. It will cost a small sum of money, and I am sure it will pay. If the people of Bonnie Vale and the people of Coolgardie can satisfy the Government that a small railway, costing about £12,000 I suppose altogether, will pay, the amount is not worth talking about. Why should we not construct it? There is another reason why the Government have gone into this matter—the one I have mentioned is the paramount reason—the other reason is that we are trying to open up the country instead of keeping people waiting all their lives for conveniences that it seems to

them they will never get. It has been generally thought, and I may have encouraged the idea to some extent, that the construction of the Coolgardie water scheme would prevent any other public works being carried out throughout the length and breadth of the colony. That idea has been industriously circulated by the opponents of the Government. They desire the people of the colony to think we have embarked on this great scheme, which is only intended, they say, for the benefit of a certain number of people on the goldfields, with the result that all the other parts of the colony must languish—that they cannot get their public works done until this work is finished. That story is very industriously circulated by the enemies of the Government; but it is not so. We find we can do other works at the same time as we carry out this great work, and more especially are we able to do this because a great many of these works are now nearing completion, and we do not want to come to a standstill. I will not press this next argument I am about to use too strongly, but I say that we have in one way and another encouraged a large number of people to come to this colony to try to earn their bread and to seek their fortunes; and are we going to close down all the works in this colony and give no employment to anyone, in order to please the hon. member opposite, who wants us to stay our hands because we have been progressing so well during the last seven years that he thinks we should not progress any more? No. The Government are not built that way. We intend to go on so long as we think there is a fair prospect of success. We have been at it for seven years, and we have not brought disaster on anyone; and I do not think the projects set forth in this Speech are likely to hurt anyone, but that, on the contrary, they will give employment to a lot of people, and will bring assistance and comfort to those who are pioneering the remote parts of this colony. As to reappropriation, I may say that it would have been quite competent for me to have brought down a Bill for the amount, and asked for an additional loan authorisation. Speaking off-hand—and I do not wish to be twitted with this hereafter, because the

financial arrangements of the Government have not been completed, and will not be completed until after the end of June—I do not think this appropriation, which will include a considerable amount for the Fremantle harbour works, as the vote we took last year was only intended to carry us on during the year, and although we have a balance in hand of £30,000 to £40,000, still we want more money during the year—taking £100,000 in addition to what we have got for the Fremantle harbour works, this work will not cost more than something like £300,000, making about £400,000 reappropriation altogether. It would have been very easy for me to have brought down a Bill to authorise the expenditure of £400,000 for this work. Few would have voted against such a Bill, but because we say we have a large amount of money belonging to these various votes, and especially to the Coolgardie water scheme, where we have one to two millions which we need not touch, and of which we will not want the last £500,000 for 18 months or nearly two years, why should we not appropriate that for our purposes at the present time? What is the difference between our passing a Bill to-day and passing it in 18 months' time? I can see no difference, except that it is better for the Government and for the people, as well as for the credit of the colony. We are not embarking in new projects before we get others out of hand. We are reappropriating from a vote which we will not want for a time, with the certain understanding that we shall come to the House in about 18 months' time and ask for this money for the Coolgardie water scheme when it is wanted there. There is, in fact, an idea in my mind that the water scheme can be carried out for two millions instead of 2½ millions. At any rate, if it cannot, I shall have to ask the House for that sum. If, on the other hand, we manage our affairs well enough, so as to make a saving upon that scheme, it will not be necessary to ask for all of it.

MR. GEORGE: You are by no means sure that the House will vote it.

THE PREMIER: They must vote it if the work is to be done. Now, what is all the noise about in respect of this £400,000 of money? A year or so ago,

when this House voted six millions of money, there was not half as much talk ; and we were not half so well off then as we are now. Anyone can see the reason of this talk—opposition to the Government, an attempt to harass and annoy the Government. There is no other reason for it. Why did they let those six millions of money go through, about eighteen months ago, without any question?

MR. LEAKE: Because we were not strong enough to stop it.

THE PREMIER: Well, you are not strong enough now.

MR. LEAKE: You are abusing your power.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We opposed it all we knew how.

THE PREMIER: I should like to know if anyone thinks we have come to the end of our borrowing powers in this colony? All I can say is that, if we felt ourselves justified in authorising the borrowing of six millions of money eighteen months ago, when our exports were very little compared with what they are now, we had stronger faith in our country than some hon. members have at the present moment.

MR. GEORGE: We have plenty of faith, but no money.

THE PREMIER: Someone asked me what we had spent upon the Fremantle harbour works. I have a note of it. The total cost up to date is £700,000 ; but included in that is a sum of over £100,000, which has been spent upon works which really do not properly belong to the Fremantle harbour works. We all knew of it years ago. I refer to the Custom House sheds and to the South Jetty at Fremantle, the cost of which was debited to the harbour works vote. Of course they were connected with the harbour in the sense that they provided proper accommodation for the traffic, especially at the time of the block, as people called it, two years ago.

MR. GEORGE: Then you were bad bookkeepers.

THE PREMIER: So that something like £600,000 is properly chargeable to the Fremantle harbour works, and there will be £200,000 more, making up the estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief. When that sum has been expended, I think we

shall be ready to accommodate the large ocean-going steamers.

MR. GEORGE: You will not, until you get that million-and-a-half tons of stone out of it.

THE PREMIER: It is not stone.

MR. GEORGE: Well, your Engineer-in-Chief says it is, and he knows better than you or I.

THE PREMIER: So that it will be something like £400,000, speaking off-hand, that we want to reappropriate. We shall know more about it when we come to consider our financial arrangements after the 30th June. And, as I said just now, if you take it all out of the 2½ millions, still, it is almost intact ; and if anyone thinks that my proposal is not a better plan than that of getting a new loan, I cannot agree with him. It would, in fact, have been very much easier to me to have asked for a £400,000 authorisation, which I am quite sure this House would have been willing to give. Now, as to our finances, I have heard a good deal from the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) about the financial position of the colony. I am glad to see that he did not seem to be afraid of the future of the colony. All he seemed to be afraid of was that the Government should spend any money. His desire seemed to be that we should stop public works—that we should stop giving employment to the people, and thus bring ourselves into discredit and disrepute, and allow the hon. member to take our places.

MR. LEAKE: Reduce taxation. That is what I said.

THE PREMIER: Now, the revenue of the colony, as the Speech says here, will not reach the estimate, but will not fall behind the revenue we received last year. It will not reach my estimate, given at the last meeting of Parliament, but it will very nearly equal the revenue received last year, and I am glad to say that the revenue is improving. Even during this month there are signs that are very reassuring ; and I hope that the revenue for the month of June will show a considerable increase on that of May. I confess at once that the revenue has not come up to our expectations, but still it is very large. It will be about 2½ millions—an immense revenue, I

think, when you consider everything; an immense revenue indeed. I know that we were a little too sanguine; but I may plead as my excuse that I was away in the other colonies and came back only a few days before Parliament met, and had not the time to give to this matter that I have had since, and therefore was not able to form as good an estimate of the future as I have on this occasion. As to our credit, we have had no trouble whatever in obtaining all the money we require for carrying on the public works of the colony. Some of these are done from revenue and others from loan account, and concerning loan works I have had no great anxiety. Some anxiety is always involved in controlling large financial operations, but I have had no great anxiety in providing sufficient money for the requirements of the colony; and I have been able to raise what money I required at 3 per cent. on short dates—two years and three years; and I do not think that is a bad state of affairs while we are waiting for the opportunity, which will come in due course when we can place an inscribed stock lien upon the London market. As to our indebtedness, the hon. member has asked a question, but he need not have asked it, because he inferred and will possibly make people think that we are in the habit of overdrawing our account at the local banks. I have been Premier and Treasurer of the colony for seven years; and with one or two exceptions—for a day or so—we have never owed the local banks a sixpence.

MR. LEAKE: Who said you did?

THE PREMIER: You seemed to think we were overdrawing with local banks.

MR. LEAKE: Who said so?

THE PREMIER: You asked a question as to whether we were indebted to the local banks.

MR. LEAKE: Well, answer it.

THE PREMIER: You know very well we do not owe them anything. I have at the present moment £400,000 in the banks here at my disposal as Treasurer, and I do not owe the London and Westminster Bank a shilling on current account. We owe them nothing. We do not owe the banks here, or the London and Westminster Bank anything, and I think

I ought to know something about this matter.

MR. LEAKE: But you never tell us.

THE PREMIER: We had £400,000 to our credit last month here, and of the £500,000 we have only had £180,000. That does not look as if we were in a pauperised condition and not able to go on with our public works. Our gold mines are improving, and our exports have increased from £1,660,226 in 1896 to £3,940,098 in 1897. That is, two and a half times more. I think next year or the year after our exports will exceed our imports, or will come up to them. As the Governor's Speech tells you, we estimate that the output of gold for the year will reach one million ounces.

MR. GEORGE: I wish it was timber.

THE PREMIER: The timber industry, the pastoral industry, and other industries are in a flourishing condition. We never had a time when they were more flourishing, and therefore what occasion is there for this croaking, and these miserable fears of the hon. member for East Perth, who ought to be a leader for his colony rather than a laggard behind?

MR. SIMPSON: There are three thousand unemployed.

THE PREMIER: I am very sorry to hear that there are, but I am Premier of this country, and am in a public position, and I have not had three men come to me.

MR. VOSPER: They cannot catch you.

