

MR. MORAN: That was a point he wished to get from the Government. If the head serang was away on some important business in the East, and the two lesser lights disagreed, everything would be locked up unless the head commissioner was sent for. But according to Clause 10, there was a means of getting over the difficulty, as the Government could, on a big question, bring in an outsider to settle the difference. The Bill gave power to appoint a commissioner temporarily; but should a temporary man be appointed when there was a difference of opinion between two commissioners?

**SPEAKER'S RULING, SUSPENSION.**

THE SPEAKER: Will the hon. member please sit down?

[Mr. Moran remained standing.]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must sit down. I will read out what is the practice of the House of Commons in a case of this kind, and I am going to put it into practice:—

That Mr. Speaker or the Chairman, having called the attention of the House or of the Committee to the conduct of a member who persists in irrelevant or tedious repetition, either of his own argument or the argument of other members used in the debate, may direct him to discontinue his speech.

If the hon. member does not talk relevantly to the question before the House, I must ask the hon. member to discontinue his speech.

MR. MORAN: The Speaker has his privileges, and I have mine.

MEMBERS: Chair!

MR. MORAN: The highest privileges of Parliament are the people's rights, and I am doing my best to protect them. I am not afraid, and if the axe is to fall, let it fall straight away. I am quite prepared to sit down at once.

THE SPEAKER: I have called the attention of the House to the conduct of the hon. member.

MR. MORAN: Certainly.

THE SPEAKER: I consider the conduct of the hon. member has been highly disorderly.

MR. MORAN: Let the axe fall at once. If the Speaker considers I have been highly disorderly, it is time I was ordered to discontinue my remarks.

THE SPEAKER: I order the hon. member in consequence of his grossly disorderly

conduct, to withdraw from the House during the remainder of this day's sitting.

MR. MORAN: Certainly. Will that mean for the whole of the sitting, until half-past four to-morrow?

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member is suspended for the sitting.

[Mr. Moran retired to the door.]

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must leave the House.

MR. MORAN (at the door): May I be allowed to get my papers [walking towards his desk and removing papers].

On motion by MR. WALLACE, debate adjourned.

**ADJOURNMENT.**

The House adjourned at 22 minutes past twelve midnight, until Wednesday afternoon.

**Legislative Assembly,**

*Wednesday, 27th August, 1902.*

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

**PRAYERS.**

**QUORUM IN DEBATE—PROCEDURE.**

[Mr. Speaker having, at the previous night's sitting, refused to count the House again after attention had been called repeatedly to the state of the House, and a member having been suspended, the matter was now brought up as one of "urgency."]

MR. J. L. NANSON (Murchison): I wish to call attention to a matter of

urgency ; and so that I may put myself in order I propose, before resuming my seat, to move the adjournment of the House.

THE SPEAKER : I shall have to ask the House, first of all, whether you ought to have leave to do that.

THE PREMIER : I submit the proper course would be for the hon. member to make a motion.

THE SPEAKER : I gave notice during last session, when some hon. member wished to take this course, that the directions laid down in *May* would have to be complied with :—

The member who desires to make such motion, having previously delivered to the Speaker a notice, in writing, of the definite matter of urgent public importance which is to be discussed, rises in his place and asks leave to move for that purpose the adjournment of the House.

THE PREMIER : You laid down that rule last session, sir.

THE SPEAKER : I laid down that rule last session, and I have had no notice on the subject of the intended motion.

MR. NANSON : I shall be happy to postpone this matter until the next sitting of the House.

THE PREMIER : Give notice.

MR. NANSON : My motion is for the adjournment of the House.

THE SPEAKER : I know that ; but the rule I have laid down is that if it be intended to move such a motion, the Speaker must be furnished with a statement of what is the matter of urgent public importance which should cause the House to agree to the motion being made.

MR. NANSON : Yes. I shall wait, then.

THE PREMIER : I should like to say at once that if the hon. member is going to do that, he ought to give notice and make a substantive motion. It can hardly be maintained that the motion he intends to make to-day is one of urgency, if it can wait till to-morrow and if he can give notice of it now. I submit he cannot give notice for the purpose of bringing it forward as a matter of urgency to-morrow, because it cannot then be urgent. The hon. member had better give notice of a substantive motion.

MR. NANSON : I have given notice.

THE PREMIER : Of what ?

MR. NANSON : Of my intention to move the adjournment of the House.

THE PREMIER : I submit the hon. member cannot do that to-morrow, on a matter which cropped up to-day.

THE SPEAKER : I should like to mention what my views are on this particular question. The intended motion, if made, can have absolutely no result whatever, because the hon. member cannot now call in question a ruling which I gave last night. Therefore it would, I think, be an utter waste of the time of the House and an abuse of its privileges if a member brought forward for discussion a subject which, under our Standing Orders, cannot be dealt with. Still, as I am personally concerned in the matter, I do not wish to stand in the way of the hon. member's making his motion ; and if the House choose to give permission for the motion being made, of course it can be made. I take this opportunity of saying that I think it a matter for extreme regret that the hon. member, the leader of the Opposition, who with the leader of the House ought to be the strongest supporter of the Speaker, appears to be the member who is conducting an attack on my position in the Chair.

MR. NANSON : May I claim your indulgence, sir, while I make a personal explanation ? There is nothing farther from my thoughts than to question your authority as Speaker of this House. My object in endeavouring this afternoon to bring the matter up in the form of a motion for the adjournment of the House was merely that you might be given an opportunity of quoting the authority for the ruling which you gave in regard to a quorum of this House. I have had the opportunity of myself looking up the matter, as well as of taking advice on it from recognised constitutional authorities in this State ; and I had hoped my information would be reinforced by hearing the authority for your ruling on the point.

THE SPEAKER : I gave no ruling. I merely said I was following a precedent emanating from Mr. Peel, when Speaker of the House of Commons. I did not mention, at the time, that it emanated from Mr. Peel ; but on looking into the subject this morning I find that it was Mr. Peel who gave this ruling, that when he had recently counted the House he

would decline to count it again if called on to do so. I followed that precedent.

MR. NANSON: I hope that you, sir, and members of the House will accept the assurance that I do not wish to dispute your authority. What I do wish to insure is that, whenever a ruling is given, the authority for that ruling shall follow the ruling. And I should like to ask your assistance in regard to a point on which you may be able to help me. We have a Standing Order stating that where a motion is brought forward affecting the privileges of this House, that motion is to take precedence of other business. I should like your ruling whether, as the point with which I am dealing affects the privileges of the House, I shall not be in order in making a motion.

THE SPEAKER: No; because the question of privilege must be brought forward at once.

THE PREMIER: Why not give notice of motion for to-morrow?

MR. NANSON: I am not allowed to give notice. Is there any means, Mr. Speaker, by which this matter may be discussed?

THE SPEAKER: I do not think there is any means by which the matter may be discussed and any result arrived at, because, as I pointed out just now, any objection to my ruling must be taken at once; therefore the time has passed for anyone to object. The only course I see for the hon. member is that he shall bring forward a substantive motion for my removal from the Chair. I do not think anything else can be done.

MR. NANSON: Last night I endeavoured to obtain a ruling on your second ruling, immediately after it was given; and I was ruled out of order.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member was not in the Chamber when I gave my ruling.

