

THE PREMIER: Yes; but he did not suppose anyone expected that every single branch line was to pay its way. There must be a system. We must have a railway in order to carry coal, even if the railway did not pay.

MR. A. FORRESTER: Five hundred tons of coal ran into this station every day.

THE PREMIER: Doubtless his friend the General Manager would look into this matter, and see if any injustice had been done to this hard-working poor line—the poor man's line.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The pet railway.

THE PREMIER: If any injustice was being done to this line, the railway officials would, he was sure, rectify it. He could only say, in conclusion, it had given him and his friend the Commissioner, and the Government altogether, much pleasure to find that their endeavours this year had met with the approval of hon. members. One thing he noticed had not been referred to, that being the difference in the shape in which the Estimates were presented to hon. members. There was always a complaint that sufficient details were not given as to the employees and officers. The Government tried to remedy that this year by treating the Railway Department exactly in the same way as all other departments. Although that had been a great deal of trouble, the Railway Department were only too anxious to do whatever they were asked to do, and to give all the information; in fact they gave it to a larger degree than he (the Premier) desired. He did not know that any difference would result to the finances, but it might be satisfactory to know that the railway estimates in regard to officers' salaries were presented in the same shape as were those of the other departments.

On motion by **MR. GREGORY**, progress reported and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:58 o'clock, until the next Monday evening.

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 5th November, 1900.

Question: Mail Contractors' Charges—Question: Relief to wife of absent Soldier—Question: Tick Cattle and Quarantine—Leave of Absence—Kalgoorlie Tramways Bill, third reading—Leederville Tramways Bill, third reading—Fremantle Tramways Bill, third reading—Roads and Streets Closure Bill, third reading—Trustees (Colonial Securities) Bill, third reading—Annual Estimates, Committee of Supply, Railways vote, debate resumed, adjourned—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—MAIL CONTRACTORS' CHARGES.

MR. WALLACE asked the Premier, What was the object of the following new condition applying to mail contractors (*vide Government Gazette*, 26th October, 1900):—"When mails are conveyed in wheeled vehicles, the charges made by the contractors for the conveyance of passengers and parcels will be subject to the approval of the Postmaster General."

THE PREMIER replied:—The condition referred to is not a new one, having been in force since July, 1893, in accordance with a resolution passed by this House.

QUESTION—RELIEF TO WIFE OF ABSENT SOLDIER.

MR. WALLACE asked the Premier: 1, Whether the attention of the Government had been drawn to the distressed condition in which a Mrs. Walker was alleged to be, whose husband was at the front fighting in South Africa. 2, If so, what was intended to be done to relieve her from distress.

THE PREMIER replied:—1, Yes, but only recently. 2, The Patriotic Fund has contributed £10, and inquiries will be made in the matter.

QUESTION—TICK CATTLE AND QUARANTINE.

MR. WALLACE asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands: 1, Whether it was true that tick-infected cattle, not intended for slaughter, had been permitted to leave the Quarantine Yards at Fremantle. 2, If so, (a.) On what date;

(b.) Where had they gone to; (c.) Who were the owners; (d.) Why the existing regulations had been departed from.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by MR. ILLINGWORTH, leave of absence for the remainder of the session was granted to the member for Plantagenet (Mr. A. Y. Hassell) on the ground of urgent private business.

KALGOORLIE TRAMWAYS BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

LEEDERVILLE TRAMWAYS BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

FREMANTLE TRAMWAYS BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ROADS AND STREETS CLOSURE BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

TRUSTEES (COLONIAL SECURITIES) BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed from last sitting, at page 41.

Vote — *Railways and Tramways*, £920,716:

MR. MITCHELL: It would be a pity to strike a discordant note in the song of praise he had heard during the debate. He had been somewhat concerned as to why this change had come about, and had almost thought it was owing to the genial smiling face of the new Commissioner of Railways, or to something that had happened to improve the railway service. He was willing to think it was a little of both, and while he admitted we had a good railway service, it must be confessed it was somewhat expensive. There were something like 1,358 miles of railway in the colony, and

to work those lines cost £920,716. If from this we deducted two items for contingencies of £203,000 and £15,000, and also £2,750 for the Cossack-Roe-bourne Tramway—a total of £220,750—that left a balance of £699,250 as the actual salaries of heads of departments and their staffs, and showed an average of £538 per mile. That amount was much larger than it ought to be, though, as he had said, there was a good railway service. The ex-Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Piesse), speaking the other night, made two statements, namely that the Government could not work railways as cheaply as private individuals, and that the working expenses should and would, he hoped, be reduced. It must be confessed that the sum he had mentioned was far too much to pay for the working of 1,358 miles, and in this connection he (Mr. Mitchell) had been very much struck with the number of clerks employed in the department. If hon. members looked through the Estimates they would find there were 456 clerks, including 25 clerk cadets—whatever the latter might mean—in addition to 87 other cadets, with salaries ranging from £40 to £100; and of this expenditure he would like to have some explanation, because, although we had a good system, every economy should be used, and the cost reduced as much as possible. If we continued to go on spending a lot of money, when Parliament met the next time it would be found there was greater difficulty than ever in working the railways, and he hoped those intrusted with the management would take the hint and work on a cheaper scale.

MR. CONNOR: Loan moneys ought not to be under the control of the working department of the railways, and on this opinion would be based most of the remarks he intended to make. The other night an hon. member of the House made an attack on the Engineer-in-Chief, which was in bad taste, unjust, and unnecessary, and he (Mr. Connor) would try to prove that it was in many cases incorrect. In 1890 the railways of the colony showed a loss of £6,527, or a percentage of working expenses to revenue of 114 per cent. In that year the Engineer-in-Chief, who had been attacked, took control of the railways of

the colony, and held that control for a period of six years, up to 1896. In the year ending June, 1896, the railways made a profit of £266,000, or $11\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the capital, showing a percentage of working expenses to revenue of 50 per cent, although the expenditure was very much greater. In these six years the Railway Department had approximately £400,000 to spend; but in June, 1896, the present General Manager, Mr. John Davies, took over the management from Mr. O'Connor, and in the last four years had had approximately £1,500,000 to spend. In the year ending June, 1897, the percentage of working expenses to revenue was 63 per cent., or 13 per cent. more than in the previous year; in 1898 the percentage was 77, or 27 per cent. more than two years before; in 1899 the percentage was 71, or 21 per cent. over that of the year in which Mr. O'Connor gave up the charge; and in the year ending June last, the percentage was 68, or 18 per cent. higher than in 1896. This meant an average increase of 20 per cent. of working expenses to revenue since Mr. Davies took over control of the railways; but Mr. Davies in his report, in giving the percentage of working expenses to revenue, started with the year 1890 and then made a jump of nine years to 1899. In the latter year the percentage was 70, and this year 68, showing an improvement.

THE PREMIER: There was an improvement, as the hon. member would see.

MR. CONNOR: But in the column to the right, on page 5 of the report, it would be seen that in 1890 there was a percentage of 114, and in this connection he thought hon. members were being intentionally misled.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was now attacking someone.

MR. CONNOR said he would speak more strongly before he had done. Hon. members would think, from the figures in this column, that there had been a gradual decrease in the percentage of working expenses; but the column did not show that in the year Mr. Davies took over the railways the percentage was down to 50. The report showed that in 1890 the percentage was 114, and the next thing seen was that the percentage was 70; whereas since 1896 there had been an increase, and a serious

one, namely an average of 20 per cent. What were the reasons that Mr. O'Connor made the railways pay better than Mr. Davies had succeeded in doing? The first reason was that Mr. O'Connor did not rush into reckless expenditure, which was of no value to the State, and only an encumbrance to the people in the places where the money was spent; and, in the next place, Mr. O'Connor spent the money in altering the grades, so as to enable engines which formerly carried only eight or nine trucks to carry twenty trucks at, perhaps, a greater speed. He bought rolling-stock suitable for the times and the railways, also machinery for the purpose of improving and repairing the rolling-stock. In 1896-7 the revenue from the railways was about £900,000; in 1897-8 it was about £1,000,000, showing an increase in that year of about 10 per cent.; in 1896-7 the number of train miles run was 2,500,000 miles, approximately, and in 1897-8 3,500,000 miles, showing a net increase of 40 per cent. We should see where the crux of the question lay, and if we found a weak point in the working of the railways it was worth while looking into seriously. There was an increase of 10 per cent. in the revenue of the railways, and 40 per cent. in the train miles run, a difference of 30 per cent. in one year. That was the particular reason the railways were not paying in Western Australia. But there were other reasons; the expenses per train mile should be cut down to what they were some time ago. In 1890 the earnings per train mile were 38d.; in 1895-6—this was the year when Mr. O'Connor handed over the railways to the present General Manager—the train earnings were 82d.: more than double. An argument no doubt would be used to show that the expenses would explain away why there was such a great difference; but from 1890 to 1896 the running power was double, while the expenditure was hardly increased. We found at the end of June this year the earnings were 71d. per train mile; showing 11d. less, even as against 1895-6. In 1887-9 the working expenses were 43d.; in 1896-7 there was a reduction to 41d.; in 1899-1900, the year which had just passed, the amount again went up to 49d. That showed some of the reasons why we had not the dividends from the railways

which we should have. He would try to give some reasons why the railways were not paying. The expenditure in proportion to the number of train miles run had increased enormously. That was the principal cause. There had also been an expenditure which in building future lines we should block, a reckless and unnecessary outlay on stations and sidings. Without giving many instances he would take the stations between Perth and Fremantle, where buildings had been erected more than would be required, perhaps, for all time. Take the station which had been built at Burswood; where was the necessity for such a palatial building as that in the wilderness? Take the station building which had been erected in the constituency of the Commissioner of Crown Lands. He did not know what it had cost, but he believed it was a very large sum of money. These were small items, but a great many small items made up a big total. We should take notice of these things, and see that they did not occur again. There was an item on which a lot of money had been spent, and to which the Government looked forward to spending more in the immediate future. That was in connection with interlocking gear. His (Mr. Connor's) opinion was that we had enough interlocking gear in the colony until we were in a better position to pay for more. All the interlocking gear that had been supplied to the colony had been furnished by one firm, and no tender had been called for the supply of the article. That was a point which the Commissioner of Railways might look into. Another reason why the railways did not pay was the way in which the tolls were collected on some of the lines. Take the line between Kalgoorlie and Boulder: men went about with bags strapped across their shoulders, collecting money, and there was no check on these men, although a large amount of money passed through their hands. If this was called good management, then we wanted bad management; at any rate we wanted a change. He had intended to refer to the Ice Company's frauds and other matters, but so much had already been said about them. If members thought it worth their while to turn up some of the back returns, they would see in connection

with the Government Railway Report for 1897-8 there were some items which could not be located. There was a sum of £63,000, which he believed had been spent, but no one seemed to know where it had gone to. He unhesitatingly said that no auditor could bring out a balance on the figures given in the report.