THE PREMIER: I do not say there are not a number of men unemployed, but I believe the number of the unemployed is very much exaggerated, and it is made the most of by the members opposite.

MR. SIMPSON: Your own gospel writer, the *West Australian*, does it.

THE PREMIER: I know it is very tempting, and I hope, when I am in the position of the hon. member opposite, I shall not make the same mistake. No doubt it is tempting.

MR. LEAKE: You can come over here tomorrow if you like.

THE PREMIER: When the hon. members opposite make this mistake they wish, of course, to strike me. They want to hurt me and my colleagues; but in striking at me they miss their mark. They do not hurt me. They injure the colony—of course

they do not wish to do it, but they do do it. It is no new thing for the country to be disparaged. Who has disparaged the country more than the hon. member for Central Murchison did in 1894? I think the hon. member is ashamed of his pessimistic doctrines of those days. He used to tell us that the South-Western Railway business was going to bring disaster and discredit on the country, but it is a good paying line now. It is the second-best paying line in the colony, I am told. Who has been right ever since, my friends here or my friends opposite? We are going on in the same way towards prosperity. What did one hon. member say? He spoke of the Bridgetown railway and the Collie railway, and he sneered at the Collie railway because it was in the district I represent, and he knew I took some interest in getting the railway line passed. The Collie coal and the timber in that district are two of the assets of the country. The Collie coal has been proved already. The hon. member who made those remarks was either ignorant or has no faith in the country.

MR. LEAKE: What about the artesian water there?

THE PREMIER: It is a libel on the administration of the Railway Department to say that it is not paying. The Railway Department is paying very well.

MR. LEAKE: Who said the railways were not paying?

THE PREMIER: You said so.

MR. LEAKE: I said that the revenue was reduced.

THE PREMIER: When I pulled you up, you did, but not till then. You said the railways would not pay.

MR. LEAKE: That is with the new lines.

THE PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition in 1891 said that the South-Western Railway business would bring ruin on the country, whereas it has been a great benefactor to the country. I have said nearly all I have to say. This is not a want of confidence motion, but I hope it will be treated with the contempt it deserves. I hope the members who have stood by me for so many years will not allow this paltry accusation—that ruin is to come on us—to influence them, and that they will not be influenced by the mentor of the House, the hon. member

for East Perth; that they will not be influenced by the lugubrious effusion which he delivered last night; but that they will have some pluck and confidence and faith in the country. Hon. members on this side know this, that we have all pulled together well in the past; we have been on the progressive side, and we have no cause to regret it. In regard to this little extension of railways, it is nonsense to say that disaster is coming on the colony in consequence; to me it is ridiculous. If we were to be ruined by the construction of railway lines we would have been ruined long ago. Then we had the statistics of 1891 brought up to show that we were better off in 1891 than we are now. If the hon. member had an opportunity of reconsidering his speech, I think he would admit that he made a mistake. Surely we should forget the past. We have had pleasant times no doubt in the past, but to compare the past with the present, and say that the people were better off then than now, is ridiculous. There has been an advance in civilisation, an increase in comfort. Surely these things have had some influence on the people. I have only one more remark to make, and I wish to say that I resent more than I did any remarks on myself the insults which the hon. member for Albany (Mr. Lake) cast upon hon. members sitting here. They were unworthy of a gentleman of his standing, the insults and allusions to gentlemen on these benches, who give the whole of their time to the public service, and try to do the best they can for the country. Their whole desire is to try and please the people, who have placed them in their position. The hon. member made one remark about one of my colleagues being a bad lawyer. If there is one thing a man resents, if he is a lawyer, it is to be called a bad lawyer.

MR. LEAKE: I rise to explain. I said the hon. gentleman did not know the law of the colony, because he had not been here long enough.

MR. VOSPER: You could say he was a very good lawyer.

MR. LEAKE: Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the expression, and say the hon. gentleman is a good lawyer.

THE PREMIER: Then the hon. member tried to insult my colleagues. It was

unworthy of him. The hon. member comes from a time-honoured family here, and such remarks are unworthy of him, and I am sure he regrets them. The remarks were of a personal character.

MR. LEAKE: They were not personal at all.

MR. A. FORREST: What about the remarks in reference to the Hon. G. Randell?

THE PREMIER: This Address does not follow the same practice as the Address has followed in former years. The course has been to traverse the Governor's Speech in some particulars, but I understand that members in these days take exception to that, and the form of the Address has been altered so as not to commit anyone to anything. It says we have received your Excellency's Speech; we thank your Excellency for it; we will consider the whole of the matters which have been placed before us as well as any other matters which are brought under our consideration, and try to do the best we can for the colony of Western Australia. That is all. Everyone can subscribe to that. But the hon. member for Albany wants to tack on to it an attack on the Government. The hon. member knows that under ordinary conditions, with a strong Opposition, an attempt to alter the Speech would be regarded as a motion of want of confidence, although I am not prepared to accept it from him at the present time. I want a direct challenge from him as to whether the House has confidence in the Ministry, but the hon. member for Albany wishes to tack this additional paragraph on to the Governor's Speech to bring discredit on and harass and injure our administration.

MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear.

THE PREMIER: That is the object the hon. member has in view. I ask hon. members not to be trapped by the hon. member, but to rally round and stick together. Let the hon. member make a direct challenge, and see if we have the confidence of hon. members in the House. He knows that he is not on the right course. I ask hon. members again to rally round, and not allow the two or three members opposite to disparage not only us, but every member on the Government benches.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): Naturally I have listened with a vast amount of interest to the remarks made by the Premier, and I must say they bear a striking contrast to all the speeches that preceded the Premier's remarks. The debate had been exceedingly mild, but as soon as the Premier rose he made an attack upon members on these benches which reminded me of the old story of "Bombastes Furioso." I began to wonder why we should be subjected to such bullying for daring to criticise the policy of the Government. The first thing the hon. gentleman did was to make an unprovoked attack on the hon. member for South Fremantle (Mr. Solomon), who has not yet taken part in this debate. It was a gratuitous outrage, I cannot call it anything else, upon an old and respected member of the House. I am not here to defend the hon. member for South Fremantle—he is capable of doing that himself; but there is a certain disparity between the strength of the hon. member for South Fremantle and the Premier, and the right hon. gentleman should have taken that into consideration. We were subjected to another tirade of abuse heaped upon the hon. member for East Perth, and we were informed that that hon. member was endeavouring to establish a sort of dictatorship over the House. There is no necessity for that, so long as we have the right hon. the Premier at the head of the Government. There is no room for two dictators, and it is useless for anyone on this side of the House attempting to usurp the position. The right hon. the Premier went on to recapitulate what good he had done for this country, and he said the gold export had gone up, and the production of gold had increased, and we are told that these things are mainly due to the action and policy of the Government. I say that Paul Kruger might just as well have taken to himself the credit for the success of the Transvaal, as the Premier for the success of the increased production of gold here. We have a high tariff and high rates, and an attempt has been made to deprive thousands of men of their legal title to mine for gold. The goldfields remain unsettled, people can get no homes there, and they have to pay heavy taxes—all this is developing the

goldfields! I cannot see how the heavy taxation has had the effect of developing the goldfields, or in what way it has helped us to increase the gold output. The right hon. gentleman seemed to think there is a lack of desire on the part of the Opposition to recognise the good points in the Ministry as a whole. I do not think that is so, although we may not feel it necessary to go into the last seven years' history of the colony, as the Premier does every time he speaks. I give credit to the integrity, honesty of purpose, and good desire of the Premier; I should not deprive him of that credit. But there exists no necessity to praise the Government, as the members of the Government are so continually and loudly blowing their own trumpet, that no other trumpet can be heard. Then I say there has been a generous omission of matters of vital importance. Scarcely a man on this side of the House has spoken on the well-known alluvial question. I do not propose to allude to it at length, because I shall have an opportunity later on. But I say there was a flagrant attempt on the part of the Ministry to deprive men of their legal title to what was undoubtedly their right. In any other colony this would have been made the theme of debate. The Premier went on to give a description of the finances and the industries which are going on. There is an attempt on the part of the Ministry to disguise from themselves and others the state of affairs existing at present. We know that in Perth there are a great number of men unemployed, and if the Premier says he does not meet them, then I would remind him that the Premier is not so approachable as a private member, and if the Premier will throw off his personality as Premier, he will soon find there is a good deal of distress in Perth. During the adjournment for tea, I went into Hay-street and met a man, who said that if there was someone to raise a cry for a demonstration of the unemployed, there would be a roll-up of three or four hundred men round Parliament House in a very short time. Day after day members of Parliament are pestered with applications from men seeking employment. Some of them desire

to get into the civil service, some want employment on the railway, and some want employment of any kind. Most of these men bear on their bodies the evidence of hard toil, and while men are compelled to loaf about the town unable to obtain employment for earning a living, and are half-starved, there are sure to be these complaints from the unemployed. There is in fact a good deal of depression, and we know that people in business have great difficulty in collecting accounts, and they say that things were never so bad in this colony since the gold fever broke out.

THE PREMIER: There are reasons for that.