MR. NANSON: But you subsequently gave another ruling.

THE SPEAKER: I never gave a second ruling at all. To the best of my recollection, I told the hon. member I had already given a ruling, and that he could not object to it because the time was past.

THE PREMIER: I may perhaps be responsible for some misapprehension in connection with this matter; because in an interjection last evening I expressed an opinion that the suspension of the

hon. member in question (Mr. Moran) would last an ordinary calendar day; but on looking into the Standing Orders I find it lasts only for a parliamentary day.

THE SPEAKER: Certainly. The Standing Order says "during that day's sitting."

#### QUESTIONS—RABBITS INCURSION.

##### EXPENDITURE.

MR. BUTCHER asked the Treasurer: 1, The amount of money expended over the incursion of rabbits since June, 1901. 2, The amount expended in salaries to officers. 3, The amount actually expended in fencing material. 4, The amount still available for that purpose.

THE TREASURER replied: 1, £3,276 3s. 2, £1,676 16s. 11d. 3, £1,367 12s. 7d. 4, At 30th June, £9,054 17s. 11d. (Since 30th June, £422 10s. 6d. has been spent.)

##### OFFICERS EMPLOYED.

MR. BUTCHER also asked: 1, The number of officers employed in the Rabbit Department. 2, The number employed as Inspectors. 3, The part of the State in which such Inspectors are employed. 4, What is the nature of their employment.

THE TREASURER replied: 1, Five. 2, Four. 3, Chiefly in the South-West, but they are sent to different parts as occasion demands. 4, Searching for and destroying the advance guard of the rabbits; examining country to ascertain timber and water available for fence erection; putting down wells and excavating tanks along fence line; receiving and disposing of fencing material; overseeing fence erection, etc.

#### QUESTION—ESPERANCE RAILWAY SURVEY.

MR. HOPKINS asked the Minister for Works: 1, How many men are at present engaged on the permanent survey of the proposed Esperance Railway route? 2, When did they start operations? 3, What is the estimated total cost of survey? 4, When is it likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Eleven, including the surveyor in charge. 2, Middle of March, 1902. 3, Approximately £8,000. 4, So far as can

be ascertained at present, about the middle of 1903.

#### PAPERS—SPARK-ARRESTERS.

On motion by MR. EWING, ordered: That all papers and correspondence dealing with spark-arresters during the last 12 months be laid on the table of the House.

#### RETURN—RAILWAY DEVIATION (PROJECTED), FREMANTLE.

On motion by MR. FOULKES, ordered: That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing, 1, The length of the proposed railway route from Cottesloe Station to the point where the proposed line crosses the river above Rocky Bay. 2, The length of another proposed railway route from Cottesloe Beach Station to the point where the proposed line crosses the river above Rocky Bay. 3, The distance or length common to both routes. 4, The estimated length of new railways required to be constructed on—(a.) The Cottesloe route; (b.) The Cottesloe Beach route; (c.) That part of the line common to both routes. 5, The length of land belonging to private owners (including lands already purchased by the Government from private owners) that would be required—(a.) For the construction of the Cottesloe route; (b.) For the construction of the Cottesloe Beach route; (c.) For the construction of that part of the proposed line common to both routes. (6.) By whom the decision to purchase lands for the Cottesloe route was made, and—(a.) The date such decision was made; (b.) The name of the Premier at the time the decision was arrived at. 7, Date or dates on which instructions were given by the Government to the Government engineers or surveyors for reports as to—(a.) the Cottesloe route; (b.) the Cottesloe Beach route; (c.) the nature of such instructions, whether written or verbal; (d.) the names of such engineers or surveyors; (e.) the full details of such instructions, and if written, copies of such instructions. 8, Whether any reports were furnished by such engineers or surveyors; and, if so, (a.) the nature of such reports, whether written or verbal; (b.) to whom such reports, if written, were furnished; (c.)

by whom such reports were furnished; (d.) the names of the officers thus reporting; (e.) date or dates on which such reports were furnished to the Government. 9, Whether the late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor furnished any written reports as to the routes, and if so—(a.) to whom such reports were furnished; (b.) dates the same were furnished; (c.) the full details or copies of such reports, if any. 10, Whether any verbal or written reports with regard to the routes were furnished to the Government by any Government engineers or surveyors prior to the 28th day of July, 1902, and between the 28th day of July, 1902, and the 18th day of August, 1902. 11, Whether any surveys have been made of the two routes, if so—(a.) The date or dates on which such surveys were made; (b.) The names of such surveyors; (c.) The nature of such survey; (d.) The date when the plans of the two routes were prepared. 12, The date when certain lands were purchased from Mr. Tuckwell, and the situation of such lands. What lands (on the Cottesloe route) have been purchased since the 28th day of July, 1902. 13, The amounts of receipts of the Cottesloe Beach Station for the years ending 30th June, 1896; 30th June, 1897; 30th June, 1898; 30th June, 1899; 30th June, 1900; 30th June, 1901; 30th June, 1902.

#### RETURN—MECHANICAL BRANCH, SALARIES, ETC.

On motion by MR. McDONALD, ordered: That a return be laid on the table of the House, showing—1, Expenditure in salaries and allowances in the Chief Mechanical Engineer's Branch of Railways during the financial years ended respectively on 30th June, 1900; 30th June, 1901; 30th June, 1902. 2, The number of salaried officers in the above-named branch in each of the three years named, under the following heads: (a.) Adults; (b.) Juniors; (c.) Cadets. 3, The cost of stationery, printing, and books during each of the three periods above stated.

#### DONNYBROOK FREESTONE, REPORT.

On motion by MR. EWING, ordered: That the Report of the Royal Commission on the Donnybrook freestone be laid on the table.

# ESPERANCE TO EASTERN GOLDFIELDS RAILWAY.

## MOTION TO CONSTRUCT.

### AMENDMENT, INQUIRY BY COMMISSION.

Debate resumed from the 20th August, on the motion by Mr. A. E. Thomas, affirming the desirability of constructing a railway connecting Esperance Bay with the Eastern Goldfields, and on the amendment by Mr. Hastie for inquiry by Royal Commission.

MR. A. J. DIAMOND (South Fremantle): I have not, so far, taken up the time of the House to any extent on any one subject, and even on the present important question I intend to be as brief as possible; but at the same time I cannot promise to be as brief as I have been in the past. I will do the best I can to approach the subject as a practical shipping and freight man. I can assure the House that I do not approach it purely and simply as one having business connection with the town of Fremantle. I had great pleasure in listening to the exhaustive and powerful speech of the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas). Had he a good case, his speech would have been even more powerful; but he certainly laboured a bad case to the very best extent, and I must say that those who think with him, particularly the Goldfields-Esperance Railway League, if I may use that term, have every cause to be thankful to their champion. I sincerely hope that if at any time in the future I have a scheme to bring before the House, I shall be able to rely upon having such a powerful champion as the hon. member. But on coolly and calmly investigating all the alleged facts and the powerful array of figures quoted by him, so many blanks were found and so many hitches, so many erections built on false foundations, that the practical power of his great speech was to some extent lost.

MR. THOMAS: I hope you will give us those defects.