THE PREMIER: What year was that?

MR. CONNOR: It was 1897-8. He did not say there was anything wrong about the £63,000, but he defied any auditor or any accountant to make the accounts balance. There was either something wrong with the accounts, or there had been some "cooking" of them to suit the department. Since 1896, when Mr. O'Connor gave up the management of the railways, the capital account showed an increase of £700 per mile; although 200 miles of railway, costing not less than £1,500 per mile, had been handed over to the department since. That was another serious aspect of the case. Instead of increasing the cost, that should have reduced it materially. In addition to the figures quoted by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) the other night, we found that we had to build the Leonora Railway. That was a very serious item, and a million and a-half of money would have to be spent, under the present management, to bring the railways up to date. The member for the Murray the other night had attacked him (Mr. Connor) personally: simply because one interjected a remark, the hon. member in his supreme majesty and wisdom barked at him (Mr. Connor). The hon. member had turned special pleader for Mr. Davies. The remarks which the hon. member had made were on a par with an interjection which he made in regard to the Under Treasurer, saying that the official must have been drunk. Such remarks were ungentlemanly, and should be tabooed in the House.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Whom did the hon. member refer to?

MR. CONNOR: The member for the Murray. There were a great many other amounts to be spent in connection with the railways. The member for the Murray (Mr. George) had suggested that some thousands of pounds should be spent in ballasting the lines with blue metal. It was far more important to

duplicate the Eastern railway than to blue-metal the lines, or purchase more interlocking gear and brakes. If improvements were not made between Kalgoorlie and Boulder there might be heavy damages to pay. Now trams were to compete with the railways in that district. His (Mr. Connor's) opinion was that the management of the railways in Western Australia was bad and rotten to the core, and he had no hesitation in saying that the fact of the revenue decreasing with the cost per mile of the working coming together, would be like the hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) and the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) coming together. Something would have to give way; something would have to break. Within the last few days he had taken the trouble to go through the accounts, and the manner in which the accounts were brought before the committee from year to year was not satisfactory. They could not possibly get a man to work harder than the gentleman who was Commissioner of Railways here until a few weeks ago, but that gentleman was taken from a business which had not given him a large grasp of figures and the wide ideas necessary to carry out great and extensive works like these, and although he did his best, he was not a success. We had heard to-night about the administration of the railways. The gentleman who was at present General Manager of the Railways came to this colony in, he believed, 1891, to be under the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. O'Connor. An unjust and unfair attack had been made on the Engineer-in-Chief, who was the ablest and the hardest-worked official in Western Australia, and no man deserved better from the country. No man had worked harder or more ably in connection with the work intrusted to him by the Government.

MR. SOLOMON: One desired to say a few words in regard to this matter, and more particularly in relation to the dissatisfaction that existed in regard to the railways generally throughout the colony. He hoped that under the new régime the state of things would be very different from what it had been in the past. Questions which he asked some little time ago in relation to the Engineering Department at Fremantle elicited information showing a most unsatisfactory

state of affairs. Some of the heads of departments who had lately come from New Zealand had, under the plea of retrenchment, imported fresh blood into the clerical work, and dispensed with men who had been not alone in that portion of the public service, but in other parts of it, for some years. That had given rise to a great deal of dissatisfaction amongst the various departments, because for some years past when heads of departments had been imported from New Zealand, it had been the general custom as soon as they got into office to discharge many of those who had been in the service a long time, and import officials from New Zealand who were pets of heads of departments. He referred particularly to the Engineering Department. One of the questions asked by him in reference to New Zealand was whether the Government of that country had expressed themselves dissatisfied with the overtures made to their servants by the Government of this colony. That state of things should not exist between one colony and another. The servants of one colony should not be induced to go to another simply for the sake of getting them into that colony. He was not at all surprised to hear that the New Zealand Government had expressed themselves dissatisfied with what had been going on. He hoped the new Commissioner would set his face against anything of that kind, and would see that justice was done to all servants, and that if in one department—more particularly in reference to those who had been living in Western Australia—the Commissioner could not find work for the officers, he would endeavour to do what he could to place them somewhere else. It had been said a large amount would be required to put the railways on a fair footing. He hoped the Government would take the first opportunity of putting the railways on that footing, and that no moneys would be laid out in further railways until our present lines were made up to date.

THE PREMIER: If that policy were pursued, the hon. member would stop the progress of the country.

MR. MONGER: And stop the Fremantle harbour works at the same time.

MR. SOLOMON: A large amount of money would be required to put the railways in the condition they should be in,

and more particularly in regard to the goods traffic. We heard from all sides complaints as to the rates and charges, the non-delivery of goods, and the losses which occurred in the transit of goods. It was time these losses were largely reduced. The Estimates showed that something like £5,000 had been paid during the year in respect of goods that had either been lost or not accounted for. The House ought to have some particulars of that. A recommendation had been made by the Traffic Manager that the Railway Department should make their own ice, but the Government should set their face against that. One could not see why a department like the Railways should be so anxious to make ice for themselves when they had had it, as had been stated, brought to their own doors.

MR. MONGER: Was the hon. member a shareholder in the Ice Company?

MR. SOLOMON: No.

MR. MONGER: It was pleasing to hear that.

MR. SOLOMON said he had never been a shareholder in the Ice Company, and had nothing to do with that Company. Then, again, there was a recommendation that the Railway Department should have their own printing staff. He did not know whether that would increase the expenditure on printing, but already our Government Printing Office was a great tax on the colony, and something should be done to minimise that as much as possible, and not increase the expenditure by having a fresh department entirely for the railway service. So much had been said, and so many figures quoted, that it was not necessary to show any further that the railways of the colony had been worked hitherto to great advantage. He hoped the new Minister would supervise matters himself, and not allow one person to be the overseer of the railways altogether. When any demands were made by people in the service, the Minister should look into them himself and do justice to all concerned.

MR. GREGORY: In regard to this item of railways, the question of increases of salaries came at a most inopportune time. Not that he thought for one moment that the General Manager of Railways was not worth £1,500 or even £2,000; but at the same time there was something very disagreeable in the

atmosphere. Charges had been made in the Press, and there had been very serious charges before the Select Committee. Ere these items went through, the Premier or the Commissioner of Railways should give some indication of what the Government purposed doing with regard to the report of the Select Committee. Serious statements were being circulated throughout the city. One had been told that Mr. Jaques held a letter in which, he said, he was authorised not to inspect the goods coming from the Perth Ice Company.

MR. MORAN: What was that?

MR. GREGORY: One was told that Mr. Jaques had in his possession a letter from the department, to the effect that he was not to inspect the goods going along the railway from the Perth Ice Company.

MR. DOHERTY: Why did not Mr. Jaques state that in his evidence?

MR. GREGORY: That was the rumour current, and it was about time the House had some knowledge of the intention of the Government. It had been stated distinctly that two of these officials should be dismissed. They had been suspended, and possibly that might be all right, but apparently there was a desire on the part of the Government not only to shield these officers but also to shield others. It seemed a very bad thing that a charge of conspiracy should be hanging over the heads of a large number of people for such an unlimited time without any action being taken. Before the Estimates were passed, the House should know what action the Government intended to take with regard to the appointment of the Commission. Members wanted to know what class of Commission was going to be appointed, and by this time (more especially while the Estimates were being discussed), the Commissioner in charge of the Railway Department should have given some information as to how the report of the Select Committee was to be dealt with.

MR. MORAN: The Committee were entitled to such information.

MR. GREGORY: Regarding the railway auditing, while the heads of the department had the appointment of their auditors, a serious discrepancy might occur and never come to light; in fact the evidence before the Select Committee on

the Perth Ice Company, showing how one of the heads of the department could withdraw papers from a file, showed that some things could occur which, if not dishonourable, were absolutely wrong. [Mr. MORAN: That was undoubtedly dishonourable.] It was dishonourable that when charges had been made by the District Superintendent against any superintendent beneath him, the superior officer should be allowed to withdraw papers from the file. [Mr. MORAN: Scandalous, if true.] The Auditor General had stated that, if it were desired by Parliament that he should give a full certificate as to railway accounts, the auditing of that department must be placed under his control. Had that been done, probably cases of moneys lying to credit of the department in some remote bank, and remaining there unthought of in spite of the balancing of the departmental books, would not have occurred. Concerning the Perth Ice Company, unpleasant rumours were in circulation. A long time had elapsed without action being taken on the Select Committee's report. Serious charges had been made against the Government and the department; and, before the railway estimates were passed, hon. members should know the intention of the Government regarding the appointment of the Royal Commission to inquire into the departmental working. If the heads of the department were exonerated by the Royal Commission, the increases of salary proposed to be given them would be justified; but, until the Commission had reported, these increases were manifestly inopportune.