MR. VOSPER: Yes; and one reason is that the ordinary accommodation of the banks is a good deal absorbed by the requirements of the Government at the present time; and although it is said the Government have large credit balances in local banks, yet there is a scarcity of money and difficulty in getting accommodation. The right hon. gentleman told the House that the Opposition were not progressive, and that during the whole course of his career in this colony he has found them opposing every movement he has made in favour of progress. That is a statement he makes session after session; but I contend that the statement is not true. In divisions taken on the Coolgardie water scheme, the right hon. gentleman received a generous support from the Opposition side of the House as well as from other members: and when my friend the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) offered the last opposition to that scheme, he was not supported by a single member on this side of the House. We assisted the Premier at that time, and stood shoulder to shoulder in support of the scheme.

THE PREMIER: People would not stand opposition to it at that time.

MR. VOSPER: I am not so sure of that. Of course the Coolgardie water scheme looks extremely rosy when viewed through the bottom of a champagne glass, and that is the medium through which the right hon. gentleman usually gauges public opinion; but if he were to try to elicit the opinion of men on the goldfields by addressing

them, say, from a balcony, on this water scheme, he would probably find that the opinion in its favour is not so unanimous as he supposes it to be. We were told there was no intention on the part of the Government to conciliate the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) in supporting the proposed railway to Bonnie Vale. I am prepared to believe that is so, although I am aware, and it is a significant fact, that just after Coolgardie ceased to be the leading opposition town in the colony, and had "licked the shoe" of the right hon. gentleman, the Governor's Speech comes out with the promise of a railway to Bonnie Vale. When the Premier disclaims any intention to conciliate the member for Coolgardie, we may take it that his object is not so much to secure promises for the future as to reward services in the past. A comparison has been made between the proposed line to Bonnie Vale and the short line from Kalgoorlie to the Boulder. I am not inclined to offer strong opposition to the Bonnie Vale railway, for I look upon it as the beginning of a railway which will ultimately develop a line of country to Black Flag and in that direction; but there is a great difference between that railway and the Boulder line, for the Boulder line is some four miles long, touching at several mines on the route, whereas a line to Bonnie Vale will be about double the length, and will go through country in which practically there is no settlement at present. At Bonnie Vale there are a few mines, which are of very doubtful value indeed. The Westralia mine is a good property, although its crushings have been going down to the vanishing point. As to the action of Geraldton in seeking to protect its own interests as a port town connected with the goldfields, and in reference to the route to be adopted by the railway to Mount Leonora as compared with a line from Mount Magnet in the Murchison district, one cannot wonder at that kind of feeling on the part of people in Geraldton, when we see in the Speech of the Governor that it is said the proposed line will also tap the East Murchison goldfields. It seems to me the natural outlet for all the trade of the East Murchison goldfields is at Geraldton. If this railway

to Mount Leonora were part of a great scheme for connecting Geraldton with the south-east goldfields and for connecting the south-east goldfields with Geraldton, there would not be the same objection to the route now proposed for a railway to Mount Leonora. I agree that Mount Margaret and Mount Leonora, as goldfield districts, deserve in themselves a railway; but the Government are depriving the town of Geraldton of its actual trade rights. Of course we are told by the right hon. gentleman that railways are for the people of the colony, and not for the people of any particular district. It does seem that, in the case of people of Esperance, the Norseman railway is not to be for them. It is contended also that Norseman will be in as good a position when the line is constructed as Menzies is to-day in regard to railway facilities; but I say that if the full natural facilities of Norseman were allowed to operate, Norseman would progress far more by having a railway connected with Esperance than by having a railway over the much longer route by way of Coolgardie and the coast at Fremantle. As Norseman is geographically in a far better position than Menzies, it seems to be the aim of the Government to bring all things down to one dead level, and that although one place may have greater natural advantages than another, yet it shall not have the benefit of those advantages. If it is justifiable to take people four or five hundred miles further round from the coast to their destination or *vice versa*, to benefit the people of Perth and Fremantle, it is at least equally justifiable to construct a railway for the benefit of people who are settled at Esperance. The natural channel of trade for the Coolgardie goldfields lies from the port of Esperance rather than from Fremantle, therefore the Norseman goldfields trade should go to Esperance, and to Esperance only. We have been told that the Esperance line will not pay. That may be so, but as the leader of the Opposition has pointed out, the line that is now proposed will go from a dry country to a dry country, and there will be water difficulties which must cause a continual expense; and he pointed out also that we shall have to pay extra freights on

the railway, in order to make up for the extra expense caused by water difficulties through a dry country. If you construct a railway from Esperance to Norseman, you will at least have the advantage of getting water by sinking anywhere over at least 80 miles of country northward of Esperance.

THE PREMIER: How far, do you say?

MR. VOSPER: You can get fresh water over the first 30 miles from Esperance, and you can get brackish water, mostly fit for stock, over 80 miles from Esperance.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Brackish water for railway engines!

MR. VOSPER: I do not say that all the water which can be got in the first 80 miles from Esperance will be suitable for railway engines; still, it is a very big argument in favour of the Esperance route that water can be obtained over the first 80 miles from Esperance. The Premier has made an appeal to the House not to support the Opposition in preventing him from carrying on a policy of public works which will give employment to people in the colony. Now I do think that, if there is a weak argument which can be advanced in favour of a policy of public works, it is this one; and if anyone will read the works of persons who have studied national finance, they will find that borrowing money to carry on public works for the purpose of giving employment to people in a country, and thus attracting more people to go there, is the one thing that is more dangerous than any other that can be conceived in connection with national finance. Yet we have the Premier advocating a policy of borrowing and spending for the purpose of providing employment in the country. It means that you are to continue going to the London market, or to financial institutions in this colony, for the purpose of borrowing money to carry on works for employing people in the country. If the Premier does not know that the resources of the country are great enough to keep people employed without this means, then he has no justification in resorting to plans which are ruinous in themselves. In reference to the reappropriations which have been indicated in the Speech, the whole business looks delightfully simple

on the face of it. It is like the silver question over again, for, as one authority has put it, you have only to take a shilling and call it half-a-crown, pay your debts with it, and the thing is done. That is the free silver scheme. We are asked first to borrow money for carrying out a certain scheme; then we are asked to reappropriate part of that money to some other scheme, upon a promise that the reappropriation shall be repaid by borrowing again at a later date; but when the time comes for borrowing at a later date in order to make up for the money reappropriated to other schemes, what guarantee has the right hon. gentleman that he will be able to borrow, say two years hence, on favourable terms? Other colonies have done this, and have suffered for it, and it is very probable we shall suffer likewise. The Premier has told the House that the revenue has fallen off in the last year. Is that not a reason for thinking carefully before launching out into additional public works? We have no guarantee that the revenue will improve again immediately, and the signs of improvement, if any, are microscopic. Therefore it is only reasonable to ask that a little caution shall be exhibited. We say that with the revenue falling and with the possibility of a deficit in the near future, it is desirable to proceed with caution. The Premier has told us we do not owe the local banks anything. Well, I know a firm in Perth to which the Government owe hundreds of pounds, and the firm cannot get the money. I know that to one firm the Government owe £163, and that has been owing for the last three months, and the firm cannot get the money. If it be true that the Government have money lying to their credit in local banks, why do they not pay what they owe to tradesmen in the place, and why is not the trade of this town stimulated by the circulation of the surplus money which is said to be lying in the banks? I know as a fact that the evidence taken before the Mining Commission was ordered to be printed by a firm in Perth, that it was printed, and that the firm are holding the printed evidence back and will not hand it over until the Government "ante up," as the firm have not been able to get payment for the work. I know that

a letter was sent by that firm to the secretary of the Mining Commission, only a few days ago, stating that the work would not be handed over until the money was paid.

THE PREMIER: You ought to know all about that transaction.

MR. VOSPER: I want to disabuse the Premier's mind of the idea that I have anything to do with that transaction. I am not a partner in the firm, and my only connection with it is that I pay some £30 a week for work done. If the Government have really credit balances lying in the banks, it would be more honourable if the Government would pay their accounts. I know that at this time the Government are owing thousands of pounds in this way; and, if they have money lying in the banks, it is a dishonourable proceeding to keep it there and not to pay these people who have done work or supplied goods for the Government. The Collie coalfield, we are told, is a great asset; but, on the other hand, we know it is one from which the country has up to the present realised nothing. We have built a railway at the cost of about £150,000, and not a thousand tons of coal have yet come down from that coalfield. It is found also that, by sinking, artesian water is struck all over the place. I look upon that field, as an asset of the colony, with considerable doubt; and, after twice visiting the field, I have come to the conclusion that it is a place which one may best leave alone. Finally, I would like to ask this House what reply has been given, in the Premier's remarks, to the criticisms which have come from this side of the House? In the case of the member for the Murray (Mr. George), we had a most explicit and destructive criticism, denouncing the Government's extravagance from a practical standpoint; yet we have had no reply to that. The right hon. gentleman told the people at Esperance it would not do to run this Government by six men, and that it must necessarily be a one-man Government; therefore we are perfectly justified in placing the whole responsibility on his shoulders. The same applies to the remarks of the member for East Perth (Mr. James). He certainly indulged in a line of argument which the Premier did not attempt to refute or re-

but. The Premier simply told the member for East Perth that he was a dishonour to the country.

THE PREMIER: Oh, no.

MR. VOSPER: That he had done himself no credit by the remarks he had made, and so forth. The right hon. gentleman indulged in a series of assertions without a single atom of proof, or any attempt to reply to the leader of the Opposition. Of course, it was a very excellent rallying cry for the members on the Government benches; but we know that they do not want any rallying. It is absolutely superfluous. I think it would be more conducive to the Premier's health if he were to spare himself that kind of exercise.