MR. DIAMOND: The hon. member absolutely flooded the House and almost drowned us with statistics. He perspired with decimals at every pore. I think that when he has had a little more experience, not only in this House but in life generally, he will find that although the common or garden member of Parliament likes facts and figures, he can very

easily be wearied by extreme pressure of decimals.

MR. THOMAS: The Premier said I did not give enough.

MR. DIAMOND: I am very sorry I do not quite agree with the Premier, and I am sure that, if the Premier said so, the majority of the members of the House do not agree with him. The member for Dundas made a great effort, and as I said before, would that I could always have such a champion. I repeat that he deserves the admiration and thanks of those who think with him, but it appears to me that his speech teemed largely with irrelevancies, and later on, as I continue my remarks, I will endeavour to show in what respects it did so. I think members will see, when I give them a few facts, figures, and deductions from the point of view of a practical man, how frequently the member for Dundas has been irrelevant.

MR. HOPKINS: What are you supporting, the motion or the amendment?

MR. DIAMOND: I am not supporting either. With reference to this agitation and the splendid advocacy of the case by the member for Dundas, we must first ask, what are the objects? I do not intend to read off the number of headings the hon. member gave when he started the other evening, but I think that in a few words I can state really what he said. The proposed line is to cheapen the cost of living, to cheapen the cost of production, to open up agricultural land between Norseman and Esperance, to open up the Widgemoultha goldfield, wherever that is—

MR. THOMAS: No; the auriferous area.

MR. DIAMOND: To open up a very large supply of firewood for the mines, to develop a salt industry at Pink Lake, to take people to the coast for a change, and to carry material for the Transcontinental railway. I propose to take these *seriatim*. I think you will find when I have finished that I have kept my promise not to detain the House one moment unnecessarily. [Interjection.] I would like to say that when I interject I always try not to embarrass a speaker, and I earnestly hope that members will exercise a little bit of forbearance towards myself, because I am not a practised public speaker, and consequently I require a little forbearance. With reference to the cheapness of living,

this assertion is based on the supposition that the total cost of transit of the necessities of life from the Eastern States to Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie—to Kalgoorlie, I will take that as a central point—would by this scheme be necessarily decreased. I propose to show in a very few words—and the facts and figures I will give cannot be contradicted—that the assumption or statement is, to say the least of it, ridiculous. I will deal with the freight from the Eastern Goldfields to Esperance on potatoes, onions, and flour. I took these three as I thought they were leading lines in the category of articles of food. I find that the freight to Esperance is 35s. per ton, and that the railage from Esperance to Kalgoorlie at the same rate as is charged now from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie would be £1 4s. 7d., making a total transit charge—that is freight and railage from Adelaide, we will say, or Melbourne to Kalgoorlie—of £2 19s. 7d. The freight to Fremantle to-day is £1. That appears a paradox, but it is absolutely true, and the same thing rules in all parts of the world.

MR. THOMAS: The other one is not *via* Albany, is it?

MR. DIAMOND: Either *via* Albany or direct by steamer.

MR. THOMAS: There is no direct steamer.

MR. DIAMOND: There was. I got from the Adelaide Steamship Company the other day, in fact at the beginning of this week, the amounts charged when the steamers were running direct. The charge was £1 15s., and to-day it is £1 15s. The freight to Fremantle to-day is £1, and the railage to Kalgoorlie £1 14s. 3d., making a total of £2 14s. 3d., or a difference of 5s. 4d. in favour of the Fremantle route.

MR. HOPKINS: What is the difference of mileage?

MR. DIAMOND: The difference between 244 and 387.

MR. HOPKINS: What about the freight?

MR. DIAMOND: I have given you the freights as they are to-day.

MR. THOMAS: How do you make it 244?

MR. DIAMOND: Two hundred and twenty to Coolgardie and 24 from Coolgardie to Kalgoorlie. This is without reckoning marine insurance, and marine insurance, although a matter of some importance, is not so great as to come to

any perceptible rate per ton; but it would be 50 per cent. more from the port of Esperance than from the port of Fremantle, which is obvious to any shipping man. In these calculations I have been more than fair to the advocates of the Esperance route. I have not said one word about the heavy lifts, about the extra cost of handling at a second-class port as against a first-class port, and I presume that the advocates of the Esperance route do not expect that Esperance will be a first-class port for some years to come. The rates of handling at a second-class port for some years would be 7s. per ton at least, and I do not say what would be the cost at any other port. I leave that for the other side to bring out. In reference to the matter of freights, this is another important point. Should the advocates of the Esperance line be successful, the result would be that if there was a serious deflection of freights from Fremantle to Esperance, the rate of freights to both ports would be increased. I do not think that requires any labouring to prove. If a steamer leaves an Eastern port with 2,000 tons of cargo, and has to discharge 1,000 tons at Esperance and another 1,000 tons at Fremantle, the rate of freight on the 2,000 tons would be much increased. As to the cheapening of the cost of production, I presume that means the cheapening of the cost of landing mining machinery and material on the mines, and I will give a few figures on that head. The freight to Esperance, as I told members, is £1 15s. The railage on machinery to Kalgoorlie from Esperance on the same basis as the present freight made up from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie would be £2 9s. 2d. The freight to Fremantle to-day is £1. As I said before, that is without taking the heavy lifts into consideration. The rates on machinery for ordinary small packages is the same as for ordinary merchandise. The ordinary rates of freight on small packages of machinery, articles that can be handled easily, is £1 per ton to Fremantle and £1 15s. to Esperance. The freight to Kalgoorlie is £1 8s. 5d., or a total of £2 4s. 2d. The total for Fremantle is £2 8s. 5d., showing an apparent difference of 4s. 3d. in favour of Esperance. The member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) will see that if I do not succeed in proving everything in favour of Fremantle, I

am doing the best I can, as far as my ability will allow. This apparent difference in favour of Esperance, I would like to say, and I ask members to mark this, is only on machinery from the Eastern States. The tendency at the present time, and for a long time past, has been for our mining machinery to come from England and America.

MR. THOMAS: Especially with a 15 per cent. duty on.

MR. DIAMOND: The 15 per cent. duty does not make much difference. Now taking into consideration the importation from the Eastern States, and the heavy cost of handling heavy pieces of machinery at Fremantle, which is fairly serious at the present time and has been for some time past, I may say we hope at Fremantle with the advent of a harbour board, that the cost of handling goods at Fremantle will be reduced, and no doubt this machinery will reap the benefit of that reduction. But in the case of a second-class port like Esperance the cost would be, even with an expenditure of ten times or twenty times the amount set down for the improvement of that port—which is £75,000, I think—I say the cost of handling heavy articles of machinery at Esperance would most likely be 5s. more than at Fremantle. I have consulted with one or two of my staff to-day, and they give it as their opinion that the cost would be considerably over 5s.; but allowing it to be the same, I do not think that shows a sufficient reason to go to the enormous expense of a new railway and a new port for the purpose of bringing machinery to the goldfields from the Eastern States.

MR. THOMAS: You and your staff have visited Esperance, I suppose?