MR. VOSPER indorsed the views of the last speaker, especially regarding the Perth Ice Company exposure, without exception the most shocking and disgraceful thing that ever occurred in the colony, involving as it did the dragging in the mud of the names of some of the highest people in the land by the Press throughout the country. The scandal still existed, though the Select Committee's report had been adopted by the House; and the sole desire of the Government seemed to be that the matter should be forgotten as soon as possible.

THE PREMIER: Indeed! The hon. member was always insinuating something.

MR. VOSPER: There was no insinuation.

THE PREMIER: Was there anything to hide in connection with the matter?

MR. VOSPER: The statement he had made was not an insinuation, but an assertion. A select committee of the House had discovered ugly facts, and had recommended dismissals and prosecutions. The persons recommended for dismissal had not been dismissed.

THE PREMIER: They had been suspended.

MR. VOSPER: And the persons recommended for prosecution had not been prosecuted. It looked to the outside public as if every possible facility were being given to these last-mentioned persons to get beyond the reach of the law; and such lassitude on the part of the Executive was offering a premium to those persons to escape. Thanks to the action of the Select Committee—not to the Government—these men were under surveillance. Besides, no attempt was being made to appoint a Commission to investigate the working of the Railway Department, and the other frauds revealed in connection with the Customs. On the Estimates were heavy increases of salary to officers primarily responsible for the conduct of this department; yet the Committee were supposed to pass these items in the dark at a time the decision of the House was being flouted, and the recommendations of the Select Committee on the Ice Company practically set aside as valueless. This state of things was intolerable, and was made much worse by some of the rumours about—one to the effect that the man Jaques, recommended for dismissal by the Select Committee, had declared that he could not be dismissed, because he had received written instructions, which he now held, from a high official in the Railway Department, that he was not to weigh the Perth Ice Company's trucks. Whether true or false, that was an ugly rumour; and all could remember the time when the whole of the stories about the Ice Company were simply ugly rumours though they proved to be too true. The honour of the department and of the Government demanded immediate investigation of these charges.

THE PREMIER: Jaques had been suspended.

MR. VOSPER: Perhaps so; until the thing blew over.

THE PREMIER : What was the public report of which the hon. member spoke ?

MR. VOSPER : Public report and rumour, when the frauds were first discovered, had been scouted and denied by the Government.

THE PREMIER : Absolutely untrue ! When was any report denied ?

MR. VOSPER : The report of the Select Committee showed these scandals had been revealed nine months before the *Kalgoorlie Sun* exposed them.

THE PREMIER : Revealed to whom ?

MR. VOSPER : To the department, where they were deliberately suppressed ; and now there was apparently a desire to hush up the matter, and to let it be forgotten by the public.

THE PREMIER : Was that true also ?

MR. VOSPER : That was a theory which he had a right to submit for consideration ; and the House should vindicate its own honour by demanding that its decision be carried out forthwith, and by refusing to consider increases of salary until the appointment of the Royal Commission was assured and its *personnel* decided. Supposing it were true, as asserted, that Jacques held written instructions from his superior not to weigh the trucks of the Perth Ice Company—

THE PREMIER : The hon. member knew that was not true. If Jacques held such a document, why had it not been produced ? Jacques had written several letters on the subject.

MR. VOSPER : The Premier overlooked the fact that once such a letter was produced it would become valueless. That was the crux of the whole scandal. The only explanation given by the railway witnesses for not weighing the Ice Company's trucks was that they did not receive any special instructions ; but they had not waited for special instructions to weigh other people's trucks, and, therefore, in the case of the Ice Company, why did they wait for instructions ?

THE PREMIER : Why had not the committee investigated that matter ?

MR. VOSPER : The committee went as far as they could, and then made certain recommendations.

THE PREMIER : They did not even call the General Manager.

MR. VOSPER : Among the best of their recommendations was that a Royal Commission, of thoroughly practical men,

be appointed to carry the work further than the committee had found possible. The House had adopted that report and recommendation, and were bound by it ; and before the Estimates were passed, hon. members should know what had been done in pursuance of that report. It was the duty of the Opposition, and of other hon. members, to dispute the Estimates item by item, unless a statement were received from the Premier setting forth the intention of the Government regarding this momentous question.

MR. MORAN : None would be less disposed than he to cavil at an increase of salary to an officer like Mr. Davies ; but the Committee were decidedly entitled to the fullest explanation from the Government as to what was to be done in connection with the Ice Company. Any hon. member who allowed these Estimates to pass without insisting that the country should know what was to be done regarding this grievous matter would be guilty of a breach of duty. No doubt the Government would take hon. members into their confidence, and give a full explanation.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : The Government had already taken action in reference to the Select Committee's report. Instructions had been issued that Jacques and Manson be suspended, and that the Railway Department hold an inquiry forthwith. The men had been suspended, and the inquiry was being held. Jacques and Manson had been called as witnesses ; and it would be manifestly unfair to convict them out of their own mouths as witnesses, without giving them a chance of defending themselves. If it were true, as stated by two hon. members, that Jacques held a letter from a superior officer instructing him not to weigh the Ice Company's trucks, that would go a long way towards exculpating Jacques and inculpating the guilty person. Such rumours showed the necessity of not being too rash or hasty in dismissing these officers simply because they gave evidence before the Select Committee. Regarding the men recommended for prosecution, he (the Attorney General) had given instructions that they be prosecuted forthwith. Informations were being prepared, and evidence was being collected ; and the men would be before the Court in the course of a few days.

The Premier had written him on the subject of the Royal Commission to be appointed to investigate the so-called frauds on the Customs.

MR. MORAN: Only on the Customs? Not to investigate both departments?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Commission, if he remembered rightly, was recommended to be appointed to investigate the Customs only. If the recommendation had been that it investigate the Railway Department also, that would be done, and done forthwith.

THE PREMIER: Personally, he had, with the Collector, already investigated the allegations regarding Customs; and that officer had absolutely denied their truth.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Committee might rest satisfied that the Government would see that the matter was thoroughly investigated.

THE PREMIER: There was no occasion to say much about this matter. If there had been a day or two of delay and the Government had not acted so quickly as some hon. members seemed to think they might have done, it was from no want of will. Sometimes a matter could not be attended to in a moment, but he knew from his own knowledge that the suspension of those two officers was approved some days ago, and no doubt they were communicated with, and told that if they had anything to say why they should not be dismissed, they should say it at once. It was known that suspension meant dismissal and pay stopped at once, though if the officers were reinstated the pay was returned to them. It was intended to appoint a Royal Commission at once, and he hoped hon. members would not think there had been any undue delay in this matter, because persons had to be found to undertake the duties. He had already been in communication with the Collector of Customs in regard to the statement of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), in order to ascertain whether that official knew of any grounds for thinking there had been any wholesale loss of revenue. The Collector of Customs had reported fully and very decidedly that there could have been no such loss to the revenue, and he had shown him (the Premier) the means taken by the Customs authorities to inspect consignments.

MR. WILSON: Did the Collector of Customs not think the Perth Ice Company had swindled the Government?

THE PREMIER: The report was not in regard to the Ice Company, and he thought there had been some matters, as referred to in the report of the Select Committee, but those were only small, so far as the investigations had yet gone. The Royal Commission would be appointed of independent persons, altogether apart from the Government, and not interested on one side or the other; and though time must elapse, it was hoped the report would be exhaustive. In regard to the prosecutions, not only were the law officers taking the matter in hand, but he had himself written to the Attorney General in regard to the whole of the matters contained in the recommendations of the House, and brought them specially under his notice; and the Attorney General had informed him that action had been taken and the case was in the hands of the law officers to bring before the Courts. He (the Premier) could not understand the state of mind of the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) or of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), when they seemed to think the Government had an object in not dealing with those persons. What object had the Government in trying to prevent those people from being brought to justice? If there had been any scandal, that scandal had already been circulated over the world. If any person in the community had had his name bandied about, that had already been done, and names had been bandied about cruelly, and unjustly in some cases. But the Government had only one object, and that was to bring the offender or offenders to justice and to protect the revenue of the country. The revenue had been protected, he was glad to say, because so far as was known the revenue had not suffered at all, though that was nothing at all to some people, whose only desire seemed to be to get people into gaol. He quite concurred in the opinion that persons who did wrong should be punished, and that the Government ought not to compound a felony. But he, as Treasurer, always tried to protect the revenue, and restitution in law, he believed, went a long way in mitigation of punishment. If restitution were made, even a court of law

looked more favourably on the prisoner, and so far as the Ice Company were concerned, restitution had been made. There had been gross swindling perpetrated on the revenues of the country by the servants of the Ice Company, but there was not one tittle of evidence to implicate any of the directors of the company, who were entirely exonerated by the Select Committee. He fearlessly here said, before the people of the country, that these frauds would never have been given prominence in the House and out of it, if the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), his honoured brother, had not been a member and director of the company. He (the Premier) made that statement deliberately, and it was a cruel wrong, and unjust to the hon. member, that the occasion should be seized on in the House and out of it to "make a mountain" out of this matter. There were hundreds of frauds going on in the country, where restitution had not been made; and he repeated that if it had not been that his honoured brother was director of the company, there would not have been heard so much about the frauds in the Press of the colony, or in this House, or outside of it.

