

Province spoke of the absence of a provision for a road from Esperance to Dundas. Although this is an important matter in itself, hon. members must remember that all important matters are not mentioned in the Speech, but if hon. members will look at the Speech they may congratulate themselves that such matters as these will certainly receive the consideration of the Government. It will be observed that in paragraph 7, amongst the works to be undertaken out of the loan money, are the surveying and opening of roads. Now, if I were particularly interested in the Dundas goldfields, I would regard this statement as referring to the opening up of that very important route. One hon. member has mentioned the fact that there is no reference to providing oysters in Princess Royal Harbour. No doubt, if we visit that charming Southern town, we should be pleased indeed to eat the oysters produced there; but that is hardly a subject which may be considered important enough to be mentioned in the Governor's Speech. I assure the hon. member I will do my best to bring the matter under the consideration of the Government. If it is important to provide people with this delicious food, the Government will certainly do its best to further this object. The hon. member has also spoken about the coal measures of Albany. No doubt if coal were discovered there it would be a very great thing for the colony, as, in consequence of its geographical position, and its admirable harbour, a coalfield within reasonable distance of the Sound would be of more advantage than coalfields situated in any other part of the colony. Hon. members may rest assured that, as the Government exists for the benefit of the whole colony, if a coalfield can be opened up at Albany the Government will do its best to have it tested and worked at the earliest opportunity. I think I may congratulate myself that I have the opportunity of speaking after one of the hon. members who represent the East Province, who spoke in such an energetic and fiery manner that he really inspired some life into the debate. He said that "farmer" did not include horticulturist and viticulturist, but I may assure the hon. member that the word "farmer" will cover the whole of the class of people to which

he alludes, and I agree that they equally deserve assistance from public funds as those who cultivate cereals. I again thank hon. members for all the kind words said in regard to the Speech, and I hope it will be found that we shall work as harmoniously as the old Legislative Council, and I feel sure that our main object will be to promote the whole of the interest of Western Australia.

Question put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The Council, at 5-20 o'clock p.m., adjourned until Tuesday, 31st July, at 3 o'clock p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 30th July, 1894.

Tenders for Public Buildings at Cue—Sessional Orders—Election of Chairman of Committees—Supply (£150,000): Suspension of Standing Orders—Supply Bill: first reading; second reading; committee; third reading—Return of money expended on Stock Route between Mullewa and Roebourne—Address-in-Reply: adjourned debate—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 7-30 p.m.

PRAYERS.

TENDERS FOR PUBLIC BUILDINGS AT CUE.

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

1. If tenders for the public buildings at "The Four Mile" and (other than the Warden's quarters) at Cue had been let or called for. If so, when.

2. If not, when would such tenders be called for.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn), replied, as follows:—

1. No public works at 4-Mile, except the erection of a small post and telegraph office, which will be forwarded as early as possible; in the meantime a temporary structure will be erected at the 4-Mile, as a post and telegraph office. It is expected that the telegraph line between Mullewa and Cue will be opened in about three weeks.

2. At Cue tenders have been called for the erection of court house and warden's court, registrar's office, post and telegraph station and quarters, police station and quarters and cells; also for hospital. Plans and specifications of which will be seen at Geraldton and Cue, as per advertisement.

SESSIONAL ORDERS: BUSINESS DAYS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved, "That, unless otherwise ordered, the House will meet for despatch of business on Mondays, at 7:30 p.m.; Tuesdays, at 2:30 p.m., and, if necessary, until 6:30 p.m.; and on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 4:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m., if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7:30 p.m. onwards." This motion (he said) was in accordance with what was arranged last session, and he thought the arrangement had been found fairly convenient, so far as it was possible to suit everyone. The Government had no strong opinion on the subject, and if members desired to propose any other arrangement more suitable to them, of course the Government would be very glad to consider it.

Motion put and passed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved, "That on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and on Thursdays, after 7 p.m., Government business shall take precedence of all Motions and Orders of the Day." This arrangement, too, was in accordance with the precedent adopted last session, and he believed no objection was raised to it.

Motion put and passed.

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved, "That the Standing Orders Committee for the present session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burt, and the Chairman of Committees; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer upon subjects of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council."

Motion put and passed.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved, "That the Library Committee of this House for the present session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Burt, and Mr. Harper; with authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council."

Motion put and passed.

PRINTING COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved, "That the Printing Committee for the present session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Venn, and the Chairman of Committees; to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing executed by order of the House, and for the purpose of selecting and arranging for printing returns and papers presented in pursuance of motions made by members, and all papers laid upon the table, whether in answer to addresses or otherwise."

Motion put and passed.

REFRESHMENT ROOMS COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved, "That the Refreshment Rooms Committee for the present session consist of the following members, viz.:—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Marmion, and Mr. R. F. Sholl; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and during the recess."

Mr. SIMPSON moved, "That the name of Mr. Monger be added to the committee."

Agreed to.

Motion put and passed.

SUPPLY (£150,000).

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I rise in accordance with notice, to move, "That the House resolve itself into Committee of Supply and of Ways and Means, and that the Standing Orders be suspended so as to permit of the reporting and adopting of resolutions therefrom on the same day on which they shall have passed these committees, and also the passing of a Supply Bill through all its stages in one day." The object of this, as members are no doubt aware, is, that the Government, being without supplies at the present moment, are desirous of being placed in possession of supplies to carry on the public service. On the first of next month the salaries of the officers of the Government, and also the claims of contractors and other public creditors, will have to be paid, and we shall require funds to pay them. Hence the necessity for asking the House to grant this supply. As the financial year now ends on the 30th June, and the House meets almost immediately afterwards, it is impossible for the Government to have the annual Estimates on the table, and to have the Appropriation Bill passed in time to act upon it during the first month of the new financial year. Therefore, under these circumstances, this asking of a temporary supply will—under the new arrangement as to the close of the financial year immediately before Parliament meets—have to be a regular occurrence. The Government will always have to ask the House for a temporary supply soon after the meeting of Parliament, and pending the passing of the annual Estimates and the Appropriation Bill.

Motion put and passed.

ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Before we go into committee it is necessary for the House to elect a Chairman of Committees, and I have much pleasure in asking the House to approve of the election of the hon. member for Greenough (Mr. Traylen) to that position. I think those who have watched the hon. member's career in this House, and during his residence in the colony, must have come to the conclusion that he is a painstaking and earnest man, and that whatever he undertakes to do he tries to

carry it out to the best of his ability and judgment. I believe that in the election of the hon. member for Greenough this House will have a Chairman of Committees who will take a great interest in the discharge of his duties, and who will do his very utmost in every way to try to carry out those duties efficiently, and in a faithful and satisfactory way. I am, of course, aware that there is a gentleman elected to this House who formerly occupied the position of Chairman of Committees—our good friend the member for Perth; and, under other circumstances, nothing would have given me more pleasure than to have the opportunity and privilege of asking him to accept the position again. But the Government have been twitted, during the last three or four years, with going to the Opposition for everything they require. [Mr. R. F. SHOLL: You are doing it again now.] It has been said that we have tried to muzzle the Opposition by selecting members from that side of the House to fill every position or office in our power. I should regret that such an impression should prevail. Looking at what we are told has happened only to-day, when it is stated that the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Randell) has been elected by his colleagues on the other side of the House as their leader, I should regret indeed if anything should happen by which the Opposition should be weakened by the appointment of their leader as Chairman of Committees. Therefore, in these circumstances, I have very much pleasure in asking the House to approve of the selection made by the Government, and that our friend Mr. Traylen, the member for the Greenough, shall be elected to that position.

MR. THROSSELL: I have pleasure in seconding the motion made by our respected Premier. I believe that the hon. member for the Greenough, if elected to the Chair, will fill it with credit to himself and at the same time maintain the dignity of the House. Without further words, I have much pleasure in seconding his nomination.

Question put.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I should just like to say that there are a great many members of this House—I think the majority of them—who regret very much that Mr. Randell has declined to come forward on

this occasion, to be nominated as Chairman of Committees. One would think from the remarks of the Premier that the hon. gentleman had a large majority at his back to secure the appointment of the Government nominee. But I question very much, if Mr. Randell had not refused to come forward, whether the Government nominee would have been elected. I think it is due to Mr. Randell that these remarks should be made. One would think that that gentleman had not been asked, or had been overlooked, and that the Government nominee would be elected as a matter of course. I think, myself, it is to be regretted that Mr. Randell has declined to be nominated, because we have had some experience of his fitness for the position—a position which he filled with dignity, and with justice to all parties. There is one advantage, however, that will be gained by the appointment of the Government nominee on this occasion. The Premier says the Government have been twitted with coming to the Opposition whenever they wanted to fill this appointment. It is not quite certain whether they have not done so on this occasion, for one hardly knows on what side of the House the hon. member for the Greenough is supposed to sit. On the last occasion when a Chairman of Committees was appointed, the hon. member, without any rhyme or reason, left the Government benches and came over to this side of the House. On the present occasion, on the eve of another election of a Chairman of Committees, we find him again sitting on the Government side of the House; so that we hardly know on which side of the House the hon. member is supposed to sit; and one advantage of having him in the chair will be that we shall then know where he really does sit.

MR. LEFROY: I think it is most desirable that the House should be unanimous in the appointment of a gentleman to fill the office of Chairman of Committees. On this occasion, perhaps, any expression to that effect is almost unnecessary, there being no rival candidate in the field; and I am quite sure that if the gentleman proposed by the Government is elected to that position, he will, in the discharge of his duties, not only receive the support of those on the Government side of the House, but also

the support of those on this side of the House, and that he will be treated with all due respect. I feel that it is the duty of some member on this side of the House to give expression to this opinion on the present occasion, and as, perhaps, the hon. member for Perth may feel some little delicacy in doing so—though I feel sure he is quite willing to support the nomination of Mr. Traylen—I have risen to say these few words.

MR. RANDELL: As my name has been referred to, perhaps it is as well I should make one or two remarks on this matter. I felt that I should not care to accept the Chairmanship of Committees unless I had the unanimous vote of the House; and, finding that the Government had determined to propose the hon. member for the Greenough, I felt it would be out of keeping with the views I held to allow myself to be nominated for that position. I am very thankful to my hon. friends for the kind opinion they have expressed with regard to myself, as to the way in which I filled the office when I had the honour of doing so. I am very much obliged to the Premier also, for the kindly reference he has made to me. I am quite sure that all on this side of the House will endorse what has fallen from the hon. member for the Moore (Mr. Lefroy), and will be prepared to give their cordial and cheerful support to the hon. member who is to occupy the important position of Chairman of Committees. I may say this, from my own knowledge of the hon. member for the Greenough, that I am sure he will give his most earnest attention to the duties of his office. I believe that his peculiar temperament and bent of mind eminently qualifies him for the occupation of that high position. He has made himself conversant with the routine and procedure, and with the duties of the position, and I anticipate that he will fill the position to the satisfaction of the House and with credit to himself.

Motion put and passed.