MR. DIAMOND: We have not; but I think before I sit down the hon. member will admit that I know more about that port than most of those who have been there. It may be said, "This is all very well as regards goods coming from the Eastern States, and also in regard to goods coming from England; but we will alter all that, we will have such magnificent power in the centre of the universe, the financial and trade centre, London, that we will alter all that. We will have steamers calling at Esperance, and we will have freights reduced, and we will

do most wonderful things." I want to show members what chance there is of doing this. With reference to the freights from England, the tendency is to have cheap freights to big ports and dearer freights to smaller ports. It is recognised that a steamer to be made to pay at cheap freights must carry large quantities of goods to a large port, or to two large ports, and get something to take away. I do not know what steamers will get to take away from Esperance; perhaps some of the salt. In the first place large cargo steamers from London or New York do not call at Esperance at all. I do not think it requires any argument to show that. If they called, it would mean that full cargoes, or pretty nearly full cargoes, would have to be guaranteed, and from my experience steamers would not get full cargoes to Esperance for many years to come. At the present moment if shipments were consigned from London or New York to Esperance the goods would have to be transhipped at Adelaide, Fremantle, or Albany, and the difference between the freight from London or New York to Esperance, and the freight from London and New York to Fremantle, would be much greater than the difference between the freights from the other States to those ports. I will give an illustration. The freight from London to Fremantle, *via* Singapore, is 50s.—it may be a shilling or two more or a shilling or two less. The freights from London to Cossack, *via* Singapore, is 70s., that is 20s. more. These newly-fledged freight experts from the goldfields—and if I were to attempt to give information regarding gold mining, I should be a newly-fledged expert in regard to mining—argue that if the freight to a port a thousand miles away is so much, then the freight to a port which is only 500 miles away is so much less. But the actual practice amongst business men and the experience of life teach us that the direct opposite is the case. Freight is not governed by distance entirely, but by the exigencies of the trade, by the quantity of trade which goes from one port to another, and by the capacity of the port of arrival for giving something in return. I think that is clear to all men, and I do not need to take up the time of the House in elaborating the argument.

MR. TAYLOR: What do you give the London boats to export from Fremantle?

MR. DIAMOND: If the hon. member, or any member who has any curiosity on that subject, will come to Fremantle for a few days I will take him over the wharves and show him something. If this railway to Esperance and the making of the port of Esperance caused the taking away of a considerable portion of the freight to Fremantle, the result would be an increase of the rates at both places. There is another item, and the hon. member for Mount Margaret (Mr. Taylor) in an interjection just now put me in mind of it. The mail steamers that form a considerable section of the shipping interests in Western Australia can never by any possibility that can be conceived at the present moment—however desirous the goldfields people, or a certain section of them may be of taking the trade from Fremantle, which after all in the minds of a great many agitators on the fields is the principal object of this scheme—export sovereigns from Fremantle, because the financial people interested, notwithstanding any outcry on the goldfields, will continue to send their gold by the quickest route and from the place where they can get the cheapest rate of insurance. At the present time to send sovereigns from Fremantle by the mail steamers the cost for freight is 10s. per cent. with 3s. 9d. per cent. insurance. When the time comes to send sovereigns from Esperance at the same rate, then I am satisfied. The next point is the opening up of the agricultural lands around Esperance, and there are so many large areas of agricultural land already opened up in Western Australia without railway facilities that I think it is a fair thing for the people who advocate this line as an agricultural settlement to make use of some of that land before they ask for a railway to open up more.

MR. THOMAS: I never asked for a railway on that ground only. I said it would be a means for traffic.

MR. DIAMOND: This last day or so, since the meeting at Fremantle the other night, I have been twitted with advocating a railway through the Jandakot Area, and the Jandakot Area is a practical illustration of what I said. I think there are some 270 settlers there on small

blocks, making a living on those blocks and improving their land, fencing and growing something; and if that part of the State asks for a railway I shall be one of the advocates for it, and I do not think I could do anything my conscience approved of more than that. I will read to the House a few words from the Admiralty report later on—although the Admiralty authorities are not agricultural experts—showing what that report has to say on this matter. The next reason given in support of the hon. member's motion was that a large revenue would be derived from the carriage of firewood for the mines. I do not think I need greatly enlarge on that point. The Premier, in fact, knocked the stuffing out of that bag with a very few words. He was not too hard on the member for Dundas, and I am sure I do not want to be too hard on that hon. member, whom I esteem far too much to try to make capital out of a little slip. The hon. member said last year that the present sources of supply within easy reach of Kalgoorlie would provide the mines with firewood for 14 years to come.

MR. THOMAS: Considerable reserves have been made since.

MR. DIAMOND: In touching on this particular point, I shall not go to the full period of 14 years, but confine myself to 10 years. I certainly do not think the hon. member has shown anything which would lead us to believe that this railway would enjoy a considerable accession of revenue from the carriage of firewood from some remote point, about 100 miles away from Kalgoorlie, when the mines can get all the firewood they will want for the next 10 years from sources of supply now available close at hand.

MR. THOMAS: You are misquoting again.

MR. DIAMOND: One of the latter points relied on by the hon. member was the development of the salt industry. I have lived in South Australia, where a salt industry has been in course of development for almost as long as I can remember, on York Peninsula. The salt produced there is a staple article of export, and commands a large market throughout Australasia and New Zealand; indeed, I believe it even competes favourably with the celebrated Liverpool salt. The salt, I say, is obtained from



lakes situated in the centre of York Peninsula, and the people engaged in the industry have, for as long as I can remember, carted their produce to the coast. Although they have created an industry showing an annual export of thousands of tons, I have not known them ask for a railway line. Had they done so, there would have been some excuse for them; but with regard to the salt argument in this instance I can only say that the hon. member is building on a false basis. By the by, I have to point out that the hon. member is wonderfully poetic. I do not know whether he has named these places in the vicinity of Esperance; but I note Pink Lake, Grass Patch, Salmon Gum and the Garden of Eden. [MR. THOMAS: That is Esperance.] I believe this celebrated Pink Lake contains a magnificent deposit of salt, and I may inform the member for Dundas that on this subject I have already placed myself in communication with certain friends in Adelaide. The lake is about two miles out of the town of Esperance, and the existence of the lake is one of the reasons advanced for the construction of a railway 220 miles in length.

MR. THOMAS: I say nonsense. You were not present when I spoke.

MR. DIAMOND: I did not miss a word of the hon. member's speech.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps the hon. member does not recognise his speech when it is quoted to him.

MR. DIAMOND: The member for Dundas apparently made a good point when he said that the railway to Esperance would open up a pleasant seaside resort, affording a nice change for the goldfields residents. He was unkind enough to make a slighting reference to the inferiority of the climate of Fremantle, as compared with that of Esperance.

MR. THOMAS: I do not remember saying anything of the sort.

MR. DIAMOND: Oh yes; I distinctly remember the reference.

MR. THOMAS: I said nothing of the sort.