MR. LEAKE: They are like the Ministers—they do what they are told.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: And your party do the same.

MR. LEAKE: No; we confer.

MR. VOSPER: It would be impossible to find a body of men anywhere more thoroughly under control. They have all the characteristics of a troop of soldiers; and a very "awkward squad" they are, too.

THE PREMIER: I think the "awkward squad" is on the other side.

MR. VOSPER: We suffer, over here, from a lack of discipline. We have minds of our own, such as they are.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: All leaders.

MR. VOSPER: I will just add a word or two about the Speech itself. I have already said that I think the remarks of the right hon. gentleman consisted mainly of "sound and fury, signifying nothing." They suggested to me, not that Sir John Forrest was addressing the House, but rather Bombastes Furioso. There is a story told about Mark Twain, the American humourist. When going through the state of Louisiana, he visited a large sugar mill, and was shown the various processes through which the material goes in the course of refining. Last of all, he came to a large vacuum pan. Mark Twain knew nothing about a vacuum pan, so he said: "I suppose that is intended for the purpose of extracting the vacuum?" That is exactly the position we occupy at the present time.

We have to extract the vacuum out of the Governor's Speech. Out of vacancy we have to extract vacuum, and of course nothing will remain.

A MEMBER: It is "sugar" you are after.

MR. VOSPER: We do not get much of it over here. If there was ever a document prepared by any Government which exhibited the art of saying nothing at all in a great many words, this is that document. It is simply a compilation of stale and half-forgotten history—a mere mass of verbiage intended to confuse the intellect and bewilder criticism. But there are some things in the course of the Speech—empty though it is—that demand comment owing to the very bland and mild manner in which they are put forth. For example, take paragraph 16. Fancy having to wade through fifteen clauses before you can find anything worth striking at! Paragraph 16 deals with the provision of public batteries for the goldfields—the erection of ten-head batteries at Tuckanarra and Lennonville on the Murchison, also at Mulline, Mount Ida, and Mount Leonora on the North Coolgardie goldfield, and at Yalgoo, Norseman, and Pilbarra. That is the sum total of what has been done in connection with public batteries. Now this is very remarkable. There is one here, that at Tuckanarra, on which I congratulate my friend the member for North Murchison (Mr. Kenny). My friend the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) has also secured a battery. And these two are the only batteries which have been erected on any part of the goldfields represented by Opposition members. I do not say this is done on purpose, but it is very remarkable.

MR. A. FORREST: The Government members have not got any.

MR. VOSPER: Pardon me, sir; my friend the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) has got three; the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly) has also got one, and possibly by his vote on this division he will have earned that one. I have too much sympathy with the member for Dundas to say much to dishearten him. I wish to let him down lightly, because, heaven knows, he wants it!

MR. LEAKE: He has been deserted by his friends.

MR. VOSPER: A number of bills are initiated in this Speech, and are described as useful measures, dealing with the goldfields, the electoral machinery, trade unions, and other matters. I hope the Goldfields Bill will be based upon more common-sense lines than the Act we have at present, and that a great portion of the recommendations contained in the Report of the Royal Commission on the Goldfields will be severely left alone—in fact ignored—by this House, for I am perfectly certain that their suggestions, though embodying much that is useful, contain much that is absolutely dangerous to the industry. With regard to the Electoral Bill, members of the Opposition are placed in a complete quandary. I would like to criticise the Government's electoral policy as well as their goldfields policy.

THE PREMIER: You will have a chance when the Bill is brought in.

MR. VOSPER: I will have a chance when the Bill is introduced, but I have no opportunity now; and, in every other country that calls itself civilised, members are given an opportunity of doing so at the commencement of the session. It is merely blunting Parliament to keep us in the dark as to all these matters until the Bills have been placed on the table of the House.

MR. LEAKE: It does not give us a chance. They are absolutely unfair.

MR. VOSPER: I have been advocating electoral reform in this colony ever since I first had anything to do with public life in it; and yet now, after the House has been sitting nearly a week, I do not know whether I shall have to support the Government or oppose them in respect of the Electoral Bill. But, judging from the traps they have laid for the unwary voter in the past, I think I shall have to oppose it. If it is no better than that which has preceded it, I can promise the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues that I shall do everything I can to keep it off the statute book. Another measure proposed is a Trade Union Bill. I am glad to see the Government resolved to grapple with this question, because it is one which wants grappling with. It is certainly an anomaly and an anachronism that we should still have in force in this colony the old statutes—I suppose of

George IV.—which make it a criminal conspiracy for men to combine to maintain a fair rate of wages. But there again we are blocked. The hon. the Attorney-General said last session, in reply to a question of mine, that the Government did intend to introduce a Trade Union Bill which would probably be modelled on the law in force at the present time in Queensland. If that is the case; if that intention is carried out; if the Government take for their model the law of Queensland—an Act which was deliberately framed, not for the regulation and support of trade unionism but for its downright suppression, then it will be the duty of every man who wishes to be just to the working classes and who respects the right of combination to do his best to oppose it. I hope the Government will think better of the proposal, and try to find a more worthy model than the Queensland Act. Surely the right hon. gentleman, who is so fond of citing the case of the mother country, will, in matters of labour legislation, take his example from that source. Surely we need not go to Queensland, where the whole labour question is obscured by party feeling. If we are to have a Trade Union Act in this colony at all, it should certainly be based on much more liberal lines than the Queensland law. Ever since the present Queen came to the throne, the British Parliament has honourably distinguished itself by social and industrial legislation; and everything it has done has tended to raise the workman higher and higher and to put him in a better position. And if we are to do anything in that direction here, it is clear that we should go to England for our examples, and not to a reactionary colony like Queensland, which is governed by a class of people concerning whom it would not be quite parliamentary to express my opinion. I want to deal now with this paragraph in reference to the railway policy of the Government, which was to be made the subject of a vote of want of confidence. This paragraph 25 contains, perhaps, the most interesting matter in the whole Speech. And first of all we are faced by a promise—or by an alleged promise—made by the Premier. The Premier is rather free with his promises; and I will do him the credit of saying that he keeps a very large pro-

portion of them, if he does not keep them all. But in this particular case the Premier is charged with having made a promise to the people of Esperance which he has not since granted. I admit he has denied the accuracy of the statement. It is said the right hon. gentleman told the member for Plantagenet (Mr. Hassell) that a railway, if ever constructed at all to Norseman, would start at Esperance; and the people of Esperance have been buoyed up by the hope of it. The hon. member for Plantagenet will say exactly how it was that he came to delude the people of Esperance by repeating to them this promise. We are bound to accept the Premier's word, and also that of the member for Plantagenet. We can only suppose there has been some kind of misunderstanding. How far that misunderstanding has gone may be judged from the fact that the Mayor of Esperance, who very hospitably entertained the Premier during his last visit there, said recently that:

In April, 1896, Sir John, in an interview with Mr. Hassell, then member for the district, said that the Government were willing to propose the construction of the line to Norseman whenever it was shown clearly that the field was good enough to justify the expenditure. They were not in favour of constructing it from Coolgardie, and when they proposed it it would have to start from Esperance. In December, 1897, Sir John further said he would go so far as to say that if he could not actually favour railway communication, he would at least provide a more expeditious means of transit between Esperance and the goldfields than now exists. He was very pleased with the recent gold returns from Norseman, and he still further said that Esperance was the port of the goldfields. Well, this is what he said some months ago. Had he carried out his promise?

Then follows a series of very obnoxious and highly uncomplimentary remarks in regard to the Premier, which I shall not go to the trouble of repeating. But, at all events it is safe to say this with regard to Esperance, that whatever promise has been made in words, there has always been a promise by implication. The right hon. gentleman said that Esperance was the port of the Norseman goldfield; and, having said that, one would think he would endeavour to give effect to it by legislation. Besides this, there is a further implication in connection with the huge public works constructed at Esperance itself. No less a sum than £40,000 has

been spent at Esperance. An hon. member tells me that £60,000 has been spent there. I wired to the Mayor of Esperance for a statement showing the amount spent on public works there, and he told me £40,000. However, on the authority of the member for the district (Mr. Conolly), I will say £60,000. The land sold there was bought by the people of Esperance at a total cost of £20,000. Now, I want to know, if it was not the intention of the Government to treat Esperance justly and fairly, why did they build a Customs shed? Why the harbour opened up for navigation? Why the huge jetty? What was the Customs House for? Why allow the people to pay £20,000 for their land? Would it not have been more honourable to the Government had the Premier said to these people: We do not intend to do anything for this district; we do not intend to promote its advancement. If you build here, you do so at your own risk. If those people had been treated in that way they would never have been so foolish as to sink their capital there. The mere fact that they have spent £20,000 in land alone is a pretty good indication that they have spent at least three times as much in other ways. The policy of the Government all through has been in favour of Esperance; and now, all of a sudden, the people of this place are thrown overboard; and not only the inhabitants of the town, but many firms elsewhere who have sunk their capital in it. It is not as if this place was suddenly discovered to be a bad port. On the contrary, we have all kinds of authorities to show that the port is a good one. The report of Commander Coombe, of H.M.S. "Waterwitch," is most emphatic upon this point. I do not intend to trouble the House with the whole of the report, but I will give a portion of it at all events. The *Esperance Times* writes:—

The long-expected Admiralty chart of the coast in the vicinity of Esperance has come to hand. Commander Coombe, of H.M.S. *Waterwitch*, has very courteously supplied the chairman of the municipality with two copies of the chart. The chart indicates that an extraordinary minute and painstaking survey of the bay and the channels ramifying between the various islands out to the sea highway has been made. The plan shows, among other things, that deep water could have been reached with a much smaller length of jetty than has been constructed. Had the jetty

been started at Hannett's Point, not far below Burns, Philp and Co's. warehouse, 40 feet of water could have been reached in considerably less distance than it has taken to reach 19 feet of water with the present jetty.