The House then went into Committee of Supply.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE CHAIRMAN: Hon. members,—it is my duty, in accordance with the Standing Orders, on the initiation of a Committee of Supply, to read that

portion of the Governor's Speech that relates to finance. I will, therefore, do so:

"MR. SPEAKER, AND GENTLEMEN OF THE
"LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

"11. The financial position of the colony is sound and satisfactory. The revenue for the year ending the 30th June was estimated at £589,500, and reached £681,245. The expenditure was estimated at £651,962, and reached £656,356. The credit balance at the end of the financial year was estimated at £669, but was actually £88,020.

"12. The loan authorised last session of £540,000 has been successfully floated, having been largely over-subscribed, and realised £103 6s. 1d. per cent., showing that our credit in London is very satisfactory. The Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for the current year will be carefully prepared and presented to you as soon as possible; and with the existing credit balance, and an increasing revenue, my Ministers hope to be able to provide for many pressing works throughout the colony."

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that there be granted to Her Majesty, on account of the service of the year 1894-5, a sum not exceeding £150,000 towards defraying the expenses of the various departments and services of the colony.

MR. LOTON: May I ask whether the hon. gentleman is asking for one or for two months' supplies.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I should think it would last two months. Last year we asked for £100,000, and on this occasion we ask for £50,000 better than last year. I have not studied the question very closely as to how far the money will carry us; but, as it may be two and a-half or three months before we can expect to get the Appropriation Act through, I think we are well within the mark in asking for this sum to go on with.

Motion put and passed; resolution reported, and report adopted.

SUPPLY BILL (£150,000).

Introduced by Sir JOHN FORREST, read a first time, and (the Standing Orders having been suspended) passed through all its stages, without comment.

Ordered—That the Bill be transmitted to the Legislative Council, and their concurrence desired therein.

MULLEWA-ROEBOURNE STOCK ROUTE.

RETURN OF MONEY EXPENDED.

MR. RICHARDSON, in accordance with notice, moved—

1. For a return of all money expended in 1893-4 on the stock route between Mullewa and Roebourne.

2. The particulars of the works carried out for such expenditure.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) said he had anticipated the hon. member's wishes in this respect, and he would now lay on the table a return showing the amount of money expended on this stock route. With regard to the second portion of the motion, the hon. member asked for particulars of the works carried out for this expenditure. He might say, for the information of the hon. member, that the work of sinking wells along the stock route between Mullewa and Roebourne had been taken up by the different Roads Boards of those districts, and therefore he was not in a position at the present moment to give the hon. member the details of expenditure asked for; but he would lay on the table a letter received from one of the Roads Boards, or some of the Roads Boards, showing the expenditure up to date, so far as they were concerned. He thought the hon. member would find sufficient information there. If he required any further particulars, the moment the Government got the information from the other Roads Boards they would be happy to furnish it to the House.

Motion put and passed.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY TO THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

ADJOURNED DEBATE.

MR. LOTON: Mr. Speaker,—Before I address myself to a few points in His Excellency's Speech—and that address will be pretty short—I may perhaps be allowed to refer to the action I took the other day in moving the adjournment of the debate. In taking that action I did not constitute myself leader of the Opposition party; neither, in moving that

adjournment, did I do so as leader of the Opposition party. At the same time I am free to admit that I was requested by certain members to take the action that I did. Certain developments have taken place since that time in the formation of a party on this side of the House, and I hope the fact that members on these benches now present a somewhat more solid and concrete form than in the past will result in a closer criticism—an honest criticism, not a factious opposition in any kind of way—of the actions of the Government, which I trust will tend to the best interests of the colony. The policy that has been placed before us in His Excellency's Speech is an old friend, and, I think, in an old form. So far as I can gather, the policy of the Government has still the same ring; it is a Loan policy. We all of us expected that, I believe; though probably some members may have expected something more. If they did, they have not got it yet. Now, sir, this policy is referred to at some length in one or two paragraphs of the Speech, where it is described as a policy having for its object "the progress and development of the mineral resources of the colony by constructing railways, establishing postal services, erecting telegraphs, conserving and obtaining water, and other measures of utility." In another paragraph we are told that the works proposed to be undertaken are the extension of the railway from Southern Cross to Coolgardie, from Mullewa to the Murchison, from Donnybrook towards Bridgetown, a branch line to the Collicie, and other works, which are duly set forth in the Speech. The policy of the Government, in fact, abounds with the construction of railways, or intended construction of railways, in various directions. I think, sir, that this policy might have been described fully in very much fewer words than it has taken to describe it in the Governor's Speech. I would describe it very briefly myself as a policy of borrowing money extensively and spending it freely. The policy placed before us is that we should go into the money market for a million and a half of money; and it is made fairly manifest that two-thirds at least (or thereabouts) of this sum of money is proposed to be devoted to the construction of further railways. Well,

sir, railways no doubt in this country, and in any other new and undeveloped country that has an extensive territory, must play a very important part. A country with an extensive territory cannot be developed unless it has means of communication—[THE PREMIER: Hear, hear]—fairly good and rapid, too. There is no doubt, sir, in my mind that we have been very much favoured in this colony during the last two or three years in this matter of the construction of railways. What I mean to say is that our railways have no doubt of late been constructed at a less cost, I suppose, than ever has been known in these Australian colonies. I say we have been very favourably situated in that respect; and I trust that whatever railways may be undertaken in the near future we shall be equally well favoured, so that the money we raise may go a long way. At the same time I think members will agree with me that this proposal to borrow another million and a half is a very serious matter for this colony. It means, sir, in plain words, giving a rough estimate, an extra indebtedness of £20 per head of our present population. That is not a very small item. Even supposing the population during the next three or four years doubled itself, it will mean an extra indebtedness of £10 per head of the population. At the same time, it means an additional £1 per head for the present population in the payment of interest; or, assuming that the population is doubled, it means an extra burden of 10s. per head to provide the interest on this new loan. One question I think we ought to ask ourselves at this stage is, are we justified in supposing, have we reasonable and sound grounds for supposing, that the population of this colony will double itself within the next three years? We have the past twelve months to go by, and during that exceptional period we find that our population increased from 15,000 to 16,000. I hope, myself, that the population of the colony may be doubled within the time referred to. I am not going to express any opinion on the subject. I think it is a question upon which we should be somewhat cautious in expressing an opinion. At all events, even if the population does increase in anything like this ratio, a very considerable portion of it indeed must naturally filter to the goldfields of the

colony. I have already pointed out that we may take it that some two-thirds of this million and a half of money proposed to be raised is to be expended in the construction of further railways; and, before we go very far into this subject, I think it is desirable that we should compare our position in certain respects with the position of the other colonies in this matter of railway construction. I do not propose on this occasion to enter into details; I am not prepared to inflict upon members anything like a long array of figures or statistics, but I would ask their attention to just a few, for the sake of comparison between the position of this colony, as regards railway construction, and the position of the other Australian colonies. I find that in New South Wales, the parent colony—the figures available are not right up to the present date, but are up to the end of 1893, and I doubt if the position has altered very much since that date—I find that in New South Wales they have 2,185 miles of railways, with an average population per mile of 549. In other words, they have 549 people to help to make every mile of railway pay. The position in Victoria is this: they have 2,975 miles of railway, and a population of 400 people to the mile. In Queensland the total length of their railways is 2,373, with a population of 181 to the mile. In South Australia they have 1,663 miles of railway, and a population of 201 to the mile. In Tasmania they have only 475 miles of railway, with a population of 322 per mile. Now, sir, we come to Western Australia. Here we have 1,100 miles of railways with a population of only 70 to the mile.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion): Are you including the Great Southern line?

MR. LOTON: I am calculating not only the Government railways, but also the land-grant railways. I think, if members consider for one moment, they will agree with me that I should not be doing my duty unless I took into calculation, in this connection, nor be doing justice to Western Australia, if I did not take into calculation our land-grant railways. As a matter of fact, as regards the Midland Railway, although it is not built with the colony's borrowed money, we know that a portion of the money required for its construction is actually guaranteed

by the Government; and, so far as the Great Southern Railway is concerned, it is the people who live in the colony that help to support that line. In connection with both of these railway lines there is always a contingent liability—it has existed from the very first, and we cannot get rid of it—that the Government of the colony may have to work them. In addition to this contingent liability, there is the fact that as regards the Midland Railway, the Government have guaranteed a sum of £500,000 towards its construction. In view of the figures I have quoted, it seems to me that a serious question we have to think of is: to what further extent are we prepared to go in the construction of railways, with our limited population, which, if doubled, would not give the population per mile of railway possessed by the least favoured of the other colonies in this respect? I think most members, if they look at the question seriously and honestly, must admit that the position, so far as Western Australia is concerned, is already a strained one, in respect of this question of railways and population. We are taunted sometimes with being a very slow-going people indeed; but, when we look at these statistics, we find at all events that in the matter of railway construction we are already far ahead of any of the other colonies in proportion to our population. There are a few other figures I should like to call attention to, which possibly may be of interest to members; they are very important at all events to my mind. I will take the parent colony, New South Wales, first. The position she appeared to be in, with regard to her railways, a short time ago, at the end of 1893, was that she was enabled to pay $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., or 3·58 per cent., towards paying the interest on the borrowed money expended in the construction of her railways. That, I assume, would go very closely towards paying the whole of the interest upon the capital expended in railway construction in that colony. Of course I am not now speaking of working expenses. The Victorian railways at the same time were paying 2·87 per cent.—not quite 3 per cent.—upon the money spent in their construction. Even that colony, whose inhabitants at all events regard it as standing at the head of the Australian

colonies, is not in a position to pay the interest on the capital expended in the construction of its railways, from the revenue derived from those railways. According to the latest accounts from the colony, she has a number of lines which the Government propose either to close altogether or to let them to somebody else to see if they can be made to pay, as the Government themselves are unable to make them pay. Then there is South Australia. Her railways enable her to pay 3·07 per cent. upon the capital expended in their construction. In Queensland, which comes the closest to ourselves in regard to the percentage of population to each mile of railway, though far in advance of us in that respect, her percentage being 181 per mile, compared with our 70,—in Queensland, at the end of 1893, her railways were paying $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. (or thereabouts) towards the interest upon the borrowed money expended in their construction. Now we come to Western Australia. I am sorry to say that the Railway Department here, from some reason or other, has not been able to bring up its returns any closer to date, so far as the public are concerned, than the end of December, 1892; so that the latest returns are a year and a half old. I do hope that, from this date out, the hon. gentleman who represents that department in this House will let us have these returns a little closer up to date than that. It is not very satisfactory to members who wish to go into these matters to have to fossick about in every pigeon hole they can find, to try and get these statistics. I have done the best I can in this direction. Up to two years ago, we are all of us aware, it took us all our time—and we were sometimes a little behind—to earn sufficient on our railways to pay working expenses. I am very glad to say that at the end of 1892 (so far as the returns furnished go), there was some improvement shown, and we turned the scale, and had a small sum to the good. I believe that during the last twelve months—I do not know when the returns will come out, but I believe that during the past twelve months Western Australia, with a very small population per mile of railway, will possibly be able to show that she can contribute, in excess of working expenses, something over 1 per cent.—perhaps $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—towards