MR. GREGORY: The latter portion of the Premier's statement was absolutely unfair, and, to go further, was untrue, because the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) had friends on both sides of the House, who would not allow his name to be bandied about. The Select Committee on the Ice Company frauds were only too pleased that they could state in their report there was not one tittle of evidence against the member for West Kimberley as chairman of the company. The Premier was trying to make out that this matter had been brought up for the sake of doing some injury to the member for West Kimberley; but if any person were doing an injury to the member for West Kimberley, it was the Premier himself, when he mixed himself up in departments which did not concern him. The Premier had a caucus meeting between the General Traffic Manager, the General Manager of the Railways, Mr. Sayer, and himself, and settled the matter the day before Parliament met, and that was the sort of thing which gave an ugly tone to the affair.

THE PREMIER said he knew nothing about that meeting.

MR. GREGORY: There was Mr. Short's evidence on the point.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member went eavesdropping about, he got something that was not true.

MR. GREGORY: It was that sort of thing which did the member for West Kimberley harm, and not the report of the Select Committee.

THE PREMIER: What harm was there in a meeting? Surely the Treasurer could have an interview with any officers he desired, and besides he was, he believed, acting Commissioner of Railways at the time.

MR. GREGORY: The Premier was not acting Commissioner of Railways at the time.

THE PREMIER: Practically he was acting Commissioner.

MR. GREGORY: The Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Piesse) resigned the day Parliament met. He (Mr. Gregory) wished to refute the statement that there was any desire on the part of the Select Committee to injure the member for West Kimberley, and the Committee were only too pleased to be able to say in their report, although they were not asked to say it, that the directors of the Ice Company had no knowledge of these frauds, and that the Attorney-General had not favoured them in any way. But certain statements had been made in the Press, and the committee were pleased to put that exoneration in the report, so that any subsequent allegations might be refuted.

THE PREMIER took exception to hon. members finding fault or referring adversely to the fact that he had an interview with officers of the Government in his office, in regard to this or any other matter. So long as he occupied the position he did, on any important matter he would always have interviews, if he thought them necessary in the interests of the public service.

MR. GREGORY: But this was by way of a settlement.

THE PREMIER said he had no recollection of what took place, nor did he know he was ever consulted in regard to the matter, which was for the Law Officers to deal with, and on which the Attorney-

General had advised. It was not a matter for him.

MR. GREGORY : That was what he (Mr. Gregory) thought.

THE PREMIER said he had nothing to do with the final settlement, or with making the conditions or inflicting the fine. So far as his memory served him, he had not. That was a matter between the Railway Department and the Law Officers of the Crown. But even if he had had anything to do with it, he did not see there was any harm. He was responsible for the conduct of the Government to a very large extent, and if he thought there was anything, political or otherwise, going to cause trouble, he would be foolish if he did not investigate it and see exactly how the matter stood.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The Premier in his haste had made a statement he would regret, when he said there were hon. members in this House and out of it who had put emphasis on this question simply because the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Forrest) was connected with this particular company.

THE PREMIER : Nothing had been said about hon. members.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : The Premier said "both in this House and out of it." There was not an hon. member in the House who was actuated by any such motive, and the Premier could not have meant to imply that hon. members had put emphasis on this question simply because the member for West Kimberley happened to be a member of the company, and he hoped the Premier would see his way to withdraw the expression, because it was a reflection on hon. members.

MR. MOORHEAD : The Committee were more concerned in ascertaining from the Government what steps they intended taking to follow up the recommendation of the Select Committee, than in obtaining any explanation from the Premier or a repudiation from the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory). Personally, he (Mr. Moorhead) was pleased to hear the tribute which the member for North Coolgardie paid to the member for West Kimberley, who sat on the Government side of the House. He (Mr. Moorhead) was not at all astonished at the warmth with which the Premier repudiated what must be taken as an insinuation against

the character of the member for West Kimberley, because there was no earthly doubt that had not the member for West Kimberley been mixed up in this company, there would not have been heard so much about this affair. But the matter having cropped up, and having been exposed, it was open to hon. members of the House to discuss one or two aspects of the report, seeing the railway estimates were before the Committee. He did not propose to go minutely into the matter, but he would say the disclosures made before the Select Committee evidenced a state of disorganisation in the Railway Department which hardly warranted an increase in the salary of the General Manager. Furthermore, there was no country on the face of the habitable globe where, had similar disclosures been made, the General Manager would not be called to account. But instead of that, the General Manager, somehow or another, did not appear at all before the Select Committee, and his name did not transpire in the slightest degree; and there was the fiat of the Minister to the effect that the General Manager was such a competent officer that his salary must necessarily be increased. He (Mr. Moorhead) agreed that the General Manager of these railways was deserving of more than the miserable pittance given to him; but until the present manager was clothed in the garb of that office, and until his conduct was explained more fully than it had been yet, either inside the House or outside, he concurred with the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) that the Committee ought to pause before they increased his salary or that of any servant in the department. This was not a matter of a single fraud. It did not mean one instance alone; it did not mean a series of frauds extending over a month or two months, but it meant a series of frauds extending over a considerable period, and known not to one railway official, but to several occupying high positions. Not alone that, but if we accepted the evidence before the Committee, if we accept the report of that Select Committee, statements were made to high officials, and the matter was burked. What did that mean? It either meant that there was a state of disorganisation in the department that warranted inquiry, or it meant what he (Mr. Moorhead) would be

long sorry to entertain, a knowledge on the part of the General Manager. He said advisedly that he would be long sorry to charge Mr. Davies or Mr. Short with anything of that description; but there must have been laxity on their part or there would not have been laxity on the part of the lower officials. If there was laxity on the part of the lower officials, the General Manager had not been acting up to the responsibilities of his position. He (Mr. Moorhead) was sorry to peruse the remarks made by the hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) in regard to the attack on the predecessor of the General Manager. It was unwarranted in the highest degree. In the first place, attacks on public officials ought not to be made recklessly in the House, for one reason above all others, that officials had not an opportunity of defending themselves, and that public officials could only speak through the Minister. He believed with the member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) that there were few officers who deserved so well of the country as did Mr. O'Connor. A glance at the figures adduced by the member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse) showed what Mr. O'Connor deserved at the hands of the House. He (Mr. Moorhead) might point out to the Premier what the member for East Kimberley had alluded to in regard to the £63,000, showing the necessity for an independent audit being conducted, and not that auditors should be appointed by those who had the control of affairs. On page 6 of the report of the working of the railways for 1897-8, Mr. Davies showed the net profit on the working, after paying expenses, was £230,359; that was for 1898. For 1897 the net profit was £337,828. It was the latter figure to which he wished to call the attention of hon. members. Turning to the Auditor General's figures, there was a marked discrepancy of £63,000. On page 29 of that report the net credit for the year ending 30th June, 1898, was £179,955. What had become of the difference, £63,707? Was it hung up in the air, like Mahomet's coffin?

THE PREMIER: How much had the Auditor General given?

MR. MOORHEAD: The Auditor General gave £179,955.

THE PREMIER: Cash and earnings were quite different.

MR. MOORHEAD: On one occasion a Chancellor of the Exchequer returned rails as cash.

THE PREMIER: The earnings were not always in the Treasury.

MR. MOORHEAD: The profit given by the auditor of the Railway Department differed from the Auditor General by £63,707. What had become of that amount, he asked members who had suddenly developed a taste for figures in connection with the railways? That single item alluded to by the member for East Kimberley showed the necessity of having the accounts audited independently of the Railway Department. He (Mr. Moorhead) would go further and refer to the ice frauds. Did hon. members think if the Government auditors had been auditing the railway accounts these frauds could have extended over the period which they did. The first thing the Government auditors would have done would have been to have called for the books, which they were entitled to have done, of the Ice Company, when the matter first came under observation. If there had been an independent audit this matter would have been thrashed out long since. During the last four years over £1,400,000 out of the consolidated revenue had been expended on improvements to opened lines. How had that money been expended? We got a lump sum something like this: £20,000 for new works and improvements. Where was the check on that? Supposing there was a rogue at the head of affairs—and it was not impossible for such an individual to crop up in the history of railway management in Western Australia to-morrow or the next day—supposing a dishonest man was at the head of affairs, what check was there over this £1,400,000? Once the goods passed from the Government stores into the hands of the Railway Department who was to check the amount? The auditors were appointed by the manager himself. Surely it was Cæsar sitting in judgment on Cæsar. That was bad. He did not for a moment wish members to believe that there were dishonest men at the head of affairs in the Railway Department, but such a contingency might occur. Take the case alluded to by the member for East Kimberley—the interlocking gear. That was one of the greatest blots which had occurred in

the railway administration of the colony. No tenders were called for that interlocking gear.

MR. WILSON: It was a patent.

MR. MOORHEAD: There were other patent interlocking gears. It was a patent gear supplied by the firm of McKenzie and Co. Might he ask who was the engineer who supervised the construction of the gear? Who was the engineer who supplied the material? Who was the agent who was paid by commission? If his friend (Mr. Wilson) wished to build a house, would he say to the contractor "You go ahead and build it." No; the hon. member would make out the cost first. What knowledge and experience had Mr. Davies had of interlocking gear? A gentleman was brought from England who had under his control before he came here a short line of 12 miles. What did that officer know about interlocking gear? If the country was to be committed to a large expenditure, we should have had an engineer to report upon the matter: it would have even paid the country to have got another engineer from England to report upon it. The price was put on by the company and was accepted; the selection of the material was left to the man who was paid by commission, and no one could tell hon. members what the material had cost. We had an engineer appointed who was brother to the agent who supplied the article.