MR. DIAMOND: If the hon. member denies the statement, I shall not persist, but shall merely remark that I am prepared to show that in the matter of

climate there is no comparison between Esperance and Fremantle. Almost the last point made by the hon. member—and this is the funniest of the whole lot—was in connection with the Transcontinental railway. He told us that the Esperance line, if constructed, would serve as a means of carrying at a cheap rate the material for the construction of the Transcontinental line to Coolgardie or Kalgoorlie. The hon. member dwelt on the great saving which the Esperance line would effect in the construction of the Transcontinental line; but he did not appear to recognise the fact that the Transcontinental line will be constructed by the Commonwealth Government, and that they may have their own ideas, if they want to land material on the coast at all, as to the point at which they will land it. I shall ask hon. members to bear in mind that the Transcontinental line will run, at the farthest, 50 miles north of Eucla. At the same time I may remark that, from my reading of the Interstate newspapers for the last year or two—I am sure the member for Dundas will be delighted to hear this—I gather that it is quite possible the Transcontinental line may be partially deviated to take in Norseman, in which case it will certainly go through Eucla, and will also probably deviate to take in Tarcoola, which promises to be a great South Australian goldfield. But if these deviations be not made, the farthest distance inland which the Transcontinental line will run from Eucla will be 50 miles. Even now it is quite possible, without taking into consideration the deviations I have mentioned, that the line will go right through Eucla. In either case, whether the railway go 50 miles away from Eucla, or go through Eucla, if it should be considered necessary to land material for the construction of the line on the coast at a point about half-way between Port Augusta and Albany, the business men who are used to freightage and all that sort of thing will recommend the Commonwealth Government to land the material at Eucla, and, if necessary, to construct a tramway of 50 miles to convey the material to where it may be required. Certainly, the business men of the Commonwealth will be no party to the construction of 220 miles of railway for the purpose of carrying material to another railway.

MR. THOMAS: Can ships get into Eucla ?

MR. DIAMOND: Oh, yes; and get out of it, too. Next, I want to say a few words on Esperance as a port. The hon. member, a week ago, overwhelmed us with a long list of ocean-going steamers which had entered the port of Esperance; but he omitted to say—probably the omission was due to a lapse of memory—that the owners of these steamers were singularly unanimous in not allowing their ships to pay Esperance a second visit, or, if a second visit was paid, in not permitting a third. However, to take two of the largest of the steamers mentioned by the hon. member, the “Innamincka” went in flying light, with no cargo on board—unless we can call Sir John Forrest cargo—landed our late respected Premier, stopped for four hours, and cleared out again. The “Innamincka” has not paid Esperance a second visit. The “Time,” which carried the largest cargo that ever entered Esperance, a cargo of coals in transit for Fremantle or Albany, dropped into Esperance casually to land some stock for station owners in the neighbourhood. Result: a big hole in her lower regions. I can give a few farther instances to show the kind of hospitality extended by the rocks of this port to calling steamers; but I think I have adduced quite sufficient to let hon. members see, at any rate, that Esperance is not a first-class port and landing place at the present day. I believe that in broad daylight, in very fine weather, steamers can enter Esperance, or Esperance Bay, as far as what is known as the Causeway, with perfect safety. I am also prepared to admit that steamers, no matter how large, can find good anchorage once they get inside. But large merchant steamers, freight steamers and passenger steamers do not call at ports for the purpose of showing that they can get into those ports and out of them again. They call at ports in order that they may do something; they call to land and embark passengers, to land cargo, and to load salt or other cargo. The facts of the case are these. The Causeway, which is a magnificent natural entrance, runs towards the north-east; that is, from the south-west. Unfortunately, the big blows in the great Australian Bight, as it is generally known to shipping men—I had a conversation on this subject with a man who was

whaling there for many years; I think the member for Beverley knows to whom I refer—the big blows during the whole year come from the south-west, and go straight up the Causeway channel; the result being that, however safe the passage in and however safe the anchorage may be, it is utterly impossible, during the greater part of the year, for any steamer to lie alongside a jetty to discharge or work cargo, or even to lie out at anchor and work lighters. With the permission of the House, I shall read a few words from the Admiralty report on Esperance Bay. This report is published by the proper authorities in London, who have no connection with Western Australia or its particular interests; it constitutes a supplement, corrected to the 15th November, 1900, to the *Australia Directory*, volume I.; and it is printed and published for the Hydrographic Office of the Admiralty by Eyre and Spottiswoode, of London. I have no doubt that had the hon. member come across the particular paragraphs I am about to read he would have given us the benefit of them in his opening speech; but through some strange oversight he missed them entirely. It is curious, also, that these paragraphs do not appear in the report of the Chamber of Mines on the Esperance Railway. This Admiralty report states:—

Esperance Bay extends from the point abreast of Observatory Island to Cape Le Grand, and is eight miles deep. Between Observatory island and Dempster head—

That is the head behind which is situated the little jetty at which small coasting steamers now call.

are two rough rocky points with sandy beaches between. From Dempster Head to the eastward is a long stretch of sand, only broken in one place by Rossiter Head, round which there is a small bay with good landing—elsewhere there is a constant heavy surf. Esperance township is situated in the north-west corner of the bay of same name, and one mile north of Dempster Head, on a small flat in front of the sandhills, and it is but a landing place for stores and mining plant for the goldfields that are situated 100 miles inland and beyond. In the year 1897 the population was approximately 1,000.

I do not think it is quite 1,000 now.

MR. THOMAS: It is 505.

MR. DIAMOND: The report states:—

The coast line fronting the town is calculated to be growing to seaward at least one and a half feet each year.

Esperance would thus appear to be slipping away into the mother bosom of mighty ocean. Some hon. member recently doubted my statement, made by way of interjection, that the present capacity of the Esperance pier is vessels drawing about 16 feet of water. This Admiralty report says:—

Steamers of 12 to 16 feet draught will be able to lie alongside.

MR. THOMAS: But the report states the wooden pier was in course of construction. How could anybody tell what depth was at the end of it, when it was not finished? Read the report fairly, if you read it at all.

MR. DIAMOND: The report continues:—

The anchorage is safe but uncomfortable.

This survey was made in February and March, two months of consistently fine weather:—

During the survey, the "Waterwitch" experienced several moderate gales from the west and S.W.; but with two anchors down, the vessel rode out with safety.

That would be a nice place to land passengers and cargo, where two anchors had to be put down.

During such gales a heavy swell from the southward was experienced the following day. The country is sterile, and has but little stock. Near Esperance township there are extensive shallow salt lakes. Sandhills covered with coarse grass and small scrub is the general formation, becoming more undulating farther inland, but nowhere more than 400 to 500 feet above the sea.

Now we come to one of the great questions, the weather:—

During the month of February and part of March, 1897, while the survey was in progress, the S.E. and easterly winds were of short duration, lasting not more than two or three days, amounting at times to force 6.

Nautical members can explain that technicality.

Then a shift would take place to the north and N.W., force two to four, lasting part of one day, terminating in a sudden squall, sometimes of considerable strength, from the westward, frequently followed by a gale from the S.W. On the wind shifting to the southward the weather moderated; and very seldom did it blow from the south or S.S.E.

I have said that even if the port were open and the railway made, vessels could not lie alongside the wharf, nor could they lie at the entrance:—

During the period mentioned, it was not infrequent to experience a swell of eight to 10 feet above mean level between Cull and Black

Islands; farther to the southward and S.W. it being much heavier, breaking with great force on all dangers, and thus rendering the causeway very conspicuous. The sea was observed to break in seven or eight fathoms on Douglas and Sunday patches.

It must be a pretty heavy sea that would break 36 to 42 feet above the normal level. I think I have shown hon. members that the Esperance Chamber of Mines and the member for Dundas, in giving the report, might at least have let us know these little details. I have said sufficient to show that without an enormous expenditure of public money, quite or nearly as much as the expenditure on the Fremantle Harbour Works, the idea of making Esperance a port at which ships could call and land passengers and cargo with safety and despatch, with cheap freights and cheap passenger rates, is entirely out of the question. I think the hon. member, in answer to an interjection, made some remarks on the Geraldton jetty. I have no more interest in Geraldton than in Esperance; but I believe I am correct in saying that vessels lying at the Geraldton jetty can work all the year round, either in bad or in good weather.