the payment of the interest upon the borrowed money spent in the construction of her railways. This is merely an estimate of my own, but I do not think it will be far wide of the mark, for I am not in the habit of giving figures without going pretty carefully into them. Even, at this rate, that would leave us a deficiency of about $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., because we are not only paying interest, but also providing for a sinking fund upon our loans; and that deficiency we have to make up out of current revenue. In connection with our railway returns, we have also to bear this one fact in mind, that, during the construction of the railways, and during the expenditure of this borrowed money, the working receipts are considerably in excess of what we must expect ordinarily. To a certain extent the receipts are fictitious—necessarily so; it is so in all the colonies—because, when railways are in course of construction, they create an extra amount of haulage and traffic during the time the works are going on. Having placed these few facts and figures before the House in connection with the railway policy of the Government, it seems to me, after a careful consideration of the position for some time past, that we are brought face to face with this fact: that, as regards the proposed railways to the two principal goldfields, it seems to me absolutely necessary, in view of the desirability of developing these auriferous areas and of attracting population and capital, that some extra provision should be made for providing means of communication with these particular goldfields. That means of communication, to my mind, can only be by railways; and I have arrived at this conclusion, sir, that the first thing for us to do in regard to public works, in the way of railways, is to construct these goldfields lines. The great object to be kept in view, to my mind, is to see that we have these lines made from wherever they connect with our present railway system to some centre—the best centre we can get, in view of present and future developments. That is the point to be kept in view. There is another reason why I think we should open up these goldfields, and that is the stimulus it will give to other local industries. I believe there is nothing which any member

can point to that will tend more to the settlement and cultivation of the soil than the opening up of these goldfields. Already a considerable population is settled upon these fields, and, if we have faith in their stability and productiveness—and we must have considerable faith in them, or we should never have built a railway to Yilgarn—it must be clear to us all that the development of the fields, with their consuming population, must at once create a market for all the available fat stock that can be raised in all parts of the colony, and also a market for the products of the soil of every description, whether our cultivators go in for cereal-growing, or fruit-growing, or wine-growing, or anything else. Therefore, sir, it seems to me it is in this direction that whatever borrowed money we decide upon should be first expended. But there are other railways contemplated by the Government, one of them to the Collie coalfield. I shall say but very few words, at this stage, upon that. It seems to me that we are not in a position to build speculative railways—railways so speculative as this would be, to my mind. In the first place, I should want to be thoroughly satisfied that not only have we coal there of proper commercial value, but also that we have it in ample quantity as well; and I think we ought to wait until these fields are thoroughly tested, and also until we ascertain that the coal can be raised and brought to a certain point at a cost that will compete with, and keep out, importations. When we have done that, we may then venture to go into the market to borrow money to build a railway to this coalfield. Then, again, there is another railway proposed, to open up additional agricultural country. Well, sir, I think we have already a very large quantity of agricultural country opened up by railways now in existence. When we look at the fact that we have already established railway communication through the country between Albany and Perth, and from Perth to Yilgarn, on the one hand, and from Perth very nearly to Champion Bay—at all events we shall do so during the present year—and from Champion Bay to Mullewa, which is about as far as you can go in that direction for agricultural purposes; I think, sir, when we bear this in mind, it must be admitted that we already have provided a very

wide area for selection, without going any further in the way of opening up land for agricultural purposes. However desirable it may be to give further facilities for this purpose in other districts of the colony, we must look at the position we are in at the present time, and see whether we are justified in raising and spending further sums upon lines that cannot at present pay their working expenses. I can sympathise with the people of Bridgetown and that direction, but there are people in other parts of the colony in equally as bad a position as they are as regards the want of railway facilities. The Bridgetown people have a line to Donnybrook, which brings the Blackwood district within 25 or 30 miles of a railway, so that they are better off in this respect than some other parts of the colony. People about the Williams River and around Marradong and that way are just as badly off, notwithstanding the railway between Perth and Albany; and there is quite as large an area of agricultural land, and quite as much settlement in those localities, as at the Blackwood and Bridgetown way. I am not at all, sir, at present, in placing these views before members, saying that I have made up my mind to go against these particular items in the public works policy of the Government. But these are the views I entertain at the present time, and, so far as I am concerned, I shall want the fullest information, in every respect, not only as regards one particular line of railway, but all of them, as regards the probable results in the way of traffic and other matters, before agreeing to them; because I consider that our position as regards our railways is, as I have already said, a somewhat strained one already, considering the population we have. There is one item in the programme of public works put forward by the Government—the continuation of the harbour works at Fremantle—which I should like to refer to. I hope there will not be found a dissentient voice on this question. It is a very important undertaking, though it is a work that at present is not yielding any return whatever. The money expended upon it is money actually sunk; the work at present pays nothing towards the expenditure, or towards the interest upon the money expended. Still it is a work which it is desirable to complete,

and I am strongly in favour of its being carried to completion as quickly as we can. I am afraid, sir, that I am detaining members too long; but I recognise that on an occasion of this kind, on the assembling of a new Parliament—although the policy placed before us is an old one, and does not come before us in a new form—it is only right that members should give expression to their views upon the general policy of the Government as indicated in His Excellency's Speech. Although some members have told us there is nothing in the Speech, it seems to me there is a great deal in it, when we bear in mind that it involves an expenditure of a million and a half of money. There is one other proposal referred to in the Speech to which I should like to make a passing reference, and that is the establishment of a Land Bank. I do not exactly know what that may mean.

MR. SIMPSON: No one else does.

MR. LOTON: Special reference is made to it in the Speech, and a special paragraph devoted to it. We are not told where the money to establish this bank is to come from, but we are told where it is to go to. It is to be applied for the purpose of making advances to farmers. So far as I am concerned, I am prepared to say that, in my humble opinion at the present time, this is a movement in a very dangerous direction, and I fail to see that it is likely to do any material good. I understand it is the intention to lend money in small amounts to different individual farmers, at a lower rate than the current rate, and, I presume, to obtain sound security for such advances. It seems to me there are other classes of settlers and producers in this colony who are equally entitled to have the same consideration shown them in this respect as the farmers. The pastoralists of this colony want money at a cheaper rate equally as badly as the farmers do, and they have just as much right to get it, if the Government are going to find it for one class of producers.

MR. RICHARDSON: They have no available security.

MR. LOTON: I do not think this proposal to advance money at a low rate of interest is likely to be of much use, unless the Government are so strong and so able, financially, as to be in a position to

say to the financial institutions and moneyed people of the world, "We mean you to lend us money at a lower rate of interest than you do at present," and so bring the rate of interest down all round. If they feel themselves strong enough to take up this position as against the financial world, they may possibly be able to lend money to farmers and others at a low rate. But I rather doubt, myself,—notwithstanding the highly eulogistic remarks applied to them by the proposer of the Address-in-Reply—whether we have such a financially strong and capable Ministry as to be able to dictate to the outside world what rate of interest shall be charged upon loan money. Sir, in conclusion, I can only say I trust that the criticisms and the opinions that may be put forward on this occasion as to the policy of the Government—those emanating, at all events, from this side of the House—will be expressed in a calm and moderate spirit, and that they will be sound opinions, and such as will tend to the advancement, on a solid basis, of the best interests of the colony.

MR. MORAN: Mr. Speaker—Sir, I did not anticipate speaking so early in this debate upon the Address-in-Reply, but I have been informed by those who ought to know that it is customary on these occasions for new members to speak as early as possible. As representing, I suppose, what must be looked upon as the senior goldfield constituency in the colony, I have a few propositions to put forward, dealing with some important omissions in His Excellency's Speech. It has been said by the hon. member for the Swan that the Speech deals very largely, and almost entirely, with public works, and that these works are, to a great extent, intended for the purpose of developing our goldfields. Consequently, I am not likely to oppose these works in any way whatever. With regard to the first work referred to, a railway from Southern Cross to Coolgardie, I think the sooner that work is carried out the better, and the more likely will the other railway lines of the colony be made to yield a satisfactory return, because I consider—and, later on, I shall be prepared to prove, with figures—that the present railway from Northam to Yilgarn is not only bearing its own burden of expenditure, but is also helping to make up the

deficiencies on some of the other railways of the colony. I believe that, when the railway to Coolgardie is completed, it will not only pay the interest on the principal expended in its construction, but that in a very short number of years it will also pay a large proportion of the principal. I must say, however, that I totally disagree with the principle adopted by the Government of charging double rates on these goldfields lines. Perhaps this is not the proper occasion for going into that question; but I cannot refrain from condemning the principle as unjust to the fields and altogether unwarrantable. I should like the Government to remember that when the present General Traffic Manager made up his traffic rates he had in consideration that the Government intended to build a railway line to Coolgardie; and I believe I may almost state it as a fact that he calculated his rates upon the basis of long distance traffic, with the view of making those rates pay, instead of doubling them. Knowing, as I do, something about these Eastern goldfields, I may say that these double rates must prove most detrimental to the development of the fields. There are so many small companies there that are anxious and willing to develop their properties that, if the railway rates were reduced one-half, almost double the quantity of machinery would be introduced on the field in a short time. These rates are seriously and indignantly commented upon all over the fields, and have given rise to a great deal of irritation. The moment I heard of the Government proposing to charge these double rates I said, and others said so, it looked to the outside world as if the members of the Government of the colony had not that faith in the stability and permanency of these goldfields that their utterances on other occasions would lead us to believe they had. I should like it to be remembered, and duly considered by the Government, that Western Australia as a colony is benefiting very largely through these goldfields. Not only are the settlers of the Eastern districts directly benefited, but the whole colony is indirectly benefited through the Customs, for I venture to say that our goldfields communities contribute a much larger revenue through the Customs than any other portion of the colony. Therefore, I think it is unfair

for the Government, in fixing the present railway rates, not to take into consideration this indirect manner in which these people are otherwise contributing to the public revenue. I think that one or two years' trial at any rate of the ordinary rates should have been made; and, if the line was then found not to pay, it might perhaps be wise and judicious on the part of the Government to increase the rates, so that the general community might not be unduly taxed for the benefit of the miners. The miners themselves, I am sure, have no desire for that. But, instead of adopting that step, and giving the railway a fair trial at ordinary rates, the Government have thought fit to adopt a different step altogether. The Minister of Railways has stated that if the Government find that this railway is yielding a profit they will reduce the rates; but it seems to me that in doing that they have got hold of the wrong end of the stick altogether. Encouragement to new industries and the development of a country's resources should take the form of leniency in the early stages of development. It seems to me the wrong way altogether to encourage a new industry by hampering it with heavy charges in the initial stage of its development, when it cannot stand these heavy charges. I feel very strongly upon this point, and I know I am expressing the general feeling of those on the fields; and I hope and trust the Government will reconsider their action in the matter of these rates, and do as I suggest—reduce them by one-half. I am sure the suggestion is one that will meet with the concurrence of other goldfields representatives, and also with the concurrence of a considerable number of the members of this House. Let the Government give this Yilgarn line a fair trial for, say, twelve months, and see what the result of the reduced tariff would be. Should it be found that the line was a heavy tax upon the community at large—which I venture to say it will not—it would be time enough then to increase the rates. I do not propose at this stage to deal any further with the question of these public works, but I would lay special stress here publicly, as I have done privately on several occasions, upon the necessity of the Government taking due precautions that the water supply on the goldfields shall not run short, as it has done before.