Even in so remote a district as Esperance, the Public Works Department could not lose the opportunity of wasting a lot of money. The soundings go to show it; and the soundings, if the Premier will permit me to say so, are far sounder than his assertions. The report goes on to state that the harbour is comparatively a safe and commodious one. No one would dream, of course, of comparing it with Albany, that paragon of ports, or with Fremantle. It is not so convenient as Albany; but it is a decent harbour as harbours go. I notice that the right hon. gentleman himself, in the days when he was a great explorer, was just as fond of posing as a prophet as he is now-a-days, when he is a great politician. I have here a volume entitled "Explorations in Australia, by John Forrest," with a not very flattering portrait of the author as a frontispiece. Speaking of Esperance Bay, the right hon. gentleman says:—

The Messrs. Dempster, whose hospitality was so welcome, are good specimens of the enterprising settlers who are continually advancing the frontiers of civilisation, pushing forward into almost unknown regions, and establishing homesteads which hereafter may develop into important towns.

Here is a case in which the right hon. gentleman has proved a true prophet. The place has developed into a township. Pioneers of civilisation have changed that place from an ordinary sheep station into a town: and now the Premier's policy is to falsify his own predictions, destroy his own reputation as a prophet, and upset the work which his own Government have been so busily engaged in establishing for the last five years. If the right hon. gentleman saw so clearly at that time what the possibilities of Esperance were, we may take it that they are even greater now: and yet, with a stroke of the pen—with a full knowledge of the consequences of what he is doing—the Premier, in spite of all he has done for Esperance in the past, has said that Esperance must no longer exist. I think these people at Esperance are entitled to a little consideration, as well as the people of Norseman. We are

always talking of how Norseman has done this and that and the other thing. But what is it that has kept Norseman alive? Someone on the Government benches interjected during the evening that our ambition was to give the trade of that place to Adelaide. Well, at any rate, Adelaide should have the credit of supporting the Norseman field until it was capable of maintaining itself. Three-fourths of the capital has been borrowed; and the balance, it is safe to say, has come from Adelaide people who have settled in Esperance. I do think that, of all the shameless spectacles which we have witnessed in the domain of local politics, the throwing over of Esperance by the Norseman people is one of the worst. Now that Norseman has become sufficiently prosperous to be able to support itself and to win the heart of the Government, it deliberately throws over the place which was practically its parent. I think that Norseman, in consenting to degrade itself in this matter by accepting the Government proposals, is doing itself a grave injury. The hon. member for Albany has referred to the question of refractory ores being treated at Esperance when found anywhere along the line to Norseman. That is not only true in regard to the refractory ores found at Norseman, but in regard to other ores. It has been found that the Seabrook battery is not doing all that is expected of it because of the high freight and charges. If the line were constructed to Esperance the ore could be taken there to be treated, as there would be plenty of facility for treating the ore there, not only from Norseman, but from Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie and other places. But Norseman ores can never go to Seabrook (NORTHAM), seeing that Coolgardie already finds the distance prohibitive. It was urged on me and other members of the Opposition, not by any member of the Government, that there are certain gold-mining centres between Coolgardie and Norseman which deserve consideration. What are these gold-mining centres? There is Widgemooltha: the hon. gentleman referred to that place and said it contained 1,500 miners some time ago. In this country the reefs are broken to pieces: they have been so treated by

nature that the gold is only found in "pockets." There may be a rush there now and again, but Widgemooltha will never be a profitable and permanent gold-field. The same thing applied to the neighbourhood of Londonderry and to other places between Widgemooltha and Norseman. Red Hill is 25 miles from the railway. If the Government wanted to serve the settlers of Coolgardie and these centres they should have proposed the line to start from Kalgoorlie. We never hear anything from the Premier without being told that he is anxious to promote settlement and to bring miners' families over here. And I think the Premier is sincere in that. A man cannot take his wife and family on to the goldfields, as there is a scarcity of water, which the hon. gentleman will try to overcome within the next three years, or 30 years. Then there are the price of food and the climate. Norseman is as bad a place to live in, or worse, as Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. If this railway were built to Esperance that town would have been used as the sanatorium of the goldfields of this country. Men would then bring their families over to the fields, as there would be a cheap and handy means of their families recruiting their health at Esperance.

MR. HOLMES: They can go to Fremantle.

MR. VOSPER: Yes, they can go to Fremantle, but they have to travel 400 miles to get there. If the Esperance line were built, the people could reach the seaside by travelling 200 miles from Coolgardie. And by settling families around Esperance a large quantity of soil would be cultivated. Then there is the cost of transit to Norseman to be considered when the railway is constructed. The railway freight from Fremantle to Coolgardie may be averaged at about £4 per ton. I suppose we can take that as the average freight of all goods, and we have it on the authority of an hon. member in another place who has recently been returned for Coolgardie that Norseman would only pay 7s. a ton more, so that the total would be £4 7s. per ton. The inhabitants of Norseman number 2,000 souls, and if we estimate that these people will each consume five tons of material per year, that means that there would be 10,000 tons of food stuff to be

carried on the railway per annum, which at £4 7s. per ton means £43,500. Whereas a line from Esperance, with half the cost of construction, would carry the goods at 30s. per ton. There is only a distance of 120 miles, and the cost would be £15,000 a year. This favour which Norseman is to get from the Government will cost that town £28,500 per annum more than communication should do. The people would save some £35,000 a year if communication was given to them from their natural port. I say that is a heavy price to pay for a gift. In this calculation I have not said anything about the delays and the trouble consequent upon having 600 miles more shipping to do. It is all very well to say we are going to give the trade to Adelaide. At present three-fourths of the trade comes from Adelaide.

MR. HIGHAM: Not from Adelaide.

MR. VOSPER: Well, I will substitute the eastern colonies for Adelaide. When a man rises in this House and says that the Esperance railway will benefit Adelaide, he means the eastern colonies generally. At present the eastern colonies are getting that trade. The people of Norseman must suffer loss of time and money by the fact of there being 400 miles of railway and 600 miles of sea traffic extra. Trade will be taken out of its course not only 400 miles but 1,200 miles. But leaving all those considerations out of the question, let us look at the matter from a purely economic standpoint. All economic writers will tell you that it is against the interests of every country to divert traffic from its natural port. Diverting trade 1,200 miles is like pumping water up hill. In the face of all this, can we consent to pass a line of this kind? If hon. members will refer to any political work, they will see for themselves that it is laid down as an axiom that any attempt to divert commerce is disastrous to a country. After this, it is a small consideration to point out that this line to Norseman will destroy one of the most flourishing towns in Western Australia. Not only has the country derived £20,000 for land from the district of Esperance, but from Customs at the port of Esperance in 1895 the Gov-

ernment received £10,788 2s. 7d., and in 1896 £34,394 12s. 6d. I say that no port in the colony has increased at such a rapid rate. When this increase was taking place, every shipmaster went in the port at the risk of his life and cargo. The trade of this little town trebled itself in twelve months. The internal revenue from this district in the two years 1895-6, not including Norseman, was £8,453 17s. 5d. In April, 1896, Esperance contained 1,000 people, 222 of whom were ratepayers, and the annual ratable value of the property at Esperance was £9,976. All this has to be destroyed; and this town, which is a source of revenue to Western Australia, and which has done Western Australia a favour by coming into existence, is to be swept away.

MR. JAMES: Esperance reached that position independent of a railway; what what would it do with one?

MR. VOSPER: When you once commence a railway from Coolgardie to tap the back country on which Esperance depends, then you damage the place. The Premier could not have done Esperance much more harm than proposing to take a line to Norseman. Simon Sterne says:—

If the organisation of the legislative body or the practice which has grown up under its procedure results in the domination of individuals or personal interests, instead of general public weal, the laws of that community received from such a body are sure to be inharmonious and mischievous.