MR. STONE: That is a fact.

MR. THOMAS: I was referring to the depth of water at the Geraldton jetty.

MR. DIAMOND: As to this swell which continually exists at Esperance, the present condition of the jetty ought to be mentioned. It is very bad; and if the hon. member takes a great interest in Esperance, and expects the arrival of very large steamers in the immediate future, he had better get the Government to look into it.

MR. THOMAS: The Works Department sent a man down only a few months ago.

MR. DIAMOND: The little steamers lying alongside the jetty have been dashed against it so violently that they have been very much shaken. I am not prepared to give an estimate of the cost of making Esperance Bay a first-class harbour; and the estimate of the Chamber of Mines of £75,000 for the construction of a jetty may be right enough, as regards a jetty. But I have taken much trouble to get these details, and I would appeal to hon. members generally, and especially to goldfields members, to think over these figures, and to make themselves certain

whether a port can be constructed at Esperance except at an enormous cost. Not being an expert, I am not prepared to give such an estimate.

MR. THOMAS: Yet you could give estimates to the Chamber of Mines.

MR. DIAMOND: I will come to that. But the estimates I have obtained from the shipmasters who have visited Esperance—and so far as I know all of them are absolutely regardless of whether a harbour be made there or not—show that such harbour would cost from one million to, I think, three million pounds. [MR. THOMAS: No; four and a half millions.] Yes; I believe one man did say it would cost twice as much as the Fremantle Harbour. At any rate, I gave that estimate to the Chamber of Mines for what it was worth, simply as I got it. I do not indorse it. I know nothing about it. An hon. member suggests it would be cheaper to build a canal to Coolgardie. The position is that at the present time, without a breakwater, and with the jetty extended into water deep enough to take the biggest ships afloat—and there is plenty of water there—the port of Esperance would certainly not be better than, if as good as, the port of Fremantle before the construction of the inner harbour. This means that the old jetty at Fremantle would answer all purposes for the same number of days in the year as this proposed extended jetty at Esperance. I am prepared, if ever this matter come before a select committee, to bring practical evidence on this particular point.

MR. HARPER: Can you tell us whether, if this jetty were built, it would go as far as the place where the water breaks?

MR. DIAMOND: No; the water breaks farther out. As it gets longer, the jetty would naturally go more and more outside the shelter of Dempster Head. No matter where the jetty was constructed, if it were taken out to any depth of water there would always be a tremendous swell in the port, in the finest weather.

MR. HARPER: What would be the swell at the end of the jetty?

MR. DIAMOND: According to the Admiralty report, from eight to 10 feet above the mean level.

MR. HARPER: At that spot, always?

MR. DIAMOND: Yes. The opinion of nautical men generally is that the position of Fremantle at the present moment, without the inner harbour, would be the same as that of Esperance if this Chamber of Mines jetty were constructed. The hon. member (Mr. Thomas) told us there were great land sales at Esperance, and that big prices were obtained. I am sure he did not see the deduction we might reasonably draw from that statement, that the land speculators, the great majority of whom did not buy land for the purpose of settling or building in Esperance, but, as I know, bought it for land-jobbing purposes—that they, having paid big prices and having “fallen in” with a terrible thud, want the people of Western Australia to construct a railway to bring the land up to the value they expected.

MR. THOMAS: Who sold the land? The Western Australian Government sold it to them.

MR. DIAMOND: With reference to the Chamber of Mines report, I am absolutely satisfied, from what I know and have heard, that the chamber approached this subject with an open mind, as far as it was possible for them so to do; I am absolutely satisfied that according to their lights they obtained all the evidence they could on both sides of the question; but unfortunately, I suppose from their isolated position, many miles from where they could obtain expert evidence, they have failed to make a reliable report.

MR. THOMAS: Did not they ask you to collect all the evidence you could, both for and against?

MR. DIAMOND: Yes; and so I did. But the evidence I speak of would be the evidence of witnesses; and if the matter ever come before any committee of inquiry appointed by this House, I shall be prepared to nominate witnesses who will open the eyes of the hon. member and of the Esperance Chamber of Mines. I will mention one fact. The Adelaide Steamship Company, when business was brisk at Esperance, imported a lighter; but they had to send it away again because they could not work it.

MR. HOPKINS: Why do you oppose the investigation?

MR. DIAMOND: I will tell you that, by-and-by. To show the mistaken basis

on which some of the conclusions of the Chamber of Mines are built, and how they have been misled, it needs only to mention that they say the rates of freight and insurance from the Eastern States are the same to Esperance as to Fremantle. I have shown that the freights to Esperance are 75 per cent. more, and the rates of insurance about 50 per cent. more; consequently the chamber must have been very seriously misinformed. I am very sorry they did not ask me those questions, for I could have answered them correctly. Moreover, they have evidently overlooked these Admiralty reports about the state of the alleged harbour at certain times; and consequently their report on the subject has not the value it might otherwise possess. The hon. member used the argument of decentralisation. I am sorry to say he was very much out when he instanced the railway from Broken Hill to Port Pirie or Port Adelaide. On the Great Southern Railway of South Australia, there is a junction station called Petersburg. From Petersburg to Port Pirie and from Petersburg to Adelaide there were lines running before Broken Hill was heard of; consequently all the South Australian Government had to do was to construct a line from Petersburg to Broken Hill, about 180 miles. The hon. member said something to the effect that the New South Wales Government did not construct a railway to Broken Hill to compete with those lines, and I forget what reason he gave; but I would point out that the nearest New South Wales railway station to Broken Hill is about 400 to 500 miles away, at Cobar. The distance from Broken Hill to Sydney is as nearly as possible 800 miles; consequently there can be no analogy between the two cases.

MR. THOMAS: What is the distance from Broken Hill to Port Pirie?

MR. DIAMOND: About 270 miles. Apparently there was no possibility of centralisation in New South Wales. The railway policy of New South Wales shows that, had there been, they would have centralised. We know what they have done in the Riverina trade. We know they are carrying wheat from Hay to Sydney, for the purpose of taking it from the Melbourne shippers, at a rate less than they charge for carrying it half way

between Hay and Sydney. We know they take ore to the banks of the Darling, and then by barges and steamers to Adelaide, and that they made the rate for copper ore from Cobar to Sydney less than half the rate they charge in other parts of New South Wales on ores much nearer to Sydney, but not liable to competition. Consequently there is no analogy between the case of the Broken Hill and Adelaide line and this line. I finally want to come to the crux of the whole question. I apprehend that the honest aim of the people on the goldfields is to decrease the cost of living and the cost of production; I am certain that is also the aim and object of the members of this House; but in my opinion those who are agitating for the construction of this line have gone on the wrong tack altogether. We in Western Australia are, or should be, one people; we have, or should have, one destiny—what destiny?

MR. THOMAS: Fremantle.