We have had a good fall of rain lately, and for the time being the fields are to some extent relieved from present anxiety as to the water supply. Still, there is ground for apprehension, notwithstanding the glowing reports of some of the Government officers, which I say were wrong, because I travelled down the road myself, and I found the roads between Southern Cross and Coolgardie almost waterless, and another fortnight or three weeks would have rendered them impassable for traffic. I have held the opinion for several years, and I wish it to be publicly known, that I have the greatest confidence in the future of Western Australia as regards its water supply. Having observed the rainfall in our Eastern districts, I am quite confident that, since the rain does not run away, but goes down into the soil, there must be reservoirs of it somewhere below the surface. The annual rainfall in the Eastern districts is at least six inches, so that in two years it accumulates to a foot, and in ten years to 5ft., and so on. The world is more than a year old, and more than a thousand years old, and there must be a large accumulation of underground water, from all these years of rainfall. As it does not run away on the surface, but penetrates the soil, it must remain there somewhere; and I am strongly of opinion that by systematic boring—not necessarily artesian—some huge basins of water will be discovered. The water, possibly, may be more or less mineralised, but still useful for mining purposes. If an inexhaustible supply were discovered, I venture to say we should hear of the discovery of more than one Londonderry, while at the same time alluvial mining would receive a tremendous spurt. I would earnestly press upon the Government the desirability of going systematically to work in this direction, guided by the best authority, and securing the services of men who have had experience in boring under similar conditions elsewhere. I feel confident of the result. Talking about the expenditure of public money on public works, nearly all our public works, or a great many of them, up to the present have remained unproductive. But any steps taken by the Government to discover water in the arid, and at present waterless, portions of the colony will, if suc-

cessful, prove the most reproductive work which any Government could undertake. I have seen the result elsewhere, and I have no hesitation in saying that any Government that will give to this colony a good and lasting water supply in our dry interior will be entitled to, and will receive, the thanks and gratitude of every well-wisher of the colony. I do not wish to trespass on the patience of the House on this occasion. I mainly rose to express my regret at some important omissions from the Governor's Speech. I am sorry that no reference is made to any proposed amendment of the existing mining laws. I believe it is admitted on all hands by everybody who has any practical acquaintance with the subject, and by the Government themselves, that the time has come when a comprehensive system of mining regulations should be adopted. The present Mining Act was adopted by people who, no doubt, meant very well, but who knew very little about mining, and the result is as you see. The Act is hardly applicable in any one instance to the peculiar circumstances of the colony. With our present experience and knowledge of the surrounding circumstances, and with the experience of other countries to guide us, our mining laws should not only be abreast of the mining laws of other colonies, but ahead of them all. As the representative of our Eastern goldfields, I am here for the purpose of giving every possible assistance in my power to make these mining regulations a success. I think it is the duty of every member, first and foremost, to help the governing authorities, whatever they may be, to carry out whatever is good for the colony. I do not wish to be classed amongst those querulous people who are always ready to find fault, but are not prepared to suggest any remedy; and when I find fault with our mining regulations, I shall be prepared, when the opportunity arrives, to suggest some amendments, subject, of course, to the approval of the House. At present hundreds of thousands of pounds of capital are being kept out of this country simply because of this one fact alone, that our present mining regulations are so very tardy in giving the miner the fee simple of his property and security of tenure. I know that English investors, accustomed to the security of tenure

which surrounds property in the mother country, look first and foremost to the title of the land, and this title we cannot give them under our existing regulations, at any rate without a delay of months and months, unnecessarily. It is absolutely necessary that strict regulations should be framed under which mining leases may be properly surveyed rapidly, either by the Government or by the lessees themselves, and security of tenure obtained without unnecessary delay. I also think that the regulations with regard to jumping claims should at once be revised. So far as I am concerned, I am anxious to see the working miner, the man who leaves his home in other parts of the world to come here prospecting, and who undergoes all the hardships and vicissitudes of a miner's life, treated with as much leniency as possible. At the same time, I think that capital, in every shape and form, should also be protected; for without capital the country cannot be developed, and especially a mining country such as Coolgardie. When the proper time comes, I shall be prepared to submit for the consideration of the House such amendments as I think would prove useful in our present mining regulations. With regard to that part of His Excellency's Speech which refers to the proposed introduction of a Bill to amend the law relating to municipalities, I trust that in dealing with that measure we who represent the goldfields districts, where municipal government is in its infancy, or not yet established, will have the benefit of the assistance of more experienced members in framing a measure that will meet our requirements as well as the requirements of other parts of the colony. We who are sent here as the representatives of mining centres will have very onerous duties cast upon us when this municipal Bill comes before the House. New towns are growing up on our goldfields, which are new to municipal government and to other social institutions, and I feel sure that in dealing with these questions I and others, who sit here representing these new goldfields townships, will meet with every assistance from more experienced members of the House. I venture to say that, whatever may be thought of our Eastern goldfields at present, we shall find that in five years

from this date we shall have a population there equal to the population of the rest of this colony. We must therefore begin early to place our rising townships in good order, and to build upon a wise and sure foundation. For this reason I am glad to find that the existing municipal laws are to be amended and liberalised. There is another question upon which I feel very strongly, and that is the present system of alienating Government lands on our goldfields townships. A reform of the existing system is one of the planks upon which I have been returned to this House, and which I am pledged to my constituents. At present, the poor prospector, or the poorer digger, who has done all the work and helped to place this colony in the position it now holds in the eyes of the world, has no chance whatever of becoming his own property-holder. These men, when a new rush is heard of, generally make for it, and settle down in their tents; or a small storekeeper comes along, and starts his business in the new township. Presently a Government surveyor makes his appearance, and the blocks are put up for sale, and the man with capital, who has done nothing towards developing the resources of the place, but who can afford to overbid the miner, buys them up, and the men who have helped to make the township are ejected. A hundred pounds is nothing to your man of capital and the speculator, whereas the price may be absolutely beyond the reach of the struggling miner. So long as the present regulations continue, so long will the comparatively poor but hardworking digger be deprived of the opportunity of obtaining a block of land of his own in our mining townships; and I can support no Government that upholds such a form of injustice. The present regulations simply encourage landlordism, and landlordism in an aggravated form; and I need hardly say that landlordism of such a character does not commend itself to my support. I think it is absolutely necessary, if we want to make a friend of the miner, and to encourage him to settle amongst us, that we should give him every facility for securing a little block of town land at the Government upset price, or paying a certain percentage, on a sliding scale, from year to year. It is the worst principle we can adopt, to compel a man who wants to secure a

small piece of land of his own in these townships to spend the whole of his small capital in obtaining that land; and I trust we shall have some improvement in the existing regulations in the direction I have indicated. These are the chief points I wished to draw attention to. I should like, before I sit down, to thank the Government for one thing they have done to lessen the hardship of the miners: Only last week they removed one of the greatest hardships the men have had to contend with, in having to travel sometimes 200 or 300 miles to register their claims, which was not only a great loss of time but also a great expense. Now, I am pleased to say, mining registrars have been appointed by the Government, and the diggers will be able to be served by these officers, without the necessity of making a journey of hundreds of miles. This is a step in the right direction; and, if the Government exhibit the same liberal spirit in dealing with the mining regulations, I can promise them they will receive all the assistance I can give them in that direction. In conclusion, sir, I desire to thank hon. members very heartily for the patience and courtesy with which they have listened to this my first effort in addressing this House. I take it as a compliment not only to myself but also to the constituency which I have the honour to represent. That constituency, as I said before, is a big one and an important one; and I feel sure that every member here will give me every assistance in their power to make this goldfields constituency what I feel sure it will be at no distant future,—the leading goldfield constituency in the world.

MR. LEAKE: The Speech of His Excellency discloses to us that the one object that the Ministry have in view is to borrow money, and, having borrowed it, to spend it as quickly as possible. This is consistent with their policy in the past. They floated into power on a loan of a million and a third; they loaded up last session with a further loan of half a million, to keep themselves afloat; and they now ask us to ballast the ship of State with another large loan of a million and a half—not a bad rate of progress for a population of 70,000 souls—at the rate, in fact, of one million per annum. The million and a half loan which it is

proposed to raise now means the absolute addition of £60,000 a year to our taxation, for paying interest at four per cent. and a further possible sum which may be required to meet the difference between the working expenses of these railways and their actual receipts. Now, it is the duty of this House to consider whether the circumstances of this colony justify the raising of so large a sum of money at the present moment. In my opinion they do not. The principal works undertaken with the loan of a million and a third passed in 1891 were the Yilgarn and Mullewa railways, and the Fremantle harbour works.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): And the railway to Bunbury.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, the Bunbury railway hardly counts. Now, for political purposes, railways are always termed "reproductive works," but are they so, as a matter of fact? I am afraid that past experience suggests a doubt. What evidence is there that the railways which have been built are reproductive? The railways to Mullewa and Yilgarn have not yet been completed, and it is impossible for us to tell how far the receipts of those railways will fall short of the actual expenditure. And yet we are asked to sanction a further loan for what a member of the Government has very aptly termed a "speculative pioneer railway!" We should wait, I say, and see the results of our recent expenditure. With regard to this proposed expenditure, it would be well if the Government were to take a timely warning from the telegram published in this morning's Press, with regard to the opinion expressed by a London financial newspaper, *The Economist*, to the effect that it was questionable whether any further loan for this colony would be acceptable to the London money market. In saying what I have said, I hope hon. members will not think I take a pessimistic view of the prospects of this colony. I, with many others, believe, and firmly believe, that our goldfields are rich, and that they are extensive. I say they are undeveloped, and it is necessary that further progress in the course of development should be made by the mine-owners and others, before they can come to the Government and demand this extra assistance which the Government now propose in the

shape of railways. On the Murchison goldfields there is one dividend-paying mine, and one only on the Yilgarn goldfields. Public works should keep pace with the development on those fields, and not exceed them. It is possible for us all to go too fast. Can anyone stand up in this House and say that either the Murchison or the Yilgarn and Coolgardie goldfields, having regard to the amount of public money spent on their development, have not had the fullest possible consideration from the Government and from Parliament? Is it not sufficient to have built fifty or sixty miles of railway towards the Murchison goldfields, over an almost impassable sandplain; and is it not sufficient for the Government to have bridged over 170 miles, in fact more than half the way, towards the Coolgardie goldfields? And yet we are asked to pledge ourselves to a further loan, before we are in a position to appreciate the practical result of that recent expenditure. Our goldfields are rich—some of them. Some of them are poor. Where would Yilgarn have been to-day if Coolgardie had not been found? I think the bottom would have been knocked out of Southern Cross, at all events. The Commissioner of Crown Lands says "No," but I think there is not much gold being got there. I shall certainly, when the time approaches, ask the Government to give us some assurance, either by producing the reports of independent experts, or of their own competent officers, to show what guarantee they have of the permanency of those goldfields. As I have said, there are only two mines paying dividends, at present; and if we don't take care we may find this Coolgardie railway will be a railway to Bayley's Find and the Hampton Plains Syndicate country. What is there to show that Cue, on the one hand, or Coolgardie, on the other, is the centre of those goldfields, respectively? There is such a place as the Ninety Mile, in the Coolgardie country, and the general impression is that the Ninety Mile is richer than Coolgardie; and, if so, that railway should go to the richest centre. Then I hope the Government will be able to tell us to what part of the Coolgardie goldfield it is proposed to take this railway, as nothing is stated at present about that. There is an alternative course available, by which

the Government have an opportunity of saving the large expenditure on these railways, and that is to allow private enterprise to construct these lines. It is true that the Premier, speaking in another place, referred to certain syndicate representatives, who had offered to construct private lines, as "impecunious adventurers," and perhaps he will tell me now I am an "irresponsible babbler" for bringing up the matter in this House. I say that is a matter worthy of attention. Personally, I am in favour of private ownership rather than State ownership of railways. State ownership of railways is perhaps very well for giving railway matters a start; but I say that private enterprise is more likely to make a railroad pay than if managed by the State. State control, if you like, but not State management. I have heard it remarked, or rumoured, somewhere, that even the management of our present railways is not as absolutely perfect as it ought to be.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): Only a rumour.