THE PREMIER: Who was that?

MR. MOORHEAD: Mr. Evans, brother of the agent who supplied the material. That was what he called a family arrangement. If the railways were to be conducted on a commercial basis, such a thing ought not to be tolerated in this colony. This was *à propos* of his remark that we ought to have an independent audit. Mr. Davies, who had been spoken of as a good business man, was the officer who the *Morning Herald* in October, 1896, said had been obtained to institute commercial principles into the working of the railways. Surely to goodness the General Manager would have carried out this principle in the first large undertaking after he took over the railways from the Engineer-in-Chief. It was a violation of all commercial principles. A contract was given; it was left to the individuals

themselves to name their price, and we had a thoroughly unnecessary system introduced into the colony. We did not know what the initial cost had been, still the initial cost was nothing to the ultimate amount we would have to pay. If there were 1,200 miles of narrow-gauge railways in South Australia with no interlocking gear—

THE PREMIER: They were getting it now.

MR. MOORHEAD: We might have interlocking gear at the Perth Station or at Bunbury, but he failed to see the necessity of interlocking gear at every little station. There was want of skill on the part of the management which was bolstered up by the expenditure of a large sum of money. Now he came to the main question he wished to bring before the Committee in connection with railway construction. On the railway estimates it would be noticed that there was an amount of £20,765 for new works and improvements. Strange to say, salaries, provisional and temporary, amounted to £5,465, which was more than 20 per cent. of the entire expenditure. The expenditure for salaries in the Public Works Department was not more than 3 per cent. We were gradually having a new department erected, an *imperium in imperio* in the Railway Department, with the object of getting further expenditure to be checked by departmental officers. If the object was to do that he agreed with the member for East Fremantle that the Committee ought to protest very strongly against handing over to the working management the construction of the railways. On economic grounds, on scientific grounds, on the ground of expense to the colony, the least that the Government ought to do was to have the construction of lines in this colony removed from Mr. Davies. What in the name of Providence did Mr. Davies know about the construction of lines?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: His engineers knew something.

MR. MOORHEAD: Quite so; but Mr. Davies had the supervision of his engineers, and where there was a difference in regard to a station or a grade or anything in regard to construction, it was not the engineer who had a voice in the matter, but Mr. Davies.

THE PREMIER: It was the same all over the colonies.

Mr. MOORHEAD: If it was the same all over the colonies, we should not have followed the experience of the other colonies. We had before us the experience of Victoria, where the railways paid until the construction of the railways were taken away from the Works Department and handed over to the Railway Department. The construction of a line, it was superfluous to say, necessitated a good deal of scientific knowledge, a good deal of the study of economic details. Men of experience and men who had spent years at this work were better able and more qualified to tell the best place to erect a station or to put in a line, and to save cost to the country, than the gentleman who had the running of the traffic and the collection of the tickets. From that point of view it was much better to leave the construction of the railways in the hands of the Works Department. This was the thin edge of the wedge. We knew very well that Mr. Davies came out here under contract with the Government, which contract directly stated he was to be under the orders of the Engineer-in-Chief.

THE PREMIER: Subordinate to him.

Mr. MOORHEAD: At the start Mr. Davies set himself against the Engineer-in-Chief. He got little by little into his hands; first the submission of plans, and now it came to this, that we were to hand over the special vote for the new works, which vote was to go on the Railway Estimates. Let us take the figures of the Ex-Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Piesse) to see whether experience justified putting our fiat upon this particular vote, and sanctioning this move to put the entire construction of the improvements of lines into the railway hands. When Mr. O'Connor first took charge of the railways the ratio of working expenses to the gross receipts was 114·46; in 1891 it was 99; in 1892, 96; in 1893, 86; in 1893-4, 73; in 1894-5, 61; and in 1895-6, 49 per cent. During these six years the total amount expended by Mr. O'Connor out of the consolidated revenue on the improvements to existing lines was £416,396. What happened when Mr. Davies took charge in 1896? This was how his advent was heralded by the *Morning Herald*:—"Had Mr. Davies had the facilities which are possessed by the railways in the Eastern colonies, there is

no doubt whatever that the percentage of working expenses to earnings would have been considerably less than it is." That was in an article written on the 6th October, 1896. Let us take next the few years of Mr. Davies's management. In 1896-7 there was expended out of the consolidated revenue £636,847; in 1897-8, £566,346; 1898-9, £115,612; and in 1899-1900, £124,848; making in all a total of £1,443,653, as against Mr. O'Connor's £416,396. Did we have a reduction? The percentage which we had in 1895-6, 49·79, jumped the following year to 63·09. The following year it was 77·11; and if we took into account that £63,707 which had been carefully omitted, and could not be discovered, we should bring the 77·11 up to about 82 per cent. of working expenses. In 1898-9 it was 70·91; and last year, 1899-1900, it was 68·40; therefore instead of the economical experience or practice which we were to have had introduced by Mr. Davies in 1896, we found that the percentage had steadily increased, going in one year up to 77 per cent., and if we took into account that amount which had been omitted, we found it running up to 82 per cent. Therefore there was nothing at the present moment to warrant us in giving our assistance in handing over the construction of improvements to open lines to a department which was running extravagantly now. It might be said that this increase was attributable to circumstances over which Mr. Davies had no control, but one was inclined to think that the absence of water and the difficulty of procuring water was not the difficulty which had led to such a vast increase in the percentage. In his opinion it was due to the running of unnecessary trains. The average working of an engine was equal to about 100 miles per day, and if we had a station at Clackline and only ran the Newcastle traffic 30 miles, there was so much loss. Again, if we had a train running 100 miles for a certain amount of money and we increased the distance up to 200 miles, whilst only the same amount was paid as was received for the 100 miles, we increased the expense 100 per cent. That had very often occurred, and it was taking place at this moment. Again, there were expenses in certain directions which were not charged up in the account

at all. There was expenditure in one direction and waste in another. Too much was spent on our stations, as had been pointed out by one hon. member. There was an attempt to run our lines upon the English system, and that would not do for a new colony. Our lines ought to be built cheaply. They ought to be built on the principle adopted in America, running into places and opening them up, and then, if sufficient traffic grew up, they should be made fit for the running of Pullman cars. The evidence did not point to unanimous praise with regard to our railways, but to mismanagement on the part of gentlemen who might have had more experience before being put in charge of our railways. When this particular estimate came before the House he (Mr. Moorhead) should take the opportunity of opposing it on the ground that it was unwise for this colony to hand over to an inexperienced body the construction of our lines.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was not, one thought, quite accurate in some of his statements, although he was pretty correctly briefed on this occasion. He did not suspect that the hon. member got these things out himself. Doubtless the hon. member did not expect us to infer that.

MR. MOORHEAD: The Premier could have his (Mr. Moorhead's) notes, if he liked.

THE PREMIER: One would be very glad to see them. It was a pity that we, in discussing this subject, had somewhat personal matters introduced into it in regard to the Engineer-in-Chief and the General Manager of Railways. That was regrettable. He quite agreed with members who had spoken in the same way as the hon. member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) had done, in saying it was advisable to, as far as we could, keep the loan expenditure under the Public Works Department rather than have it controlled by the working Railways Department. That was obvious, because however desirous one might be of doing what was right, there would always be a tendency to charge against capital account loan moneys, items which might just as well or perhaps with better reasons be charged against maintenance. We had almost every year, he thought for many years past, allotted a certain sum

out of consolidated revenue for improvements and renewals. Of course, if we had not the money, that sum would not be charged against consolidated revenue, but would be charged against loan. There was a difficulty, however, in the Public Works Department carrying out many works of improvement to existing lines, because they had not the control of the traffic, and it was somewhat inconvenient to have two persons working on one piece of railway. For instance, perhaps the Engineer-in-Chief's Department were renewing rails, placing 60lb. rails instead of 45lb. rails, and the General Manager's Department were running the traffic. There would be a good deal of difficulty in the case of men working together when there was more than one authority, for they were not always in accord, and there was certainly greater difficulty when there were two authorities than when there was only one. This had induced the Government to allow the General Manager to do works of that kind, renewing rails, replacing them with heavier rails, improving stations and overhead bridges, and all sorts of works, which came to a good deal of money in the aggregate. There was another thing. He was informed by those who managed the traffic that they knew better what sort of conveniences they required for station yards than anyone else, and he (the Premier) knew that while the improvement of station yards was under the control of the Works Department there was always a considerable amount of friction between that department and the Traffic Department, the Traffic Department saying they did not want a thing to be done this way or that way, or they wanted the work done at once, and the other department did not do it quickly sometimes. There was nothing but wrangling and trouble. The Railway Department said this or that was not as good as it ought to be, or that they were not given the conveniences they ought to have. They said that they ought to have all these matters submitted to them, for they had to do the work of the traffic, and they knew best what was necessary. Then, again, with regard to the rolling-stock: at one time the Engineer-in-Chief used to order all the rolling-stock, all the engines and all the carriages. The Traffic

Department were always complaining that the stock was not such as they wanted, that it was not suitable to the traffic they were running; and eventually they got that into their hands. There was a great deal to be said on both sides, and he was really not going to give an opinion to-night as to which was best. All he could say was that in all the other colonies except South Australia (and it used to be the case there), the General Manager had the complete control of the railways. Mr. Eddy, in New South Wales, had the complete control of all the railways, construction and everything else, throughout the colony; and the Engineer-in-Chief was under him. In Victoria Mr. Mathieson had complete control of the railways; the Engineer-in-Chief, the Traffic Managers, and all others being under him; and Mr. Speight had similar control before him. In fact, all over Australia that had been the system, where the railways were removed from political control. In all the colonies the system had been to place the whole matter in the hands of the General Manager.