I say the whole of the Esperance-Norseman trouble has been brought about by vested selfish interests. Esperance is being sacrificed for the interests of the people of Fremantle. There has been no attempt to do this for the good of the country. The Government is simply trying to divert the traffic of the country 1,200 miles out of its course to please a handful of people. This railway proposal must receive the condemnation of an unprejudiced body of men, but I do not think it will receive the condemnation of this House. I come now to another matter—a grievance which affects the whole of the goldfields, and upon which no comments have been made at all. One would have imagined that the people on the goldfields and in the colony generally suffered enough with-

out having to suffer indirect taxation. The taxation has steadily increased, by reason of the greater consumption of dutiable goods, and one would have thought this would have been sufficient to satisfy the Government. The Government have spent the money rashly, and at last have outrun the constable, and being in a desperate position they find they must raise revenue somehow. How shall we do it—raise the railway rates on produce going to the goldfields? Simple, and so far effectual. I know that if anyone attempts to say anything about these rates, one is liable to be sneered at and to be told the figures are inaccurate; but I have taken a lot of trouble to get figures which I believe to be accurate, having obtained them from one of the leading business firms at Kalgoorlie, and from other persons engaged in the goldfields trade. These particulars show the increase in the railway rates to be—for carrying galvanised iron from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie, £1 5s. 1d. per ton increase; groceries, from £1 5s. to £2 6s. per ton; flour, 10 per cent.; chaff, oats, bran, maize, pollard, and wheat, 10 per cent.; preserved fish, from £2 17s 4d. to £5 3s. 4d., or 80 per cent.; coffee, currants, and raisins, increased 80 per cent.; preserved meats, raised from £2 17s 4d. to £4 2s. 5d.; bacon, on which there is a duty of 3d. a pound, butter, with a duty of 2d., and cheese, with a duty of 3d., are increased in the railway rates practically one farthing per pound; sago is increased from £2 17s 4d. to £5 3s. 4d. per ton; rice, from £2 17s 4d. to £4 2s 5d.; tinned fruits about a halfpenny per pound increase; and so on with almost everything else. A few articles were left alone. For example, kerosene was not interfered with, and I fancy the right hon. the Premier must have a particular fancy for kerosene, for he told the people on the goldfields some two years ago that the Government had reduced the import rates on wool bales, on fencing wire, and on kerosene. The Premier was told at the time that people on the goldfields did not clothe themselves in wool bales, nor feed themselves with fencing wire, nor drink kerosene. Of course the Perth merchants will be affected as well as those

on the goldfields, and I have heard that one establishment in Perth has had to spend over £40 this very day on account of the increase in railway rates. I say this is an unjust form of taxation—an iniquitous thing to do, for it is a form of taxation which is unauthorised by Parliament, and is imposed without the consent of Parliament. This is using the railways of the colony as a machinery for increasing the burdens of the people. When the ubiquitous reporter went to the ever-obliging Commissioner of Railways, asking for his explanation of the increase of railway rates, the Commissioner first of all replied that the railway rates to the goldfields had been increased because the back loading which was formerly anticipated had not been coming to the railway. I believe, however, that there has been back loading for the railway, if only the Commissioner would take it. It will be remembered that I said something in the House last session about the way in which Kalgoorlie mine-owners were being treated by the Railway Department in reference to back loading. When passing through Kanowna I noticed hundreds of stacks of bags of ore standing on the railway, and when I inquired why the ore was left there, I learned there had been some difficulty about the rates for carriage; and ultimately, between the contractor who had undertaken to crush the ore and the Commissioner of Railways, who had undertaken to carry it, the stuff was not crushed at Northam, and the owners of it had to pay about twice as much for getting it crushed elsewhere. In other cases the Commissioner of Railways refused to insure ore against loss in transit from Kanowna and Kalgoorlie to the coast, and the result was that rich ore was lost at various places, and the owners of the particular mines were materially affected by losses in transit.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We did not refuse to insure the ore. We offered to carry it at the "D" rate instead of the mineral rate.

MR. VOSPER: Yes, and the beastly, sordid, commercial-minded people on the goldfields would not pay the increased charge, because they considered their own interests first in the matter. I do not blame the mine-owners for being selfish; and as to the Government posing as

philanthropists, it is not my object at all to say they should do so, but rather that they should endeavour, by the services they perform for the public, to assist in developing the resources of the colony in every practical way. They cannot do it in this way, and I say the rate charged for carrying ore by rail is prohibitive. There is another industry which broke out there about that time, and that is the cutting of sandalwood. I know merchants on the goldfields approached the Commissioner of Railways, asking him to concede special rates for the carriage of sandalwood, but he refused to do so. I know there were hundreds of tons cut, but not sent away, and many more hundreds of tons would have been cut, but people were prevented from pursuing this industry, because of the prohibitive railway charges.

MR. GEORGE: Because of large stocks held by other people.

MR. VOSPER: That may be so. The Commissioner of Railways has informed us, in justification of these things, that the Railway Department has been paying more for fuel to run the engines than is paid for fuel in the eastern colonies, and he gives this as one reason for charging higher rates. Then when the Premier comes before this House, he has not words strong enough in his eulogy of the Collie coalfield: but why do not the Government do something with the coal that is alleged to be there? If other owners of mining areas on that field will not get out the coal and send it to market, why do not the Government open what is called the Government mine there, and get enough coal for every-day use, or enough to assist in the working of the railways? It was said also that the rates were put up on account of the dry weather and the great cost of carrying water by railway for the use of engines going to and from the goldfields: but the rain has come down since then, and it has fallen so heavily on the goldfields that some of the towns have been in a condition of slush; and although the rates were put up because the country was dry, yet now that the country is wet and people on the goldfields are walking through slush, the railway rates have not come down. We were told also that the railway rates in this colony are less than those of New South Wales. That is a

specious argument; for I say the people in New South Wales are not hampered with our customs tariff, and have not to pay so heavily for what they eat and what they require.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: New South Wales had the tariff at the time these rates were put on.

MR. VOSPER: I think I can challenge the Commissioner of Railways to prove that any individual has to contribute as much in New South Wales as individuals have to pay here. Our railways are among the most profitable that exist in the colonies, and there is the less reason for raising rates here. The worst feature of the case is that the rates apply to the goldfields railways alone.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: No, no; they apply to every railway in the colony.

MR. VOSPER: If that is so, the position is altered; but, if even these increased rates apply to all the railways in the colony, yet, as the goldfields contribute the largest portion of the whole traffic, they must pay the largest share of these increases. Let us go into the history of railways in this colony; for, if I dealt with the results of this year only, I should probably be told the position was different last year, and would be different next year; therefore, I will take a series of years as a basis and a criterion. Up to 1890 the Eastern Railway did not pay—that will be admitted. In 1891, which was the period of the gold discovery on the eastern fields, the tide began to turn, and a profit began to appear and to increase in the working of that railway, until in 1897 the profit for the year had risen to £116,313, or over 30 per cent. on the gross earnings. Last year the Eastern Railway paid 30 per cent. on the gross earnings; and, as that is the line to our goldfields, surely there was very little justification for increasing the rates. The Yilgarn railway (from Northam eastward) in 1895, 1896, and 1897 earned £383,365, or over 50 per cent. on gross earnings.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: We had double rates then.

MR. VOSPER: I know you had; but, because the Government robbed the goldfields yesterday, and are robbing them to-day, is that any reason why this House should consent to their being robbed to-

morrow? We were robbed shamefully; and because we were compelled to pay "through the nose" for our goods at the time, that is no reason why we should be compelled to pay now. At that time there was no opportunity of protesting in this House; but now there are several members representing those goldfields here. The South-Western Railway, which was talked of as being the second most profitable line in the colony, has made a profit of only £30,482, or 19 per cent. on the gross earnings in seven years. That cannot be called a profitable railway.

THE PREMIER: At the present time?

MR. VOSPER: Yes. The profit made hitherto is not very large in seven years.

THE PREMIER: That railway has not been running seven years, nor anything like that time.

MR. VOSPER: I do not know how long exactly, but I find from the returns that the total profit earned is £30,482. The Northern railway (Geraldton district), from 1881 to 1893, earned only £15,540; but from 1894 to 1897 it earned £25,751, or 21 per cent. on gross earnings. These figures go to show that the one thing which has helped our railways to pay is the goldfields. Two things which have helped the Bunbury (South-Western) railway to pay are the existence of the goldfields trade and the existence of the timber trade; and were it not for the goldfields, there would not be nearly so much produce or so much timber sent along that railway.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The goldfields railways are the worst-paying lines we have, during the last five months.

MR. VOSPER: That is because you have made dams in wrong places on the goldfields—made them in porous rock and in wrong soils. It is well known on the goldfields that wherever there is a place that water is not likely to flow into, there a dam is made by the Works Department. I know dams all over the goldfields where a person would be absolutely barred, by the muddy ground, from getting up to them; but, having got to the dams, you would find no water in them. Many of the dams are not sufficiently large, at any rate. If the Public Works Department makes mistakes of this kind, it is not the department that suffers, but the unfortunate people on the goldfields, who

have to pay for them. If a process could be devised by which you would pay them yourself, we would not mind so much; but we have to pay the piper every time you choose to dance.

MR. HUBBLE: You grumbled before you got them, and now you grumble when you have got them.

MR. LEAKE: We grumbled because they cost twice the amount of the estimate.

MR. VOSPER: As a matter of fact, we have a perfect right to grumble. An Englishman's most cherished right is the right to grumble, and I am going to grumble with all my might and main—and don't you forget it. I was sent here to grumble, and I have to do my duty. It is a very difficult duty to perform, but, at the same time, the work has got to be done. It is an unpleasant task, but it has to be accomplished somehow. I will not trouble the House any further on this subject. I have said all I want to say on the Loans Reappropriation Bill, and that matter has already been far more ably dealt with than it can be by me. But I would say this, that there is something in the length, the almost interminable length, of the Governor's Speech, which reminds me of Euclid's definition of a line—length without breadth. There is very little breadth of thought in it, certainly. If there is nothing else in it but the way in which Esperance has been treated—the uneconomical idea of diverting traffic some twelve hundred miles out of its proper route, and the fact that there is no mention of any attempt to remedy the evils which have been created on the goldfields by the alluvial dispute yet, the fact that there is no mention of the increased railway rates which have been imposed upon the people without their consent and to their very great loss and detriment is quite sufficient, I think, to justify me as a member of this House in supporting the amendment to the Address-in-Reply which has been proposed by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake). I certainly think that the goldfields have every reason to cry out against the gross injustice of the Government, who are prepared to sacrifice Esperance to the requirements of a few property owners in this portion of the colony. It is a gross injustice, and one which the eternal laws of political

economy have clearly ordained that they must suffer for sooner or later.