MR. LEAKE: Positively, I have heard that remark, though it couldn't possibly be true, of course. Now there is another advantage of private over State railways, and that is that private owners have to make their lines pay, and, to do that, they have to keep up their freights. What is the difficulty the Government have had to contend with in the management of the present railways? They have to keep up the freights in order to make the lines pay anything; and the trading community of Perth and Fremantle, and all who are interested in the carriage of goods, are worrying the Commissioner and the Government to get the freight charges reduced. I say the Government have acted very properly, in this regard, when they determined to keep up the freights on the Yilgarn Railway, after the attempt made by a deputation to get them reduced, and I sincerely hope the Government will succeed and prosper in this intent. Besides these proposed railways in the programme, there seems to me to be only one other railway which is really worthy of consideration, and that is the proposed railway to Bridgetown. I represent an important district, and I ask the assurance of the Government that this railway is to be part and parcel of a

through railway to Albany. If it is to be a railway only to the tinfields, you are not going to get my vote for it. We must not forget that Mr. Reid, who had an offer of a concession of a thousand acres on the tinfield, some time ago, had to throw it up because he found the tinfield was no good. So, I say, give me an assurance that this railway is going to be carried on from a gum-stump to some centre of settlement. As to the proposed railway to the Collie coalfield, I do not think many members on this (the Opposition) side of the House will support the suggestion for its construction; and, at any rate, before the votes of this side can be obtained, it will be necessary to prove to us that there is an extensive coalfield at the Collie, and to what extent it has been tested. I think I am right in saying that, up to the present, there has not been an authentic report published of any thorough inquiry as to the extent or permanency of that coalfield. We have it rumoured that there is coal in other parts of the colony, and it would be well to test several other places where coal is reported to exist. There are other works mentioned in paragraph seven of His Excellency's Speech, and I refer especially to conserving and boring for water on goldfields. As one who has lately visited Coolgardie, I do congratulate the Government on the work that has been recently done along the road to Coolgardie. I have had opportunity of seeing the tanks, and there can be no doubt the Government have had the services of a most efficient and energetic officer, and the expenditure he has made has resulted in very good work, and I do not believe there has been any money wasted. Let them continue that good work; let them assist in developing those goldfields by pressing forward with the water supply and water conservation; and, if they do that, they will find ample opportunity for playing with the colony's sovereigns, instead of spending them in railways. There is another interesting little subject which I do not suppose I or any other hon. member knows anything about, because we have not been favoured with particulars, and perhaps it will not be fair to criticise before we see the scheme set out, and that is the proposed Land Bank; but, if I may anticipate events, I should surmise that this is going

to be a re-hash of the old financial clauses of the first Homesteads Bill. [MR. SIMPSON: "A resurrection."] If it is, I do not think it will secure my vote. But there is this danger in a Land Bank, that it will possibly develop into a huge political factor that may work great harm to the colony. If it is not carefully looked after, I am afraid we may term it "a Bill for the relief of the country storekeeper." The financial position of the colony is fairly satisfactory; but the Government have had uncommonly good luck—they were born with golden spoons in their mouths—and they have taken care to make the most of their opportunities. They have taken credit for the good seasons, and I hope they will debit themselves with the bad one with which we are threatened. We have it on the authority of a member of the other House that the increase of the population is not owing to the energies of members on the Government benches, but I am certain they will take credit even for that. There are one or two matters which have been unnecessarily omitted from the Speech. We have reference made to our financial position, but there is no mention made of any attempt to reduce taxation.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We have not increased it, at any rate.

MR. LEAKE: No; the hon. the Premier said in Bunbury that he did not propose to increase taxation at present, but did not say what he was going to do next year. It would have shown the Premier's faith in the progress of the colony if he had been able to announce, in the Governor's Speech, that the Government were in a position to reduce taxation. It is far better for us to reduce taxation than to incur further responsibilities by borrowing. Another matter that might have been referred to was the inquiry into the Civil Service, and the possibility of reform in that direction; and, if the Treasury chest is overflowing with revenue, they could not do better than increase the salaries of Civil servants. I speak feelingly, and I do not know why hon. members laugh, for I can assure the House that in many instances the Civil servants are not paid enough to enable them to be honest; so that it would be better if the attention of the Government were given to that subject. I agree with what the hon. member

for Yilgarn said as to the necessity for restricting the enterprise of the jumper, who is no better than a jackal that is always ready to prey on the honest toil of every prospector, and the sooner his little game is stopped, the better for this country. Another thing I expected to see in the Speech was that it was in contemplation to appoint a Minister for Mines. Without wishing to say anything derogatory to the hon. gentleman opposite (Hon. W. E. Marmion), who has charge of this department, I do not think he knows quite as much about the goldfields as he ought to do. Only a short time ago he made a flying visit to the goldfields; and I say no officer in his position can possibly appreciate arguments and criticisms with regard to the management of the goldfields, unless he has made it his business to become acquainted with all the matters affecting that department of administration. Another matter referred to by the hon. member for Yilgarn was the unrestricted sale of freehold land in goldfield townships. If any action on that subject is taken in this House I shall support it. If the Government would consider some comprehensive scheme whereby, instead of parting with the freehold, they would lease the sections in the goldfield townships, they would, in course of time, be in receipt of an enormous revenue from rents, which would go largely towards paying off our national debt. It is an important subject, and if the subject is to be dealt with, I and other members on this side of the House will give ready assistance. There is no doubt the Government must look to their position carefully, and brush themselves up with regard to their administration. It is not a policy of loans for public works that will keep them in office, for if they don't take care they will go down on the question of administration. You will hear more about this in the course of our meetings—possibly when the Estimates come on. That is a word of warning which I am certain will be given by more hon. members than myself. I do not suppose the hon. gentlemen on the other (the Government) side will force that Loan Bill through in its entirety, because if they think they can do so, I am sure they won't be able to carry it in its entirety. They had better make up their minds on which

subject in the Schedule they intend to climb down. Because they will have to climb down. It is a pity that this important policy had not been divulged to the public, either through the Government organ, the *Gazette*, or some other means, in order that the country might have known what was coming forward; but I am afraid the present Government are falling into the same error as the Government under the old form of Constitution used to be blamed for, that is the offence of secrecy. They have kept the surprise up their sleeve, and let it off at the last moment, like a bombshell thrown at the heads of the electors. I do not purpose saying anything more, on this occasion. I have had certain views, and have desired to unburden my chest of those that have been locked up there. I do not know whether I may be called a thick-and-thin supporter of the Government, but all I can say is I shall give them my support when I think they are acting in the best interests of the colony, and when I think they are not trying to go too fast, or wasting too much money. With an apology for paraphrasing the concluding paragraph of His Excellency's Speech, I will now leave the Government to their responsible duties, with a fervent hope that, with the Divine blessing, their labours will result in much real and lasting advancement.

MR. PIESSE: It gives me great pleasure to congratulate the Government on the financial position of the colony, and on the general condition of its affairs. The principal feature in His Excellency's Speech is the proposed loan; and I would like to state that I have had an opportunity of visiting the goldfields, and have satisfied myself as to whether the works now proposed are wanted or not. I can assure hon. members who have not visited the fields that the work done for developing those fields, so far, proves that they are of the richest character, and likely to prove permanent. The hon. member for Albany asked, just now, where would the Yilgarn railway have been if Coolgardie had not been discovered after that line was commenced? I would like also to say that if hon. members anticipate events, where would they have been if some of the electors had not turned up at the critical moment? They, possibly, would not be

here now. It is hard to anticipate events. The Government carried out the construction of that railway with the sanction of the last Parliament; and, having approved of it, we must give them credit for good intentions in the past. One other principal subject in the Speech is the proposed railway to Bridgetown; and I agree with the remark of the hon. member for Albany that, if it is deemed necessary to construct that railway, facts and figures should be placed before us to justify it, and, if that can be done, then by all means let the line be constructed. But I do not at present see the necessity for carrying it on to Bridgetown, for the ultimate purpose of continuing it through to Albany, because we have already the Great Southern Railway opening up the country from the South, and that line affords sufficient means of communication between the port of Albany and the capital of the colony. It would be a farce to endeavour to construct a railway either from Bridgetown, or any other point on the Southern coast, for connecting with Albany, as such a line would simply run parallel with the Great Southern Railway, and the distance between them would be, at some points, only 20 to 30 miles apart, and through a country which, by way of Bridgetown, would offer great engineering difficulties, and the nature of the country also would not warrant such an expensive undertaking. Those who know that country as well as I do must be aware that it is mountainous country, thickly wooded, and having only small patches of land that could be cultivated. We have already sufficient areas in agricultural districts available for settlement within the reach of railways; therefore, to construct this line for opening up more agricultural country is hardly necessary at present. The old-settled district of the Williams River and Marradong should first be connected with the South-Western Railway, as suggested in the course of this debate. I hope that in the early future we shall have a survey made with a view to a railway into that country, connecting the old district of the Williams with some point on the South-Western Railway, because there is a great deal of good agricultural land, and the Murray forests are second to none in the colony for the timber industry. With regard

to the proposed railway to the Murchison goldfields, I cannot speak from personal knowledge, but those who know that country say that a line from Mullewa to Cue is wanted, and that the prospects of the Murchison goldfields are really better than those of Coolgardie. I hope facts will be placed before us which will enable us to come to a conclusion as to the desirability of that railway. With regard to the Bills that are promised, we have the first of them now before us; that is, the Fencing Bill. I think it is a very desirable measure; it is one we have all anticipated, and I hope its provisions will be found to be such as will enable us to accept them as suitable to the circumstances of the colony. Such a measure is desirable for enabling those settlers who erect fences along the boundaries of adjoining properties to be compensated in fair proportion, and for preventing those disputes and grievances which have arisen in the past with regard to the fencing of adjoining blocks. It is a wise course to provide this relief for those settlers who are inclined to improve their properties, by enabling each one to recover from the adjoining owner one-half the value of that portion of fencing which he is bound to erect for encompassing his own property. With regard to the Land Bank scheme, which so many have spoken of in a manner approaching ridicule, it seems to me that many persons have looked on this subject from a point of view which applies more to a city than to country districts. I have found in this House that hon. members, with a few exceptions, are not inclined to look with much favour on what has been done by country settlers. The farmer, who goes away back in the country and develops the soil, receives very little sympathy from the persons who reside in cities and towns.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: They have had practical sympathy.