MR. MORAN: That was coincident with the railway commissioners.

THE PREMIER: Yes; wherever there were railway commissioners, the Engineer-in-Chief was not the head, but was always under the General Manager. Very often the general managers were business men, and some of them had not railway experience; but if there were three, generally two of them were railway experts. One was not prepared to say the statistics quoted so ably by the member for North Murchison showed that the management was better at one time than another. There were a great many other things which had to be taken into consideration.

MR. MORAN: There had been a reduction in freight.

THE PREMIER: No one could accuse him of not having the highest opinion of the capacity and integrity of the Engineer-in-Chief. He, with those who had spoken before, thought the Engineer-in-Chief deserved well of the colony. The Engineer-in-Chief had been a long while in a public position, and had had great responsibilities, which he carried out to the entire satisfaction of the Government. But that did not prevent one from saying one thought we might err in giving too much credit to him with regard to the

management of the railways during the time referred to. We knew very well—at least he knew—that during that time the management of the railways itself, the traffic, the number of miles run, and all that, was under the General Manager. Though the General Manager had not at that time the control of the Fremantle workshops, he had the ordering of the traffic, the arrangement of the running of trains, and the collection of the money. Even now, his control of the workshops was only nominal, because the Chief Mechanical Engineer was responsible to the Government. But the Chief Traffic Manager, as Mr. Davies had been then, had the real control of the railway traffic, and it would have been easy for him at that time to run the railways expensively.

MR. MOORHEAD: Not without the consent of the Engineer-in-Chief.

THE PREMIER: The Engineer-in-Chief was never General Manager, the Government having refused to appoint him to that position. In regard to traffic, the Chief Traffic Manager had been supreme.

MR. MOORHEAD: Even time-tables had been submitted to the Engineer-in-Chief.

THE PREMIER: There was not much in that. The time-tables were discussed with the Minister, and then referred to the Engineer-in-Chief. The latter officer had other work to do, and could not give that attention to the railways which a General Manager having nothing else to do could afford. At that time, too, the rates were much higher. All knew the trouble there had been at Coolgardie when the rates were doubled, and an enormous revenue was thus secured.

MR. MORAN: It was the Engineer-in-Chief who recommended the double rates.

THE PREMIER: Yes; or else the then Commissioner, Mr. Venn; and the Government were glad to approve, as the change was said to be necessary, and it undoubtedly paid well for a time. Many improvements had since been made in the railway system. In those days there were no fast trains, the Engineer-in-Chief always having set his face against these as unnecessary; whereas the present train service from Perth to Kalgoorlie was a credit to the colony. Nor was there such a frequent train service at that time, the

trains from Perth to Fremantle being hardly one-fourth of the number now running. Many conveniences were now given to the public which it was hoped would prove profitable; and it must be remembered it might be possible to make some lines pay better by sacrificing public convenience. During the past two or three years the railways had been absolutely transformed in respect of speed and number of lines and trains, and had been placed on a much more efficient basis. When he (the Premier) returned to the colony at the end of 1897, it seemed to him the money spent on improving the line between Midland Junction and Fremantle had been spent unwisely; but after all, these stations must give to visitors from abroad a good impression of the colony, and the railway presented a vastly different appearance from that of times past, when it impressed the traveller with the barrenness merely of the land through which it passed.

MR. VOSPER: All that work was done for the globe-trotter?

THE PREMIER: It was well to do something for visitors, but the improvements were for the convenience of the public also. It was well to accommodate as far as possible the suburban traffic. None had complained that the accommodation was too good, that carriages were too well cushioned or lighted, or the stations more convenient than necessary.

MR. VOSPER: The Boulder line, also, was very convenient.

THE PREMIER: That line would get conveniences in time. Some hon. members complained of too many improvements, others thought the improvements insufficient. He agreed with the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead). Make the railways sufficiently good for the work to be done; and the further the lines were pushed into the interior, the better for the country. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. Solomon) had spoken without thinking, when he said we should first perfect the lines now in existence. Those lines were fairly good; but, to make Fremantle flourish, there were required more lines into the gold-fields and to the agricultural districts, so as to bring more produce to the markets and for export. It was regrettable that the merits of one and another railway manager should have been made a matter

of controversy. Both officers had undoubtedly tried their best. The Engineer-in-Chief was one of the hardest-working men in the colony; none could do more than he; and the General Manager, too, was most indefatigable—a very able man who took the keenest interest in everything connected with the railways. It could not be said his administration was perfect; but as far as he (the Premier) could judge, the General Manager was a good officer, and the colony fortunate in securing his services. With that officer, he (the Premier) had never been very closely associated, and therefore could speak without bias; and he knew Mr. Davies's first desire was to make the railways pay, and not to flinch from his duty on any occasion, but to make the department his first consideration; and those who had business with the General Manager knew better than others that he was a man who would not give away anything that could be retained. While not too hard, he was quite hard enough to secure all possible revenue for the State. Hon. members might, therefore, be fairly well satisfied. Regarding the expenditure of loan moneys, the Government were not handing over the whole control to the Railway Department. The Boulder loop line, for instance, would be constructed by the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. MOORHEAD: But the Railway Department wanted control of such construction.

THE PREMIER: No; the lines to Leonora and Nannine would be constructed by the Engineer-in-Chief.

MR. MORAN: The railway officials were asking for control of construction. It was that request in their report which led to this discussion.

THE PREMIER: If they asked for such control they would not get it. Still, the General Manager, although perhaps not an engineer himself, had engineers under him. The Engineer for Existing Lines and his subordinates were competent men. Regarding the construction of stations, there was much in the contention that the General Manager should rule. The arrangement of railway stations should be in accordance with the wishes of those working the railways, for no Engineer-in-Chief could know as well what was wanted as could those daily using the lines. Railway officials knew

what they wanted, and should be allowed to have it. Regarding improvements to opened railways, it was hard to have two sets of people working on such lines.

MR. MOORHEAD: What were the Works Department for?

THE PREMIER: The Works Department had a good deal in hand now, and must not be overloaded: they had the Fremantle harbour works, the Mundaring weir, the pipes and pumps for the Coolgardie water supply, the construction of all new railways and of every public work in the colony excepting improvements and alterations in existing lines, of which, no doubt, the General Manager wished to have control.

MR. MOORHEAD: And also to have control of construction.

THE PREMIER: Well, he had not got that. In deciding a question some time ago, he (the Premier) had said construction ought to be left in the hands of the Works Department. The General Manager might want a lot of things which he might not get; and, as far as he (the Premier) knew, the Commissioner had not in any way decided to hand over the construction of railways to the Railway Department, nor was it likely that would be done in the near future. In all engineering works of magnitude, such as the Coolgardie water scheme, the best talent available should be engaged, and that was what the Government were trying to do. There was no reason why the Engineer for Existing Lines should advise the Government regarding new railways; and, so far as he (the Premier) knew, there was no present intention of entrusting the construction of fresh lines to any other than the Works Department.

MR. GREGORY: What about the auditors?

THE PREMIER: Hon. members might think he ought to know more than he actually knew regarding the railway audit. The railway accounts, he believed, were audited by the Auditor General.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Certainly not.

THE PREMIER: Then why had not someone asked for explanations?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: These had been asked for.

MR. MORAN: The question had been asked half-a-dozen times in the House, to his own knowledge.

THE PREMIER said he would undertake to get full information. The accounts were audited by the Auditor General, but there might be auditors for intermediate stations who were officers of the Railway Department. That was the system in the Post Office; and in every department where there were many officers there was an inspection of accounts and an audit. It was hard to believe that the Auditor General did not audit railway accounts, as well as those of every department throughout the colony. The audit might not be so detailed in respect of every single item; but there was a thorough general audit, he believed, of the railway accounts, on the same principle as the audit of any railway department in Australia. If that were not so, he would be disappointed on learning the truth.

MR. CONNOR: It appeared that 17,608,000 gallons of water had been purchased at 4·57d. per gallon. Were those figures correct? The total cost at that price would be over £816,000.

MR. VOSPER: It was not his intention to say so much about what the Premier had said, as about those things the Premier had not yet said, and which he apparently had no intention of saying. He (Mr. Vosper) could not help being amused at the description of the elaborate arrangements made for entertaining and evidently bamboozling the distinguished visitor, who was to be conducted to Midland Junction and made to believe, from the appearance of the suburban stations, that the railway arrangements all over the country were on the same scale of magnificence; but if the gentleman were sufficiently interested to go as far as Kalgoorlie, he would see a condition of affairs as disreputable as could be seen on any railways on the face of the earth. The contrast would be amusing and perhaps instructive; and the way in which the front-door of the colony was decorated and the back-door left entirely untouched was simply a national hypocrisy. Another matter which was in danger of being forgotten was that of the Perth Ice Company, about which the Premier had given no satisfactory assurance one way or the other, but had simply told the House that the matter was "under consideration," and that a departmental inquiry was being held into the conduct of certain officers. How long

was the stereotyped phrase "under consideration" to be used for the purpose of burking inquiry? When a matter was going to be shelved for an indefinite period, that was the old Parliamentary phrase always trotted out, and he was not satisfied at seeing men going at large in this city under police surveillance, because it was due to the country and to the men themselves that they should be tried on the charges which had been made against them. Who were the officers to hold the inquiry into the conduct of Messrs. Jaques and Manson, and what guarantee was there of the genuineness of the inquiry? In the ordinary course of events, the officers immediately superior to those persons would be called on to make the inquiry. Would Mr. Douglass, the District Superintendent at Kalgoorlie, who was at Kalgoorlie during the greater portion of the time the frauds were carried on, be one of the board of inquiry? Would Mr. Stead, the gentleman who was accused of having abstracted papers from a file, be one of the persons to make the inquiry? If so the Committee should say the conduct of those people required inquiring into, just as much as the conduct of Messrs. Jaques and Manson.