MR. HASSELL (Plantagenet): The hon. gentleman who has just sat down mentioned a certain statement as having been made by me. I simply repeat that statement. The Premier made a statement to me, which I made at Esperance, that when the circumstances of the Norseman goldfield warranted a railway, the railway would be made between Esperance and Norseman.

THE PREMIER: I do not want to get into a controversy about this. Perhaps I may be allowed to explain what my views of this question have been. I do not know when the conversation referred to by the hon. gentleman took place, but I may say this, that I stated in this House last session—

MR. LEAKE: I rise to a point of order. Is this a proper time for such a statement?

THE SPEAKER: I think the hon. member may be permitted to make an explanation.

THE PREMIER: It is an explanation, and nothing more. I do not remember when the conversation took place, and all I can say is that as far as my memory goes I have no recollection of having made the statement. I am quite sure the hon. gentleman is too old a friend of mine to say anything that he did not thoroughly believe; but I must say this—that he may not have understood me. I have not been in a position to express an opinion on this matter until the present time. Last session I said this, and I said it more than once—it is in *Hansard* I am sure—that when the circumstances of the Norseman goldfield justified a railway I felt quite sure that the Legislature of the day would be capable of dealing with it, and that in dealing with it we would take into consideration all the political circumstances that surrounded the question. I am very sorry indeed to be opposed in any way on a question of memory to my old and valued friend, but all I can say is that I am quite positive that he thoroughly understood me in the way he states. At the same time I have no recollection of making the statement, and my opinion is, from memory, that he has misunderstood me.

MR. LEAKE: That is an assertion; not an explanation.

THE PREMIER: We cannot go further than our memories.

MR. SIMPSON: There is no doubt you told thousands of people that the railway would start from Esperance.

MR. LEAKE: You made a mistake, and ought to apologise.

MR. WOOD (West Perth): When I seconded on Thursday last the motion of the member for the Murray (Mr. George) for the adjournment of the debate, I little thought we should have found so very much to discuss in the Governor's Speech. After the remarks of the leader of the Opposition, I think that, at all events, my action has been fully justified in giving him and his party an opportunity of moving the annual vote of want of confidence; but these annual votes of want of confidence remind me very much of the old proverb that refers to too much familiarity.

MR. LEAKE: They are not pleasant, are they?

MR. WOOD: No; but you know what too much familiarity does, at all events.

MR. KENNY: You will know all about it, by-and-by.

MR. WOOD: I hope we shall. At all events I feel satisfied that I did the correct thing in seconding the adjournment of the debate.

MR. SIMPSON: So do we.

MR. WOOD: And, though some hon. members took exception to my action on that occasion, I say that this House does not belong to any particular party; it does not belong to the Opposition; it does not altogether belong to the Government; and, although we may be supporters of the Government, yet surely we have a perfect right to express our opinions; and it is not to be expected that men with any self-respect can hand themselves over body and soul to any particular party; and if anyone thinks that I am built that way, all I can say is that he has never made a bigger mistake in his life. And further, with regard to this Governor's Speech, if there is anything in it that is very good, and if there is a lot in it that is very bad, I think it ought to be exposed; and if there is a good deal of good in it, and

no harm, then the Government need not fear discussion on the subject. That is by way of explanation to show my feelings on the matter when I seconded the motion of the hon. member for the Murray.

MR. SIMPSON: Your annual apology.

MR. WOOD: My annual apology, if you like. I had prepared a few notes prior to that very important meeting held by the Opposition the other day, concerning which no one—not even the press—can get any information. Taking the Speech as a whole, I think it is a very fair one, and quite as good, and quite as full, as we might have expected under the circumstances. It tells of a great many works that have been done by the Government during the past year; it shows that they, at all events, have not been idle in carrying out the wishes of the House, because all these works, if you care to look through them, have been sanctioned by this House, and I think it is only a fair thing that the Government should tell us what they have been doing, and should prove that they have not been idle. No doubt there is great cause for regret that the right hon. the Premier and other members of the Ministry, and of this House too, should have been absent. That has interfered a great deal with the fullness of information that should have been forthcoming in the short sessions of last year. We have a lot of arrears of work to pull up, and the calling together of Parliament so early will enable us to pull up these arrears, and give us an opportunity to do some solid work before the hot season sets in. The Speech deals with the question of the Federal Convention that has been sitting in Adelaide, Sydney, and Melbourne, and I should like to give my humble testimony to the good work done at the Convention by Sir John Forrest and his colleagues. There is no doubt in my mind that the gentlemen who represented us there did so very well indeed, and did all they could to conserve the interests of the colony and to produce a Bill as good as they could for all the colonies under the adverse circumstances which the delegates from this colony had to encounter. I must be opposed to the colony joining any federation at the present time, and for

some time to come. I wish there to be no misunderstanding about that, because such a statement might be misunderstood later on in the few words I intend to say. There is one matter I should like to speak about, and that is in reference to some of the remarks that have been made by some delegates about their colleagues. It has been said publicly by those who have been favouring federation for this country that several members who went to the Convention never said a word there, and then came back and abused federation. They have been called traitors to the cause of federation; that the gentlemen who made these remarks were traitors to their comrades. No member was elected here to go to the Convention to advocate federation. The delegates were sent there to frame a Bill for the federation of the whole of the people of Australasia, and which would be just to the whole of Australasia. I consider the delegates have done their duty, and they have a right now they have come back to express their opinions.

MR. JAMES: Unless you are a federationist, how can you frame a bill for federation?

MR. WOOD: I very much regret that New South Wales has not elected to join the federation of Australasia. I think that is a great blow indeed to federation, because I always considered that the colonies of South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales should federate. At all events, the fact of New South Wales not receiving the requisite number of votes has prevented this colony from taking any steps to refer the question to the people. I shall be in favour during this session of altering the Enabling Bill, to allow the question of federation to go direct to the people without being brought before the Legislature, when New South Wales has decided in favour of federation, which may be in a short time. I had the pleasure of being present at some of the meetings of the Convention, and I saw that this colony had made a mistake, first because our representatives at the Convention were elected by Parliament, and stipulating that the Bill be first referred to the Houses of the Legislature and then to the people. Both these circum-

stances considerably affected the prestige of the colony in the eyes of the other delegates. I may be wrong—I was only an onlooker—but they say that the onlookers see most of the game. I was one of the warmest supporters of our delegates being elected by the Houses of Legislature; still I frankly own now that I was mistaken, that my ideas were too conservative and not democratic enough. In connection with the Enabling Bill, I may say I favour the requisite number of votes being increased from 6,000 to a fair proportion of the votes. In New South Wales there has to be 80,000 in favour of federation before federation there is accomplished. In New South Wales I find the 80,000 is only 32 per cent. of the total number of electors, so that even had 80,000 votes been cast in favour of federation it would still have been a minority vote. I think if we take 25 per cent., one-quarter of the votes here, 10,000 or 12,000, I think that would be a fair number of votes for this colony. I am glad to see there is no uncertain tone in His Excellency's Speech with reference to the Coolgardie Water Scheme. There was a unanimous feeling until last year that the matter had been treated in the most energetic manner possible. The necessity for the scheme is settled beyond all discussion. Apart from whether the scheme should be handed over to Mons. Bargigli or to any other syndicate, I would like to say a word on the system which I think should be followed. My opinion is that every inch of the way should be constructed and every pound expended under a system of contract. I don't think the Government should undertake it in any way by day labour. If the whole of this scheme is carried out by contract we shall know approximately what it will cost, whereas if it is to be carried out by day labour we shall not know. If it is done under contract the money expended will be very much less, because under a Government system of day labour there is so much loss of time, so much red-tape that the country would have to pay very much more in the end than would be necessary under the contract system. Details are given in His Excellency's Speech of good work performed during the year, and I think the

account given by the Government of what they have done is very satisfactory. Splendid progress has been made with the Fremantle harbour works. To those who have lived in this country all their lives it is indeed a revolution to see that magnificent row of ships snugly anchored in the Fremantle river.

A MEMBER: That was done by day labour.