MR. PIESSE: If they have had practical sympathy, so have some others who are not practical farmers. It is better for people who live in glass houses not to throw stones. I can hit pretty hard, if I like.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: That's right. Hit hard; hit harder. Speak out straight, and we shall know what you mean.

MR. PIESSE: With regard to this Land Bank, there is no doubt it is a dangerous subject; but possibly when the Premier introduces his scheme, he will be able to place before hon. members such facts as will enable us to shape a reasonable and safe measure for assisting this very deserving class of people. It is all very well for the hon. member for Albany to say this is a scheme to relieve the country storekeeper. That has been said pretty frequently. We quite admit that, and I hope it will relieve him. He has had the burden of the whole colony, up to the present.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Ah! That's the root of the whole thing.

MR. PIESSE: The storekeeper has been of great assistance to the farmer in the country, and I hope the time will come when some one else will be of assistance to the farmer, besides the storekeeper. We have heard of several schemes put forward with regard to a Land Bank, such as the adoption of the Credit Foncier system as established in France; but I think such systems would not be altogether applicable to the circumstances of this colony. They are on a gigantic scale, and worked on something of the debenture method, which would scarcely apply here; so that I think the only feasible method would be something like that which the Premier is about to introduce—that is a bank of loan, arranged by the Government, with a fixed sum of money voted out of loan funds, and worked by a committee, irrespective of the Government. We can work it only on those lines, and it should not be influenced by political or party feelings. I hope the collective wisdom of the House—this side of the House, at all events, if the other side does not consider the measure suitable for the country—will offer such suggestions as will enable us to make it a workable scheme. I quite agree that such a scheme would be a dangerous one, unless properly safeguarded. It is quite as dangerous as the financial scheme for assisting settlers which was proposed in the first Homesteads Bill; but I think that scheme could have been worked beneficially if a trial had been given to it, and I believe it would have produced better results in settling the land than have been obtained under the present

Homesteads Act. That Act is pretty well inoperative, owing to the restricted conditions with regard to selection. Had the selection been free, no doubt the results would have been far better, and instead of confining the selector to the taking up of those little patches on the declared Agricultural Areas, which have been in most instances rejected lots, we would have had many persons settling under that Act, and there would now be a better account to give of it. I think there has been a slight error of judgment in laying out those Agricultural Areas. No doubt those officers who were instrumental in selecting the area of country for that purpose did it in the best faith; but I can tell those hon. members who have not had the opportunity I have had of seeing the land, that many of the selections that have been made are entirely useless for agriculture, and that they would never be taken up by anyone intending to make his living off the land, for if a man is to make a living off 160 acres of land he must have the best land you can offer him. The hon. member for the Swan mentioned that other settlers were equally entitled to assistance with the farmer. Possibly the hon. member may be right, but the man who must be assisted is the man who develops the soil; and unless you are going to assist him, how are we to get this country developed? The goldfields will, no doubt, induce a large population to come to the colony, but a question with the people of all countries, and an object with all Governments, is how to settle people on the soil for its cultivation, and especially in new countries. In the Eastern colonies the Governments are trying to promote settlement on the soil, and unless we offer some inducements to men to take up the soil, and turn the desert or the wilderness into a smiling cornfield, such as we often see in favoured places, and which changes the whole face of the land; unless we do so, and in that way make traffic for our railways, we had better stop building railways and shut up altogether.

MR. LOTON: You can build railways to their doors.

MR. PIESSE: Well, if the farmers are not to be assisted, let us all go to the goldfields, and after that we can do as others do—clear out to some other colony that is more inviting.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: No, no; take the duty off flour.

MR. PLESSE: I don't intend to catch on to suit the hon. member for the Gascoyne, because that subject has been worn out. We have had enough of flour for the present. It seems to me the sons of Western Australia have been its greatest detractors. People in the North are constantly saying we cannot produce what the other colonies can send here; but let those settlers be patient, and let them give us in the South credit for good intentions and credit for producing a good article. But, with some of those Northern people, nothing will do unless it has been imported. The interests of farmers are the interests of the whole colony; and when this proposal of the Government for assisting farmers comes before us for consideration, I do hope that hon. members will give it due consideration. Although I congratulate the Government on the state of things in general, still I would like to mention a point with regard to a portion of their public works policy. It is not the first time I have mentioned this, and may not be the last. I refer to the design of some of our public buildings throughout the colony. In different parts little buildings are being put up which have cost enormous sums in comparison with their size, and it seems to me that whoever was responsible for the design of them must be a gentleman of the old school; for he has got the idea that our jarrah timber requires to be equal in size to the light pine wood used in England, and that therefore it is necessary to put in an equal quantity of heavy jarrah timber, and so increase the cost. Little school buildings, which might be put up for £200 or £300, are costing £500, through the want of local knowledge in requiring more timber to be put in than is necessary for the required strength. At Newcastle the same sort of mistake is visible, where a building is being pulled down to make room for another one. In my own district (the Williams), where the public buildings have been so costly in proportion to the size, the same thing is much remarked upon. It is only a matter of departmental arrangement, and I hope there will be some change in it. I hope also that, as time goes on, we shall see these

works of a minor nature carried out at less cost than they have been.

MR. RICHARDSON: Regarding the Speech as a whole, there is a lot of meaning in it expressed in a few words. We are attempting a further expenditure of a million and a half of money, and we are asked to give our views as to whether it is a wise policy, a bold policy, and a safe policy. I wish to remark that, with the exception of the hon. member for Albany, who has been somewhat direct in his opposition, and has gone in straight for opposing the whole thing, almost, and has said in plain language that he is opposed to further borrowing—with the exception of his speech, all the opposition we have heard to-night has been of a very qualified kind; and it would puzzle any one to gather from that opposition whether they approve of the Loan Bill or not. The hon. member for the Swan (Mr. Ioton) started off pretty directly by opposing it, but ended up by approving of nearly the whole of it. He said it required consideration, and a lot of information, and a great deal of deliberation, before he could sanction this expenditure of money; but I have not heard him and other members on that side say which of these public works they are directly opposed to, or whether they are opposed to the whole thing. We must either say we do not consider the colony is in a position to borrow any further money, or, on the other hand, we must say there are public works that must be pressed on, and that we must assist the goldfields by developing the facilities of carriage. Then the responsibility comes on us, to say which of these works we ought to undertake, and which to reject. It is a serious consideration as to whether it is right and proper to borrow another million and a half, in present circumstances. As the hon. member for the Swan pointed out, if at the end of this proposed expenditure our population will have increased to 100,000 people, we will still have only 60 persons to every mile of constructed railway. That will be a large proportion of railways to so small a population; and if we can make our railways pay, under such circumstances, we may claim that, in regard to railway management, we shall almost have discovered the philosopher's stone. We have to consider also the comparatively light cost of constructing

railways in this colony; and from that point of view there is a great deal to be said in favour of making railways to places which could not otherwise be opened up. If we can find any silver lining to the cloud, I think we are justified in availing ourselves of it. When we look at the heavier cost of railways in other colonies as compared with the cost at which we construct our railways, there is very much in favour of our constructing railways through country which would not otherwise be opened up by this means at so early a period. A comparative statement of the cost of railway construction shows that in Great Britain the cost averages £29,000 to £30,000 a mile; in Scotland, about £18,000 a mile; in Ireland, about £15,000 a mile; and in America, which is held up as the country in all the world for cheap construction of railways, the average cost has been about £12,000 a mile. Coming now to Australian railways, the average cost in Victoria has been about £20,000, and so on with the other colonies. Therefore, when we are able to construct railways in this colony for something like £3,500 a mile, and equip them also within that cost, I think this comparative cheapness justifies us in constructing more mileage in proportion to population than would be considered practicable under other circumstances. That is one consideration which may help us to swallow these new proposals of the Government, more readily than we might otherwise be able to do. There is also the question of differential rates. We have been told, by the Government and by other persons, that the only justification for making railways to goldfields is that those who are interested in the mines will be prepared to pay a higher rate of freight than the ordinary railway rate. We are also told there is very little back freight from goldfields, and that in many cases a goldfield is an exhausting quantity; that a goldfield railway is very different from a railway through an agricultural country, where you know the products from the soil will go on increasing, whereas a goldfield is a kind of product that is gradually becoming exhausted; and as there is no back freight to carry from a goldfield, the Government say, wisely, that those persons who are paying £20 to £25 a ton for the carriage of machinery and supplies to gold-

fields by road should be satisfied if they get their goods carried for £5 to £8 a ton by railway. But we also want to know what hope there is that the Government will be able to maintain these differential rates on goldfields railways. I ventured to remark, a good many weeks before we had that deputation from Southern Cross to the Railway Commissioner, protesting against the higher rate of freights charged on the newly opened line, that I doubted whether any Government would be able to sustain that exceptional rate of charge, in the face of inevitable protests from a clamorous lot of gold-diggers, worked up into indignation at being charged more for the carriage of goods to goldfields than to other parts of the colony. What we want to know, at this stage of railway construction, is whether these extra high rates on goldfields lines are going to be charged or not, and whether these exceptional rates are to be put into a Bill, so that they may not be reduced under pressure, or are to be levied at the will of Ministers, who are prepared to stand their ground against the pressure and clamour of those who will want to reduce the rates. It is as well for this House to consider these new railways on the basis of the ordinary rates of freight, because although there is a great deal of justification for charging higher rates on goldfields lines, where there is no back loading, as not many ounces of gold will fill up the return trucks, and although this exceptional course may be unpopular as applied to goods, and I would not advocate any excessive charge for passenger traffic; still we must expect that the people who have to pay the higher rates of freight will not be satisfied to do so after they have got their railway opened, because it is human nature with miners, as with others, to object to exceptionally high rates, and to cry out for the lowest, and they will do so even though they were before paying £20 to £25 a ton, and are now getting their goods carried at 75 per cent. less. In that respect we are all alike. The hon. member for the Swan showed us the dark side of the question—[MR. LORON: The true side, not the dark side.]—I was going to add that I would show the dark side was not quite true in one respect. He said, very justly, that the additional