MR. DIAMOND: The destinies of the people on the goldfields and of the people on the coast are irresistibly bound together, in bonds which sooner or later must be tighter and tighter. How do they propose to reduce the cost of living? By building another line in opposition to the present line; a line which would not lead to population that produces, a line which would only result in the increase of freights on food products from the Eastern States. Is that the way to reduce the cost of living? No. The way to reduce the cost of living is to encourage the producer, and to recognise the fact that production is increasing by leaps and bounds in Western Australia, and that the day is within measurable distance when the production of food in this State will be sufficient to meet the requirements of the whole of the population. I will give a practical instance. Bakers who, only a few years ago, would not use anything but Adelaide flour, are to-day using nothing but Western Australian flour. If you will only give our producers a little time—they are taking advantage of it, and their acreage is increasing every year—they will show they can produce as cheaply as or more cheaply than the Eastern States. I have lived in the Eastern States, but I am not, therefore, bigoted. I do not reckon that the interests of my relatives in South

Australia are greater than the interests of the people in this State. A great many people do. I am making my living in Western Australia, and I want to see the State go ahead generally. The way to make it go ahead and the way to decrease the cost of living is for the coast and the goldfields to work hand in hand, and not for the goldfields to endeavour—well, I do not want to say too much about this line, because my impression from the very start was one of contempt, and I have done my best this evening to avoid that. The true way to lower the cost of living in Western Australia is to help and encourage in every way the people who are from day to day, and from year to year, decreasing the cost by producing larger quantities and cheaper food. There is no doubt about it, as I said before, that within a reasonable time, indeed within a short time, the production of Western Australia will be up to the demand. And this must not be lost sight of, that whereas in South Australia a seven-bushel average of wheat is a magnificent return, and an average of eight or nine is a fortune, I think I am safe in saying that in the wheat growing districts of Western Australia people are very little satisfied if they do not get an average of 15 bushels; consequently, if farmers produce 15 bushels of wheat to the acre, and there is railway communication to the fields, in a short time we shall be able to get flour at as low a price from the producers in this State as it can be imported at.

MEMBER: We want 60 per cent. duty to protect it.

MR. DIAMOND: I will not detain the House more than another few minutes. If we work together we shall decrease the cost of living, and in addition to increasing the production in this State we shall also have what will be a very important factor, the duplication of our railway line to Kalgoorlie. In the opinion of practical men who engage in pursuits connected with railway traffic every day, the duplication of that line will be an absolute necessity within the very near future. That duplication will decrease the cost of working the railways to a very large extent. Goods trains will be run right through instead of being stuck up at various stations as they are at present. Many members ridicule the railway people,

but I should like to see them take charge of the goods end of a railway line with a single set of rails going over several hundred miles. With a duplicate line and moderate expenditure on regrading, the cost of running our railways will be very much decreased, and when that decrease comes about, and there is a reduction in the cost of living through increased production, the Government will be able to make special rates on the carriage of food products outside a certain area; outside, say, 100 or 150 miles. The Coolgardie Water Scheme is a very important factor, and with all these advantages the cost of living on the goldfields will be reduced quite as soon as, and far more certainly than, by the construction of another line of railway. I understand that last year the member for Dundas said there was in the immediate vicinity a supply of firewood sufficient to last the mines for the next fifteen years. I myself, from my little knowledge of the subject, believe there is an ample supply for ten years, and as the carriage of firewood would certainly, if this line were constructed, be its chief asset, I respectfully recommend the member for Dundas to bring this motion forward ten years later.

THE TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner): I do not think anyone who has listened to me in this House will doubt that I have always been in favour of the Esperance railway, recognising as I do, and as most men do, that the construction of the line from Esperance to Kalgoorlie must take place some day or other. The question we all have to consider is when that time will arrive. We look around and ask the reason of the present agitation. We listened with a great deal of pleasure to the hyperbolic utterances of the future Munchausen of this House, the member for Dundas, when he brought forward this motion, and I venture to say that after sifting all the chaff and coming down to the wheat, we arrived at the conclusion that the two principal arguments were the cheapening of living and giving the goldfields the opportunity of having two ports instead of one. Whilst I recognise that this must eventually be our aim, when there is justification for it, I also recognise that this House has a higher obligation to perform to the country than the construction of that line at

present, and that is to give large bodies of people resident in other portions of this community one means of communication with a port, before they seek to give another large centre two means of communication. If Norseman has strong claims to this railway both on the score of productiveness and of population, surely the districts farther up the country, comprised in the Mount Margaret electorate, Mount Morgans, Laverton, Erlestown, and Lawlers, both on the score of their productiveness and of their population, have an infinitely stronger claim than either Norseman or Esperance.

MR. HOPKINS: But they ask for the Esperance railway.

THE TREASURER: Yes. That is exactly where it is. They ask for it, and why? The obligation of this House at present is to as far as possible construct our main lines so that we may give one means of communication, and they will have to be satisfied with one means of communication, because there are other people who are constantly crying at least for a reduction in cost which will enable them to produce gold very much cheaper than they now do. Into this subject we have had brought a lot of extraneous matter which should not have been imported into the debate at all. It is a question really of principle, and whether we can afford the line, and what will be the inevitable result of its construction. We heard a good deal about Africa, and the lines constructed to Johannesburg. A man would be extremely foolish who did not take any notice of what occurred in other places, but a man would be equally foolish if he adopted the measures of other communities without ascertaining whether the environments and the necessities were exactly the same. Consequently we will leave South Africa outside the question altogether; and I think that in this question there is no necessity to indulge in the vacuous heroics of the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson). This is a question in which we are all striving to do what we think best for the immediate necessities of this country, which we all admit has such great possibilities, and therefore it is not a question of decentralisation at present. It is a question of proper measures to try to give everybody we possibly can those

facilities for earning their living which we reckon their necessities demand. We cannot possibly lose sight of the fact that this question is surrounded with financial possibilities and impossibilities, and no one who thinks at all and reads at all can fail to be convinced of this fact, that before the States of Australia at the present the financial outlook is anything but happy. Unfortunately, if one picks up any English newspaper one finds constant references to the drought in Australia, consequently Australia in a concrete form fills the eye of the investing public at home. It does not occur to them that whilst every other State has a deficit, Western Australia has a surplus, and consequently we ought to be able to borrow higher. Western Australia, as well as the other States, must feel to a great extent the stress of the financial market when we go into it to float loans. I am saying that the financial outlook is such that we have to be absolutely careful when discussing subjects of this kind, that we discuss proposals that will be acceptable and are acceptable to men who consider we are employing our money in reproductive works. In front of this stress that all the financial advisers tell us there is, we know that there are very necessary public works which we are compelled to put in a position so that they shall be reproductive. We have the Coolgardie Water Scheme. Certainly, so far as that is concerned, I do not say any member of the coastal district—and I do not want to raise that cry—for a moment, if ever, begrudged the work, because I think they recognised this will be of inestimable benefit to the fields. The whole State is taking on its shoulders a heavy responsibility in that direction, and before that work reaches a reproductive position, we have to recognise that a very much larger expenditure will be necessary in order to provide for reticulation and so forth. There are other very necessary reproductive works that we must construct; therefore I say we have not to encourage, even by the passing of an abstract motion, the building of a railway that the majority of this House, I venture to believe, think will deplete the revenue of the existing railways, and will therefore deplete the revenue which last year was not sufficient to pay interest