MR. MORAN : The result of the inquiry should be before Parliament before the recess.

THE PREMIER : The Royal Commission could never report in that time.

MR. MORAN : But how long would it be before hon. members found out whether the charges were justified?

THE PREMIER : The men charged could show cause at once.

MR. VOSPER : The report of the Select Committee was presented so far back as the 10th of last month.

THE PREMIER : But the report was not adopted then.

MR. VOSPER : The report was adopted, say, three weeks ago, and no steps, so far as was known, had been taken by the Government since.

MR. GREGORY : The Attorney General had said he knew nothing about the inquiry by the Railway Department.

MR. VOSPER : Then the inquiry had sprung Minerva-like, "fully armed" from the brain of the Premier.

THE PREMIER : Nothing had been said about a departmental inquiry.

MR. VOSPER : The Premier had certainly said there was to be a departmental inquiry.

THE PREMIER : Nothing had been said about a departmental inquiry, or, if so, the statement must be withdrawn.

MR. VOSPER : That made it all the worse.

THE PREMIER : The report of the Select Committee was not adopted until the 23rd October.

MR. VOSPER : The report was presented on the 10th October.

THE PREMIER : But the Government had no authority on that date.

MR. VOSPER : But surely, if there was any intention on the part of the Government to inquire either departmentally or otherwise, they would have taken some steps.

THE PREMIER : Two men had been suspended.

MR. VOSPER : Were the men suspended at once?

THE PREMIER : Yes.

MR. VOSPER : Was that before the Government had any authority from the House?

THE PREMIER : No.

MR. VOSPER : What was being done at the present time? The Premier said just now that a departmental inquiry was being held, but he had withdrawn that statement. If there had been a departmental inquiry under weigh, it would have shown some willingness on the part of the Government to carry out the mandate of the House, but if no inquiry were being held, that showed a flagrant contempt of the decision of the House. Instead of giving the House the information which was required, the Premier flew off at a tangent, and went into a totally unnecessary defence of his brother, the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest); and perhaps that was necessary to divert hon. members from the true issue. If there were any attacking of reputations, one fact which would affect the opinion of people outside the colony was that the Premier sold shares in this company at a most convenient season, and immediately afterwards the shares fell with a sickening thud.

MR. MOORHEAD : A most disgraceful insinuation!

THE PREMIER: The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) was a regular libeller, and he (the Premier) had no business to listen to such statements.

MR. VOSPER: The Premier did not listen to such statements more than he could help. As a rule he interjected as long as he could, and then, when it became too warm for him, left the Chamber.

THE PREMIER: That was what the hon. member deserved.

MR. VOSPER: The Premier's leaving the Chamber did not hurt him (Mr. Vosper). There was nothing disgraceful about the insinuation at all. Immediately the trouble arose, the Premier sold his shares; and if there were anything disgraceful about a transaction of the kind, it was the disgrace of selling shares which might be, and would be in all likelihood, valueless in the course of a few days.

MR. DARLOT: You are wrong. Several gentlemen sold shares on a rising-market.

MR. VOSPER: The shares were sold by the Premier and other people because the market rose; but immediately the inquiry was instituted, the shares came down with a run. The Premier had now left the Chamber, and he (Mr. Vosper) could proceed with some degree of comfort, and would read what one of the leading newspapers of the Eastern colonies said of this business.

MR. MOORHEAD: Which paper?

MR. VOSPER: The *Sydney Bulletin*, which had an enormous circulation.

MR. MOORHEAD: Undoubtedly.

MR. VOSPER: And the *Bulletin* would have a more lasting influence than ever the hon. member was likely to exert. The paper reflected the common sense view, though in its own peculiar language, as follows:—

THE PERTH ICE CO. TROUBLE.

The Perth (W.A.) Ice Co. trouble is growing to huge dimensions. That co. is, or was until very lately, composed of the magnates of the land—persons of wealth, political eminence, and such intense respectability that a blind beggar might hold out his hat to them with reasonable certainty that they wouldn't take any of the coppers out of it. The first trouble arose when it transpired that the Perth Ice Co. had been in the habit of defrauding the Railway Department by sending per rail, fish, etc. (which pays a rather high freight) as ice (which pays a very low freight). This was a shock, but it was unanimously agreed that the highly-respectable directors, shareholders, and managers couldn't possibly have any know-

ledge of the matter; and that the degraded office-boy or some other reprehensible and ill-paid individual, in his zeal to secretly make big dividends for his bosses without getting any credit for himself out of the transaction, must have done it "on his own." The co. stated in a proud reserved fashion that it would pay up, without interest, apparently, the amount of the steal which had been discovered, and £100 fine. It fixed its own fine at £100, in fact, which amount apparently wasn't enough to cover interest on the money that the Railway Department had been lying out of, and the offer was accepted. And then just when it seemed as if everything was comfortably settled new griefs and woes broke out. It transpired that the Ice Co., in addition to describing high-freight goods as low-freight goods, had a cheerful habit of sending 9 tons of goods as 4 tons, and things like that, and apparently it had sufficient influence in high quarters to prevent its stuff being weighed. The Railway Department accepted its weight as correct. A Committee of Inquiry, after painfully examining dozens of witnesses, can only find out that the Railway Department apparently weighed everybody's goods except the Perth Ice Co.'s. Nobody could assign any reason for not weighing its consignments—except that he hadn't specific orders to do it. Everybody else's goods were apparently weighed without specific orders, and as a matter of course. Furthermore, the Committee of Inquiry begins to suspect that the company got large quantities of dutiable goods in without paying duty, and there is also a suspicion that it got a considerable proportion of its water supply from the city water works without paying for that either. It is impossible to suppose that any of the high-class people who ran the company knew anything of these low proceedings, but public opinion is very hot against the degraded office-boy. Of course, by these devices the Perth Ice Co. showed far larger profits than could ever have been legitimately made, and its shares were doubtless more valuable because of these profits. And it is most unfortunate that, when the shares were very high by reason of these bogus profits, various more or less eminent shareholders sold out to a man in Melbourne, who, it is said, now forms in his own person the biggest part of the company. It is even alleged that a high politician sold his own shares at a high price, and that immediately afterwards the Government to which that politician belonged took proceedings against the company which he had just got out of—wherefore the shares naturally fell with much thud.

MR. HIGHAM: Who was the contributor?

MR. VOSPER: At all events he was not the contributor, and he answered the question because he knew what the member for Fremantle was driving at. If the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham) ever wrote anything for the

Bulletin, there would be very little chance of seeing it in print. The extract continued :—

This certainly sounds incredible. Still that politician's capacity for putting his foot in it is so awful that if it is true his friends have the consolation of knowing that he is about the only politician in Australia who is capable of doing such a thing without any bad intent, and by sheer honest clumsiness. Yet if it is true a man who is subject to misfortunes like that shouldn't be in office. In any decently-governed country the Perth Ice Co. business would be sufficient to kill the Government stone dead and past all resurrection.

MR. MONGER: Had we not already heard enough about the Ice Company?

MR. VOSPER: No; members would hear a great deal more about it. Until we had a more satisfactory assurance from the Government that the matter would be investigated immediately on the terms of the report given by the committee and adopted by the House this matter would be raised again and again. He was going to adopt the attitude of Cato in regard to Carthage: it was going to be raised again and again. He would be prepared to raise the matter ten times in ten days, until the House received some assurance.

MR. GREGORY: Before we got to the items, the Commissioner of Railways might give some undertaking as to what steps would be taken.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. B. C. Wood): The Committee had a statement from the Premier.

MR. GREGORY: We should have some undertaking before we got on to the items: we should thoroughly understand whether the inquiry would be a departmental one, or whether some persons would be appointed outside the department to conduct the inquiry.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There was nothing to add to what had been stated. The Premier had said that it was impossible to do this work in a hurry, because the Government had to look about to see who would undertake the duties. As regarded Mr. Jaques and Mr. Manson, they were suspended within two days of the adoption of the report by the House. Those officers were suspended, and were asked to show cause why they should not be dismissed. That was carrying out the instructions of the House, and the Government were now

waiting for those two officers to show cause why they should not be dismissed. The other matter referred to by the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) was not worth paying attention to. For his part, he (the Commissioner) had had enough of the Ice Company, and he thought hon. members had had enough of it too. He hoped the Committee would get on to the items in the interests of the country.