cost of these proposed railways would add to the debt of this colony at the rate of £20 per head of population, and that even if we got double the present population these works would add £10 per head. But the way I work out the sum shows that the cost of these works, added to our present indebtedness, will make the total amount about five millions, and the proportion will be about £66 per head of our present population, but if we double our population we shall have a proportionate indebtedness of only £33 per head, equal to one-half the larger amount. I wish also to point out a little discrepancy in a matter advocated by the hon. member for Yilgarn and the hon. member for Albany. The hon. member for Yilgarn said there is a great want of improved provisions for giving to miners the security of the fee simple of their tenure, in order that English capital may be introduced, because English investors are so accustomed to have a tangible security. I can understand that, quite well. It is reasonable. But, on the other hand, we had the hon. member for Albany advocating that, in the sale of these goldfields tenures, there should be perpetual leasing, and that the Government would, in course of time, have a wonderful amount of revenue from that source. [MR. LEAKE: Adopt my suggestion.] Well, these two methods of solving the same problem seem to me to conflict. I will venture to allude to the proposed Land Bank, and will shortly say I am not much inclined to be a full-hearted supporter of this proposal. I can see a lot of danger and difficulty; but at this stage I will only say that if Government loans are to be advanced to any class of persons in the community, secured on the permanent improvements of their lands, unless the system is fenced in with sufficient safeguards to take it out of the possibility of political pressure, and to make it not subject to what might be called political clamour, we should cautiously consider whether it is a wise measure or not. If, when the Bill is passed, it would be possible for the Government, or those who make the advances, to distinguish between Bill Brown and Tom Jones, or if, having lent to one, they do not lend to the other, and there are to be grievances and complaints in the newspapers, then we had better have nothing

to do with this lending of public money. Even with the Railways Department, if an officer is discharged, the heads of the department are subjected to all sorts of remarks in newspaper letters and by deputations; so that if, under this Land Bank scheme, the managers of it refuse a loan to certain individuals, and if for doing so they are to be subject to that kind of pressure, the less we have to do with it the better. But I do think that, if this scheme can be safeguarded in these directions, a certain amount of good may result from the measure. At the same time, I do not think the good will be anything like what is anticipated by some sanguine people; for although it may help a few individuals, and cause a little more cultivation of the soil, yet I do not think the good will be commensurate with the noise that is made about it. I have looked into the Credit Foncier system, as proposed lately in Victoria, and I see a great deal of danger attached to it, and think that, if the scheme be adopted there, its working will create considerable difficulty. That is my opinion. I regret to see a total absence from the Governor's Speech of any allusion to the Homesteads Act, and how it has been carried into effect; for I do not think that, after passing a measure which places the settler in the position that, instead of his having to pay 10s. an acre, spread over 10 or 20 years, the payment is reduced by one-half, and spread over 30 years—if such an inducement will not cause people to settle on the soil, I do not see how a loan of £200, and reducing the interest of it from eight to five per cent., will have the desired effect. All this talk about settling people on the land is like grasping at shadows, and neglecting perhaps more substantial things that are under their noses. I do believe, and in this I am borne out by my own experience and that of some practical members in this House, that if the present Homesteads Act were only taken in hand and worked practically, it would result in ten times more settlement than any Land Bank for lending money to settlers. I do hope the Government will be able to put the present Act on some better footing for promoting settlement. What amuses me very much is the nature of the objections to the Homesteads Act. We have one class of objec-

tors who say the conditions are too strict, and not liberal enough. I am alluding particularly to the homestead leases. Objectors say the conditions are too strict, and that those who took up the leases would have to spend too much money, and that the payments are too severe; therefore, people do not take up the runs. We can understand those objections as being reasonable and practical, because many hon. members on this (the Government) side of the House pointed out that this would probably be the cause of the failure. Then we have another class of objectors, who say the Act was only a squatters' Act, passed by a squatters' Parliament, for enabling squatters to convert their leaseholds into freeholds, that the country would be monopolised by the squatters, and that instead of an Act to promote the settlement of the land, we were going to have a lot of land monopoly. Well, the answer to that is that the predicted result has not happened, and I do not think it is likely to happen. Another class of objectors actually urge both these objections, and in doing so they inconsistently say these opposite causes are driving them away. However, if the Land Act be taken in hand and amended, by providing for selection before survey, instead of survey before selection, as was urged on the Premier when the Bill was before this House—if that part could be altered, I believe we should see such a revival of settlement of the lands as no Land Bank Bill will ever accomplish. In conclusion, I will say that I regret that this Speech, though it deals with the increase of revenue and the surplus, does not deal with the more important indications of our prosperity—I mean the imports and exports; for though we see a slight increase in our exports, and, though I am not croaking, there is an increase of £35,000 in the amount of our exports; yet, while we have an increase of nearly £200,000 in our wool and gold exports, there is a corresponding falling off of £160,000 in the value of the other exports of the colony. That is a large amount; but while £80,000 of the reduced total value of exports is accounted for by the less money value of the wool—though the quantity exported was greater—still that difference leaves some £80,000 of decrease in the other exports. I think

the decrease is to be found in our timber and pearlshell exports, and perhaps they are very important items. It is well that we should take a stern look at all these conditions, and not run away with the bit in our teeth, and think that because we have found a large amount of gold in the country, we may have no reverses. I do believe thoroughly in the sound position of the colony, and I think we can fairly challenge examination into our finances to prove it. But I like to look all round the question before sanctioning such a large addition to our debt as is contemplated. I hope that when we are dealing with the Loan Bill we shall not repeat the experience of the other colonies—that of losing their heads in a little prosperity. We must remember that even this gold which is being found in the country will not last for ever. We must remember that a great deal of our prosperity will be caused just by a rush of people into the country, and that when the alluvial deposits are exhausted, and we are thrown back on our permanent reefs, there may not be that wonderful increase in our population which we now anticipate. Although I am prepared to look at the Loan Bill as favourably as possible, there are some items in it I cannot swallow.

MR. THROSSELL: I think the majority of members must approve of the general policy of the Government. That policy must, to my mind, in the main, continue to be for some time to come a policy of development of the public estate—a public works policy; and so long as those public works are such as are likely to prove reproductive, such policy will command my support. With regard to the various works referred to in His Excellency's Speech, I notice with pleasure that provision is to be made for the construction of railways to the Coolgardie and Cue goldfields. Judging from all we hear of the wealth of these fields, such railways are called for, and will command my support. When the Premier brought forward his last Loan Bill, he said he hoped it would be a long time before he again entered upon a system of loans. At that time, however, I ventured to tell him his next Loan Bill would be for those very railways; and may we not rejoice that in so short a time these fields have so far developed as to be deemed,

by the common voice, worthy of railway extension? The past policy of the Government has, I conceive, been eminently successful. I regard this colony in the same light as I do many of the large private estates—of small value, until improved by judicious expenditure. The result of the past policy of the Government is seen in the large increase in the population of the colony, the gain being some 35,000 during the past three and a half years, and we have every reason to believe that a similar increase may be secured during the expenditure of the proposed loan of one and a half millions. Population means wealth; and, taking every adult as being worth £4 per head per annum to the State, this increase seems, to my mind, to do away with any objection to additional borrowing, so long as care is taken to expend the money only in reproductive works. If we secure only 15,000 people as a permanent increase during the expenditure of the proposed loan, they will be worth £60,000 per annum to the colony, and thus the interest will be provided for. I could wish that, while the discussion on the Loan Bill is going forward, the spirit of the late Anthony Trollope could be present in our gallery; for hon. members will remember how, in his work upon Australia, he ridiculed the idea of West Australia ever possessing either gold or coalfields, yet now we are actually considering the construction of three different lines of railway to open up both coal and goldfields, the latter of which give promise of becoming the richest in the Australian group. With regard to the proposed lines of railway to the Collie coalfield and to Bridgetown, I am not so sanguine, and shall require more proof than is before the House at present, before according them my support. I only hope that the land to be tapped by this Bridgetown railway is in the hands of the Government, and not already alienated and owned by absentees. We have already had too much of that sort of thing. I am pleased to learn from the Premier that this line will tap Government lands, as this, to my mind, will be a great argument in its favour; but still we must have greater proofs before recognising the necessity for these lines. His Excellency has as-

sured us that we possess coal that in quantity and quality leaves little to be desired. If this can be established beyond a doubt, then, indeed, we should be unworthy of its possession did we hesitate to expend money in its development. In dealing with these Southern railways, I cannot forbear exclaiming, "O, happy Bunbury, to have a Premier for its member!" And I could wish that the Premier could change his constituency yearly, for then I believe valuable discoveries would be made in every district he represented. I congratulate the Government heartily on its intention of introducing a measure for the establishment of a Land Bank, for the purpose of encouraging production by making loans to small landowners and new selectors. I take it on me to say that no measure yet introduced will bring so much good to the colony, provided this bank be conducted on safe lines, and that the loans be granted only for new improvements, and not for those already in existence. I trust, too, that such loan will be made on the building society principle, which has proved so successful in the city of Perth. I am confident that no other mode will be safe. Hon. members, in dealing with the question, must remember the necessity existing for extended agriculture. This is apparent from the fact that we have only about 80,000 acres of land under crop, after 60 years of settlement; and it is further proved, if proofs were necessary, by the enormous quantity of agricultural products annually imported. I believe I am right in saying that, during the expenditure of our last Loan, we have imported soil products to the value of over half a million sterling. During the current year we shall have to face the importation of 10,000 tons of chaff, which represents 10,000 acres of land. With such facts as these before us, it is plain that special measures must be taken to settle people on our lands. I am induced to believe that the name "Land Bank" is a misnomer. I would prefer it being called an "Agricultural Loan Fund." Hon. members will recognise that, while loans can be obtained in the city from the Government Savings Bank, and from the life assurance and other societies, for the erection of houses and other purposes, there is no institution in the colony, saving only the ordinary

banks, from which the landowner can borrow. The Savings Bank and the Perth Building Society have been in existence for many years, and have never made a bad debt. Why, I ask, then, shall not the same opportunities for borrowing on safe conditions be extended to dwellers in the country? In the Post Office Savings Bank we have an institution already formed. Let us enlarge its sphere of usefulness, increase the present maximum of deposits, and so provide a loan fund for farmers for clearing their land. So long as this new institution observes the wise principle that the borrower shall take equal risks with the lender, and that a margin of 50 per cent. is observed, no loss is ever likely to result, especially if the building society principle for the return of the loan be strictly carried out. To those objecting to this, I would ask again, why should not the farmer have the same privilege as the resident in towns, provided his security be equally good? Is the man in the country less honest than his fellow in town? I trow not. While on this subject, I may mention that the Government of New Zealand have for many years been making loans to farmers and others up to £5,000, on the system I advocate; that at the present time the New Zealand Government has a half-million out on loan; and that during twenty-seven years' operations that Government has only had occasion to foreclose in three instances, and has only made a loss of £50 during all that time. I sincerely trust hon. members, in dealing with this matter, will do so without prejudice, and will remember that it is not so much in the interest of the farmer as that of the colony that this measure should be instituted. I would further add that while in the other colonies similar measures are being taken to assist farmers, it is for very different reasons, and under vastly different conditions, as compared with those in this colony. In the other colonies, farmers are in a state of financial ruin, and the advances are to be made upon improvements already in existence, and these loans will add no new wealth to the State. There, too, production exceeds the demand. But here, on the contrary, we are twenty years behind the requirements of production. There, the loans are made to save the old farmer from ruin; here, to establish new ones

on the soil—a vastly different state of things, as all will allow. I do not hesitate to say that the establishment of this Land Bank will crown all the other works of the Forrest Government, and give life and encouragement to the homestead block system. In conclusion, I can only repeat that in the main the policy of the Government has my hearty support; for while they have made many blunders, and will doubtless continue to do so, their honesty of purpose is to my mind beyond dispute; and, holding these views, I can give them continued support.