MR. WOOD: There are exceptional cases where work may be advantageously done by day labour, and perhaps this was one. When the works were commenced there was an uncertainty about getting sufficient money to finish them, and on that account it was then considered a good plan to carry out the work by day labour. It was just then that the House brought up its first proposal for a loan of a million and a half. We think less of a loan of six millions now than we did then of a loan of only a million and a half. That was one of the reasons why these harbour works were carried out by day labour. I hope in a very short time we shall see the P. and O. boats and others of a similar size in the harbour. In face of the enormous expenditure we have incurred to make the Fremantle harbour works, and to place the port in connection with the fields, I shall never vote for the construction of a railway from Esperance to Coolgardie. Second to the Fremantle harbour works comes the formation of the harbour at Bunbury. That has always had my warmest support, and always will have, till it is finished. I hope it will be finished in the course of a year or two. At present shipmasters have a great deal of trouble and anxiety in dealing with that port. I think the Bunbury harbour will provide great shipping facilities for the Collie coal, and for carrying the timber of the district, which has always been considered the best in the colony. That harbour will probably, in a short time, prove of very great assistance to the South-Western districts, although hon. members do not seem to recognise its value. They are either ignorant of the great resources of the South-Western district, or they won't see them, because whenever anything is mentioned in this House about Bunbury it meets with derision. It must be a great satisfaction to all of us to see that the timber industry

has increased so much during the past year. I confess ignorance of the existing regulations with reference to timber, but I hope and feel sure that the Government will preserve the interests of this country, and will not make it open to the speculator and the dummy, as has been the case on the goldfields. There should be labour conditions attached to timber leases the same as are attached to gold-mining leases, or else we shall have another industry sacrificed the same as I consider the goldfields, to a great extent, have been sacrificed to the over-reaching greed of the promoter. At the present time there is a great deal of company promotion in regard to timber. The whole of the timber country is held by the speculator, and all he cares about is how much he can make out of it. Considering the big prices that have been paid in the old country in connection with these companies, I fear we shall have reconstruction after reconstruction until very heavy losses will have been sustained, and the whole thing will be muddled up, and we will just pull along for a great many years. I do hope that the Government will see that the timber is conserved, and that speculators and dummies are kept out. I was very glad to be able to support the Agricultural Lands Purchase Bill when it was before the House. Many members doubted the utility of that measure, and I myself at the time saw a considerable amount of danger in it. But that danger is minimised when we have a good board such as we have at the present time to deal with the question of the purchase of land. It seems, however, that lately there has been some dissatisfaction with the Board, judging from letters in the press, complaining of the allotment of certain areas of land. One member of the board very innocently asked how they could tell the difference between a *bona-fide* settler and a speculator. I do not suppose the difference could be told at a glance; but there could be a condition that no man should acquire land unless he resided upon it and cultivated it. The very object of the Act was to provide land for *bona-fide* settlers, and not for speculators, and some regulation should be made to the effect that no one could for three years transfer or sell land so granted, and that any such transaction

would not be recognised. If the applicant were made to occupy the land, there is no doubt the Act would be one of the best ever introduced in the colony. The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) made some remarks as to a tax on unimproved land values. To my mind, the land settlement question will never be satisfactorily solved until we have some Act dealing with people who will neither improve nor cultivate their land, but simply reap the benefit of the unearned increment, brought about to a large extent by large expenditure of public money or by the efforts of adjoining owners who recognise their responsibilities, with benefit to the country and themselves. I am glad that the necessity of doing something to bring the Collie coal into the market is recognised. Although that coal may not be as good as the coal from New South Wales, yet we must acknowledge that it is a splendid fuel. Even supposing the local coal costs a little more, it would be a great advantage to the country if the Government would use it, and I hope it will be used on all the railways and public works as far as possible. The idea of most protectionists is that local articles should be used in the country, though they cost a little more than the imported article. Money would thus be circulated in the colony, so that we should not lose very much. The presence of the tick pest in East Kimberley is a matter for great regrets and is little short of a calamity and a disaster to the country. I shall support any reasonable means of dealing with the difficulty. The question is of such importance that in dealing with it we should divest ourselves of party feeling. I am as much a party man as a man can be, but this is a national question and affects the country as a whole. All differences should be sunk, in order to bring about a settlement at once which is advantageous to East Kimberley and to the more southerly parts of the colony. If some means are not devised for relieving East Kimberley of the large number of stock available for the market, it will be a very serious thing for the colony. The meat supply is a very important matter indeed; and when we grumble about the high price of food we

railway rates, yet it does appear to be a ought to remember that everything except meat is sold to the consumer at a fairly reasonable rate. Freezing works might be established in East Kimberley, or the cattle brought down here and slaughtered on one of the islands off the coast. I am glad that at last we have something definite put before us about the water supply for the City of Perth. In spite of the determination of the Premier, as expressed in a reply to a motion of mine last session, I am glad to see that he at last recognises the great necessity for a water supply for the city. I welcome the promise of the Government to deal with the deep sewerage for the city at once. I cannot altogether agree with the remarks of the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) as to the question of the food duties not being made a party matter. Last year it was made a test question in the House, and I presume it will be made a test question this year unless the tariff—as I hope it will—satisfies everybody. It is absolutely necessary that something very stringent should be done in regard to electoral reform. In my own district 1,500 names have been struck off the roll for no earthly reason, and in East Perth 700 have been struck off, for what reason I cannot tell. So far as affording opportunities for getting on the roll is concerned the Act is all right. A man who wants to get on the roll has but to answer a few questions, and there is no reason if he desires to have a vote why he should not take a little trouble. The difficulties seem to arise from misconceptions or misreadings of the Act. I do not like to suggest incompetency or anything of the sort, and would rather say that the difficulty arises through disagreements as to the proper reading of the Act. In the City of Perth there have been 2,200 or more names struck off the roll. What would be the effect if a no-confidence motion were carried, and there was a general election within a month, considering that 2,200 names have been struck off the roll for no earthly reason. I am glad to see that the Colonial Secretary has taken this matter in hand, and I hope the House will arrive at a proper solution of the difficulty before long. This is one of the first questions that Parliament ought

to deal with. In the chances of Parliamentary life we never know how soon there may be an election, and I certainly do not want to go to my constituency with 1,500 names short on the roll. I dare say the member for East Perth (Mr. James) would not care to do it either. With regard to railway construction and the proposals of the Government for providing money, I had a different opinion of those proposals before I heard the Premier's remarks; and I will say I have not quite altered my opinion yet, that this is not the time to push on railways in all the directions mentioned in the Governor's Speech. As to the means of financing the proposed railways by reappropriation from votes already passed, I do not think any of us will like to swallow that pill. When we get a loan for public works, the money ought to be restricted to those works alone; and if the money is not wanted for the works, why not raise less, and have less interest to pay? My opinion, however, has been somewhat modified by the statement of the Premier to-night. [MR. SIMPSON: Of course.] The Government have a right to view this matter from their own standpoint, and everyone has a right to his own opinion. Everything seems satisfactory in the colony, except that we are importing too much of what we ought to produce within the colony.

MR. GEORGE: Are three thousand unemployed quite satisfactory?

MR. WOOD: I do not think there are three thousand.

MR. SIMPSON: The *West Australian* newspaper gives that number, and it has investigated the matter.

MR. WOOD: I do not believe there is that number of unemployed. I know that in all agitations by the unemployed there are heaps of men going about who do not want work; but I know at the same time, there is a great deal of distress in Perth, as it comes under my observation, for I go about a good deal, and cannot help seeing cases of distress, and I feel sorry that there are so many; but I do not believe there are quite so many as the member for the Murray (Mr. George) has said. I will say there are perhaps fifteen hundred. I am not going to find fault with the Government for raising the tactical mistake to raise these rates just

before Parliament meets; and I go further, and say that if the Government have no consideration for themselves in this matter, they ought to have some consideration for those members who support them, and not put on those members too great a strain. They have put the strain upon them on two or three occasions almost to the breaking point.

MR. SIMPSON: You have to do as you are told.

MR. WOOD: I must say that, at times, it is very trying; still, I know that not one member of the Government does anything for his personal benefit—that they are all single-minded in their actions as public men; and so long as I believe them to be high-minded, I shall continue to support them.

MR. SIMPSON: High-minded and wooden-headed.

MR. WOOD: That is from your point of view. The hon. member is too polite to allude to me, I suppose, as wooden-headed, though he may think so. I could not help being struck by one ridiculous remark made by the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) the other day, when he advised the Minister of Mines to place himself in the hands of his under-secretary. I do not think I have heard such a suggestion made before. There is another point to which I have referred every year, and shall continue to refer to it till the thing is rectified, and that is the delay in the publication of the Blue-book. I do not see why that portion of the Blue-book referring to the Civil Service cannot be got out at once; and, as to the other parts, a great deal of the statistical information might be left to a later date, so that the part which we really require as members of this House should be before us when dealing with the Estimates. When the Estimates were before us last year, it was impossible for members of this House to check the various salaries and emoluments of the officers, as we had not the particulars before us. If Estimates are put before us, we are entitled to have detailed information concerning them; and, until we get it through the Blue-book, I do not see how we can properly deal with the Estimates in regard to salaries and other particulars. I have not referred

to the amendment moved by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), and I do not think there is any necessity to do so, because I do not suppose he himself, or his colleague, the member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson), cares much about it. I think they must be glad now that it is not being treated as a motion of want of confidence, because there would be such a feeling against them that I do not think they could raise their heads again for the rest of the session. They have the opportunity of bringing forward a substantive motion of want of confidence, and if they will do that we can have a trial of strength later on. If the hon. member and his colleagues will bring forth a motion of that kind, one appealing more to the common sense of the House, they will have a better show, though they will not carry it.

MR. SIMPSON: We must not make it too intelligent.

MR. WOOD: No; I quite admit the intelligence is on the other side of the House. I felt very sorry for the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), when making his lengthy speech, for the Opposition was then represented on his side of the House by an average of two.

MR. SIMPSON: What is your position now?

MR. WOOD: Well, I am such a very humble member that it does not matter. The Opposition were represented by an average of two during that speech, and I think the intelligence was, on that occasion at any rate, on this side of the House.

On the motion of MR. LYALL HALL, the debate was adjourned till the next day.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.50 p.m. until the next afternoon.