MR. GREGORY: There was no special desire on the part of Opposition members to let the railway estimates go through so speedily as the Commissioner desired. We wanted some information as to what the Commissioner intended to do in regard to auditing the railway accounts. In connection with the Savings Bank, the Auditor General's officer audited the accounts, and a similar system should be adopted in regard to the railways. Would the Commissioner continue the old system or adopt a new one?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: As far as the audit was concerned, there was a great deal in what the hon. member had said. If the audit was carried out by the department itself, that did not appear to be a proper system. If the hon. member wished him to make a promise, all he could say was that there would be a full and efficient audit in this department, and that should be done under the authority, at all events, of the Auditor General: that only stood to reason and common sense. So far as he was personally concerned, he had been so short a time in the department that he had not had time to go into the accounts to see what really did take place. He would give members an assurance that there would be a full and efficient audit in the future and on proper lines.

MR. OATS: Having listened with great attention to the debate on the Estimates, and being interested in the arguments advanced, had he been a juror he would have given his verdict against the Railway Department. For years past he had felt that the construction of the railways was not being carried out on proper lines. There were many striking instances of the wasteful expenditure of money on the railways, especially on station buildings. One had only to look along every line in the colony to see striking examples of waste of money.

There were many instances in which Government money had not been properly laid out, notably on the Boulder Railway, where the loss or life had been very great.

MR. MONGER: Every death on that line was a murder.

MR. OATS: It was true that every death on that line came under the category of murder. He believed in the economy of labour, and he believed in spending money where there was great traffic to make everything secure so that people might travel in safety. In one place on the railways it was clear that sufficient precautions had not been taken to secure life and limb. At Southern Cross, a very important old station, there was not a signal box. A great deal had been said about the interlocking gear, but at Southern Cross there was not a signal box at all. Shunting had to be done on this line; and the shunting train had to cross the main line. If the line had been properly constructed that should not occur. Members could see the danger attached to shunting trains across the main line. A passenger train might come in and there would be a collision. Some months ago a collision did take place, and had there been passengers on the train probably someone would have been killed. A driver called McLeod, a man whom he (Mr. Oats) had known ever since he had been in the colony, a man of good repute, and a good driver, acting under the instructions of his superior officer, was shunting a train across the main line. Another train arriving from Coolgardie way came into collision with the shunting train, but no one was on board, and only two trucks were knocked to pieces. McLeod, after a trial, he did not know of what character, was docketed 2s. a day, which meant £35 a year.

MR. MONGER: He ought to have been "sacked" right away.

MR. OATS: Not for doing his duty. McLeod petitioned the Commissioner of Railways, but that petition did not receive attention. McLeod was entitled to a holiday, but he could get no satisfaction. The man came to Perth to interview the department, and the upshot was that he was dismissed. Was that fair to a good, honest, hard working, attentive man, who had only carried out the duty he was

instructed to do by his superior officer? He wanted to know why was McLeod "sacked."

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: It was hardly the duty of the Commissioner to go into all these individual cases; but in regard to the case of McLeod he believed a recommendation was made to dock him 2s. per day. He understood the man came to Perth, and some arrangement was come to with the officers of the department, and the whole matter fixed up. They came to a compromise, but instead of going back as he should have done to make out a claim and appeal to the Minister, McLeod did not go back to his work at all, and he was dismissed because he did not go back as he ought to have done. Discipline must be maintained in the railway service, otherwise the work could not be carried on. If these men had their rights, they certainly had their responsibilities. If McLeod had gone back to Southern Cross and made representation to the proper quarter, doubtless the sentence might have been mitigated in a month or two, and the whole thing, so far as he (the Commissioner) could learn, was brought about by McLeod taking wrong advice, after having come to a satisfactory arrangement with the department.

MR. MORAN: He went to the association.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS said he did not know, but McLeod went to the wrong quarter and defied the Railway Department. Under these circumstances, what could the Railway Department do?

MR. MORAN: Why one was made a confidant in this matter he did not know, but it was a fact. He found himself on the very best of terms with the railway officials throughout the colony, and he did not know whether it was in consequence of his opposition to their being brought under the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill or not. Several complaints had been sent to him from different parts of the country, and he always endeavoured to do his best to inquire into them in connection with the member who represented the district. This matter was fully explained to him, and he was glad the Commissioner had taken notice of it, because one was afraid we were not going to hear the end of it like

that. We knew what these troubles meant when they cropped up. If these troubles were taken up by the associations, we knew that in the end the associations would win.

THE PREMIER : The associations had not taken up this matter yet.

MR. MORAN : There was, he thought, going to be a little trouble over it. If there was any chance at all that justice was not being done, it was well in cases of doubt to give the employee the benefit of it. The original fault of this man would not have admitted of the punishment which the second fault, that of not going back to his work, had met with. There might be some excuse. Supposing the man had been badly advised, perhaps that advice only came from those who knew their power. The original fault had been explained by the member for the district as it had been explained to him (Mr. Moran), and one felt certain there was a good deal in the way of extenuating circumstances. There was no proper signal to help the man, who had either to do his duty and take the risk of it—and he could not foresee what would happen on a dark foggy night—or else he must have failed to do his duty and have run the risk of being severely rated for that. One did not wish to pander to any civil servant, but he was perfectly satisfied that this man was the victim of circumstances in regard to the original fault. The Government must not punish this man for going to certain places to look for a remedy of a grievance. If these bodies were recognised and the Government climbed down when power was brought to bear upon them, justice should be done to an individual. If this man was a valued servant and a sober man who had done his duty for years, the Commissioner of Railways might find it possible not to keep him out of employment. A principle underlay this question. One day an association was recognised and the next day it was not, and it was hard to understand the matter. Should a man be dismissed because he took a day or two to go and see an association that had been recognised?

THE PREMIER : Who said that?

MR. MORAN : The Commissioner of Railways.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : Oh, no.

A MEMBER : Perhaps the Commissioner would tell the Committee what he did say.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : The best thing for the Government to do would be to ask that the papers should be placed on the table. That would give the whole history of the case. One had so many of these cases, that he could not deal with any individual case right off.

MR. MORAN : Was this during the time of the present Commissioner?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : Yes. It appeared that the man came down here, and after having come to terms with the General Manager he simply would not go back, and would not carry out the terms of the arrangement.

MR. MORAN : Did he agree to anything?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : Yes; he went to see the General Manager and agreed, and then he would not go back.

MR. MORAN : Had the Commissioner any evidence of that?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : No; the matter had been before the General Manager, and one had the General Manager's word.

MR. MORAN : That was where the trouble always occurred: the word of one man and the word of another.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : If the man made representation, the punishment could be reduced.

MR. WILSON : But there should not be negotiation as to what his punishment should be.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : It was only a question of terms. The man made representation, and the punishment was reduced.

MR. MORAN : The original punishment regarding 2s. a day was not reduced, was it?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : It was not to be for the same term, and if the man had gone back there might have been a further reduction, but the man would not go back, and he (the Commissioner) had to sign the dismissal.

MR. WILSON : The Minister had not replied in regard to interlocking.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : There were many points that required discussion, and as some hon. members had not been

able to be present, one would like those members to have an opportunity to speak. He therefore moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10-20 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 6th November, 1900.

Paper Presented—Question: Supreme Court Building, Donnybrook Freestone—Standing Orders, suspension to expedite business—Motion: Timber Cutting, to erect Mills (postponed)—Return Ordered: Cement purchased, Particulars—Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, Select Committee's Report—Kalgoorlie Tramways Bill, first reading—Leederville Tramways Bill, first reading—Fremantle Tramways Bill, first reading—Roads and Streets Closure Bill, first reading—Trustees (Colonial Securities) Bill, first reading—Loan Bill, in Committee, third reading—Patent Acts Amendment Bill, second reading *pro forma*, Petitions—Land Act Amendment Bill, in Committee (progress)—Land Resumption Amendment Bill, in Committee, reported—Adjournment.

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 7-30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Annual Report of Government Storekeeper.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—SUPREME COURT BUILDING, DONNYBROOK FREESTONE.

HON. J. M. SPEED asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Whether freestone from Donnybrook was specified for portions of the new Supreme Court buildings. 2, Whether the said freestone has been subjected to any test as to its suitability, and has any price been quoted to the

Government at which the same could be obtained. 3, Is there more than one quarry capable of supplying this freestone. 4, Is the Government aware how and by whom these quarries are held.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1. Yes. 2. Sample blocks have been part dressed, and exposed to the weather of last winter. Prices have been quoted by the various contractors who tendered for the erection of the new Supreme Court buildings. 3. The beds of stone are reported to extend over a very considerable area, and afford, it is believed, scope for many quarries. 4. No.

STANDING ORDERS, SUSPENSION.

TO EXPEDITE BILLS, ETC.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell) moved:

That in order to expedite business, the Standing Orders relating to the passing of public Bills, and the consideration of Messages from the Legislative Assembly, be suspended during the remainder of the Session.

He said: In moving the motion standing in my name I need hardly say no improper advantage will be taken of it. If members are willing to consent to the suspension of the Standing Orders, it may have the effect of facilitating business. It will not prevent any discussion or cause any Bill to be rushed through the House, nor will it prevent any motion from being brought forward. It will probably in several cases enable us to get through the business with more expedition than at present, especially Bills which are not argumentative. Such a motion is generally passed towards the close of the session; and only with the object of saving the time of hon. members. I hope the House will agree to the motion. I do not see any immediate necessity of putting it into operation, but at any moment there may arise a desire to pass some small Bill through, so as to get the Orders of the Day cleared.

Question put and passed, and the Standing Orders suspended accordingly.

MOTION: TIMBER CUTTING, TO ERECT MILLS.

HON. J. M. SPEED moved that the following Notice of Motion be postponed until the next Tuesday:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Government should grant no further timber leases