MR. COOKWORTHY: I must congratulate the Attorney General upon his having laid on the table of the House sundry Bills, for the early information of hon. members, and of the public at large; and I only hope the Press will not hack them to pieces, as was so feared by some hon. members when the suggestion was discussed in this House during the last session. I have heard two supporters of the Government, while speaking in this debate, condemn one of the proposed new railways, and that is the railway to Bridgetown. [MR. THROSELL: I did not oppose it.] I understood the hon. member for Northam to condemn that proposal.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): No, not condemned yet.

MR. COOKWORTHY: It seemed something like it. It was very faint praise, if not actual condemnation, by those two hon. members. One hon. member (Mr. Piesse) said it would be far better to connect the Bunbury line with the Williams district; but though I do not say that would not be a good line, for I know nothing about the Williams district, yet I think the hon. member for the Williams knows very little about the Blackwood district. The Blackwood is far better land, and better country, taking it as a whole, than that along the Perth-to-Bunbury line; and I can tell hon. members that, for the first nine months since its construction, no railway in this colony has paid so well. [MR. SIMPSON: By tiddliwinking]. It has also been stated we are borrowing too much, but you may depend upon it that, considering our railways are being constructed at a very cheap rate, we can afford to do it; and we know the railways bring population to the agricultural districts, where people will remain and

settle. I am not opposed to the Coolgardie Railway, but I do support, and honestly believe it worthy of support, the proposed railway to Bridgetown. With regard to the Land Bank scheme, there is no doubt a great deal of danger attached to it; but if it is to be conducted somewhat on the plan of the Post Office Savings Bank, which might extend its operations to the country districts as well as to the towns, I do not think there will be much danger. In the first Homesteads Bill it was proposed to advance 50 per cent. on the value of improvements actually done; but, according to the Post Office Savings Bank Act, advances may be made to the extent of two-thirds of the value of the property; and I think that if the Land Bank scheme of the Premier's is somewhat on the same principle as the Post Office Savings Bank, with deferred payment, the same as in building societies, I believe it will be of great benefit to the farmer. It is said, why should you help the farmer? Because he carries on the most important industry of any in the world, and when you help the farmer you help many other trades. You also help the store-keeper, and enable him to pay off his debts. I should not have risen in this debate had not the Bridgetown railway been referred to in the manner in which it has been.

MR. LEFROY: I congratulate the Speaker, and this House, and the colony at large, upon your re-election, sir, as Speaker of this Assembly. It is due to you to mention, on this (the Opposition) side of the House, that you have the entire confidence of this House and the respect of the community; and if you had not been again placed in the position you now hold, it would have been a loss to Parliament and to the country at large. As to the subject before the House, I am afraid that after two very loud guns have been let off from the Government side of the House, I should be a very small pistol indeed; and although there is much in the Speech of His Excellency on which this colony may be congratulated, I do not feel lubricated to the same extent as the hon. gentleman (Mr. Wood) who moved the Address-in-Reply. It seemed to be no effort for him to take in the whole of it, with the greatest ease, though I think there must

have been some lubrication beforehand, or it would have been impossible to have swallowed such an amount as is contained in that Address. We have before us the old policy of borrowing. It is a policy which the Government were empowered to carry out by the almost unanimous vote of this Assembly; and it is a policy which seemed to be inevitable in the circumstances in which we are placed, and without which there could have been no material advance. But, at the same time, I think we should be cautious, and that we should not allow this stimulus to get the better of our judgment. We are informed in the Speech that the population has increased to some considerable extent. If the Government had not been able to inform us of that fact, they would scarcely have been able to come before this House with the confidence of the people, because if the population had not increased to a considerable extent, this colony would have had to be taxed more heavily than the population could possibly bear. It was a natural sequence of borrowing that the population should increase, because where the carcass is, there the eagles will gather together, and people will come from different parts of the world to settle where borrowing is going on. At the same time, I think the one thing that has brought population to this colony, more than anything else, is gold. We see it everywhere. From the utterances of hon. gentlemen in this House it is printed in large letters all over the Assembly. We hear it in the streets of our towns, in country places, in the humblest homes, and in the homes of the richest; it is in everybody's mouth, and it is undoubtedly the great factor that has placed us in the position we are in at the present time—the sound position we are in, financially and otherwise. Because, when we come to look at our exports, what do we find? We find that the exports from this colony have not increased to the extent that gentlemen in this House would all desire to see. The exports from this colony in 1891 were something like £799,000 in value; in 1892 the value was £882,148; while in 1893, with an increased population, and with half the exports made up in value from gold, I regret to say the total amount was only £918,147. I think that fact must bid us pause, when we consider

that in 1893, the latest period for which we have returns, the total exports were only £918,147 in value, and the half of that value was the export of gold as a comparatively new product. Then our export of wool, the staple industry of the whole of Australia, as it is in the eyes of the world, has also fallen off in value. In view of these facts we should consider whether we are really in a position to borrow the large amount which the Government are about to propose in their Loan Bill. No country, situated as this colony is, can prosper unless its exports keep up; and I say the fact that gold now forms such a large factor in the total value of our exports is the very reason why we should be careful in husbanding the gold industry, lest, if that industry fails us, we may possibly fail also. It seems to me the only hope we have, in these times, is to push on and help the gold industry of the colony. When trade is in such a state, and agricultural products are so low, it is important that we should try to advance that industry which produces from the soil such very great wealth. For that reason I shall be happy, when the time comes, to consider, and I hope favourably, any measure for the advancement of these goldfields. We are told, in the Speech, that during the past year the public works authorised by Parliament have been proceeded with. I doubt whether that is altogether a fact, that all the works authorised by Parliament are already proceeded with, for I think there are works authorised which have not been proceeded with. There are many buildings authorised for erection throughout the country, but not yet constructed. I could name a building for which a vote was placed on the Estimates two years ago, and the building is no further on now than it was then. The district I represent (the Moore) is a modest one; it is not large in its requirements, and the people there have not often troubled Parliament for works; but two years ago a sum was placed on the Estimates for a school at Gingin, a town which has been in existence since the commencement of the colony. There has not been a Government school in the town, and although the money was voted two years ago the school has not yet been erected. I have no doubt that matter has been overlooked, simply through the

modesty of the district I represent. I am glad that the Midland Railway construction is said to be in full progress. It would be a sorry result if, after this colony had guaranteed the Company's loan, that work was not in full progress. I may mention that when the Premier moved the resolution in this House, agreeing to the proposals which had been approved by the select committee, it was stated that one effect of guaranteeing the Company's loan would be that the land in the Midland Company's concession would be opened for selection immediately. For nearly nine years the whole of that country has been closed to selection, and it seems now to be as far off being settled upon as ever. The land is there, and people are waiting to occupy it; the forests are waiting to be cleared, but the people who want to begin operations are prevented from taking up the land. I will not now refer to the Bills promised by the Government, though I have no doubt they are intended for the advancement of the colony. With regard to the Land Bank, I do not propose to enter into that scheme now, beyond saying that my opinion is that encouraging this sort of thing is likely to be hurtful to the individual and dangerous to the State. If we go back into the history of this colony, we find that some few years ago, when a Commission was appointed by the then Governor to inquire into the agricultural products of the colony, that Commission, of which our Director of Public Works (Hon. H. W. Venn) was chairman, sent in a final report, to which his name is attached, and which was entirely against the lending of money to farmers; and the Commission also found, upon examination, that the farmers did not desire it. I think that, were we to encourage farmers and settlers to enter into this sort of thing, we should be doing away with their independence and manliness, and with a great deal of the energy which they ought to have. It is not by encouraging borrowing that we are likely to raise up a manly and hardy race of farmers. For these reasons I feel disinclined, at present, to support a scheme of this description. It is almost a waste of time to say much upon this motion for adopting the Address-in-Reply. I hope that good feeling which has existed between both sides of this House in the

past will continue during the period of the present Parliament. For some few years we have been living under the system of Responsible Government, and perhaps some notice may be taken of the position which some of us have taken up this evening, on this side of the House. I may assure the Government and this House that it is from no sordid or personal motives that we take up that position here, but we consider the time has come when we should show the country that there are a body of members who are capable of some cohesion, and able to place themselves in the position of Her Majesty's Opposition, as distinguished from Her Majesty's Ministers, in this House. It is not that we intend in any way to thwart the Government, but rather to unitedly assist the Government. I can assure the Government and the House that we on this side have quite as patriotic motives as hon. members on the other side. We have retained the hon. member on my right (Mr. Leake), I may say, for the defence, and I am sure he performed his part this evening most ably. And I trust that, in dealing with the measures which come before us this session, all hon. members in this House may be animated with the same feelings and the same desire for promoting the welfare and benefit of the colony, as I am sure that I, as a West Australian, have.

MR. RANDELL moved that the debate be adjourned until the next day.

Question put and passed.

Debate adjourned accordingly until Tuesday, 31st July.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11 o'clock, p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 31st July, 1894.

New Member—Completion and working of Geraldton-Mullewa Railway—Sale of Great Southern Railway to Government—Library Committee, Appointment of—Standing Orders Committee, Appointment of—House Committee, Appointment of—Printing Committee, Appointment of—Supply Bill: first reading; Suspension of Standing Orders; second reading; third reading—Address-in-Reply, Presentation of—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir G. Shenton) took the chair at 3 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

NEW MEMBER.

The Hon. H. J. SAUNDERS, having taken the oath required by law, and signed the members' roll, took his seat.

COMPLETION AND WORKING OF GERALDTON-MULLEWA RAILWAY.

THE HON. H. MCKERNAN asked the Colonial Secretary:—

1. The time stated in the contract for completing the Mullewa Railway.
2. If any extension of time has been granted to the contractor for this line; and, if so, upon what grounds.
3. What extent of the line is now made, and, if used by the public, what is the rate of charges.
4. Has the Government any intention of taking over the part of the line constructed, and utilising it as other Government lines in the colony.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. S. H. Parker) replied as follows:—

1. The time for completing this railway, 19th July, 1894.
2. No extension of time has as yet been granted.
3. The permanent way is laid to 54 miles 30 chains. The contractor conveys the traffic, I believe, over the line on his own responsibility and at his own charges.
4. Government has no intention of taking over this line until fully completed.

SALE OF GREAT SOUTHERN RAILWAY TO THE GOVERNMENT.

THE HON. F. T. CROWDER, on behalf of the Hon. C. A. PIESSE, asked the Colonial Secretary whether the West Australian Land Company have ever