and working expenses. We call these railways the best asset the State has got, and naturally and truly that is so. Therefore we must be very careful indeed—unless we can justify the works by a very large increase of population, such as will enable one line to pay without depleting the revenue of another—that we do not encourage this House to pass such motions as this, in order that we may show to those people from whom we have to borrow money that we are judicious in the expenditure of that money. The leader of the Opposition spoke of the courageous policy of Sir John Forrest, and no man can more conscientiously pay a tribute to Sir John Forrest than I can, because I made it a point never to be introduced to him; therefore there is nothing personal about the matter. But I say when we have to control the destinies of the country, we have to be just as courageous as Sir John Forrest was, and the only position is that we have to be courageous only in respect to those works which at the present juncture we think are more than justified. And also we have to be courageous and see that so far as we possibly can we shall meet all the obligations, honestly and faithfully, of that courageous policy introduced by Sir John Forrest. Therefore I must oppose the proposal and also the amendment suggested by the member for Kanowna, for this simple reason. I do not think the Royal Commission on this particular subject would have any practical result. What would be the use of a Royal Commission? Let members look around the House and ask themselves if any report of a Royal Commission will influence one vote in the House.

MR. HOPKINS: Why go on with the survey?

THE TREASURER: I believe in what the hon. member says, why go on with the survey. We take the obligations of the past Governments. I say if I did not believe that I was ready to construct a railway, I should not encourage a member of the House by making a survey, nor would I allow him to placate his constituents. I say unhesitatingly I do not believe in these trial surveys.

MR. TAYLOR: It is a permanent survey.

THE TREASURER: What would be the use of a Royal Commission to report

on a work which a majority of us at least think is five to seven years outside the realms of practical politics. By the time the report of the Royal Commission was forthcoming it would be of no particular use, because the circumstances brought about by its inception would materially have altered; therefore it would have no practical result, and probably we should have to go over the same ground with another idea altogether. If the cry is that the railway is needed to cheapen living, then if there is any hope in the people of this community, cheap living is at least within five or seven years, judging by the immense amount of land which has been taken up, and judging by the more favourable circumstances of the production of breadstuffs which is experienced in this land. There is reasonable hope in the minds of members of the House and of people in the community that before five or seven years we shall be able to produce quite sufficient to satisfy at least to a very large extent, the local requirements of many of the common necessities of life. Therefore, I shall oppose not only the motion, but the amendment proposed by the member for Kanowna.

MR. J. M. HOPKINS (Boulder): I rise, but not for the purpose of supporting the proposition that was so ably, and I am told so eloquently, moved by the gentleman who represents the constituents of Dundas. The proposition moved by that member has my very deepest sympathy, and I only wish the casting of my vote in support of his proposition on this occasion would do some good; but taking into consideration the circumstances surrounding a proposition of the magnitude of the Esperance railway proposal, I do not feel that the time is opportune to cast a vote in favour of building that railway. I am almost astonished to find the hostility and opposition which are being shown in that very heroic manner, even by the Treasurer, to have the matter investigated by an independent tribunal, not for the purpose of surrendering to a tribunal the functions of our engineers, but to have an independent tribunal that would take the evidence of those engineers and see if the estimates were prepared on a reasonable and economic basis. I take it that it is not an uncommon thing for estimates of common works,



even for the building of a house, to be cut down considerably. I believe I saw upon the table a petition and resolutions of the Albany Municipal Council, signed by the mayor and two councillors, urging the Government to build a railway between the Eastern goldfields and Esperance. I believe too that the Treasurer is one of the members who is pledged to support the building of a line to Esperance. [THE TREASURER: Hear, hear.] In addition to that I want to know—I am sorry the member who represents South Fremantle is absent, because I want to know if that member seriously believes the statements which he gave to this House to-day. I want to know if the hon. member is honestly sincere in the statements he has made, because if those statements are true, then the building of the Esperance railway is out of court. But what do we find? I never saw anyone who has such a good case as the hon. member submitted who would be afraid to have it investigated. If the Government can spend £8,000 on a permanent survey, I cannot see why they cannot authorise the expenditure of £500 or at most £1,000 for the purpose of covering the expenses of an investigation which would not only be invaluable to the House, but to every elector throughout Western Australia. In supporting the amendment which has been moved by the member for Kanowna, I take it it does not devolve on me to prove the wisdom of building the line of railway to connect the Eastern Goldfields with Esperance. I prefer to leave that question to be determined by an independent board, and I believe there are sufficient reasonable and fair-minded members in the House to say that the information which not only we but the country require on a problem of this importance, should not be denied. I might, in endeavouring to induce members to support the amendment, enlarge upon the excessive cost of living on the Eastern Goldfields. I might enlarge upon the possibilities of opening up new industries along that line of railway, which I undertake to say would help in a great measure to absorb the surplus population which is fast coming to these shores, a population which it is the duty of the House to find good and suitable accommodation for as an inducement to stay here

when they have landed. I might illustrate to the House how the building of the railway would make the wages paid on the Eastern Goldfields sufficient to enable men to bring their wives and families from the Eastern States. That miners' families do live in the Eastern States is illustrated by the fact that a large amount of money is going continually through the Savings Bank and other banks to the Eastern States. I am speaking on the question in all sincerity and I am going to speak briefly, but I say this matter is one which shortly will engage the attention of every member of the community. I might have gone farther and made some reference to the striking similarity which we see in Africa, and which the Treasurer sought to pass over so glibly and cavalierly just now. The instance of Johannesburg which has three lines of railway is a striking instance, and an example why it would be good for the Eastern Goldfields to have additional facilities provided for them to reach the coast. The increased revenue which must necessarily come from finding profitable employment for new and growing industries—and I suppose any new line of railway which is carried through 200 miles of new country, in Australia or anywhere else in the world, is likely to open up additional and new industries which were not dreamt of at the time the country embarked on the proposal—I believe the opening up of industries along the line will lead to a desirable end in increasing the population, and thereby decreasing the debt per head of the population and reducing the taxation which at present is pressing so deplorably heavily on the population of the State. In the course of his observations the Premier asked whether there was trade for both lines, and Mr. Moran interjected, "That is the whole question;" the Premier thereupon remarking, "Exactly; that is the question." Now, the question is one which I do not presume to answer; one which the member for Albany (Hon. J. Gardiner) did not choose to answer, because it is said he is pledged to support the railway; one which the member for East Perth, the Premier, does not feel called on to answer, because I think he has been sent here to oppose the Esperance railway—at least, I understand opposition to the

Esperance railway was one of the planks of his platform. Other members are in the same position; and thus to the most casual observer it is manifest that to appeal to Parliament in a matter of this kind is merely to appeal to what in this connection is a tainted tribunal, already bound by hustings pledges or impelled by prejudices to vote on one side or the other. Consequently members of Parliament, in a large measure, are not open to conviction. The Premier, continuing the remark I have quoted, said:—

When constructing a line, we want to know what the receipts will be, not only for the first year, but what will be the permanent receipts. Now, is it not extraordinary that the Government should require the whole of that information before they will even consider the proposition with which we are confronted, whilst last night they felt justified in tabling a proposal to build the Collie-Boulder Railway, in respect of which line none of that information is available? I do not think it speaks too well in favour of the stand taken by the Premier on this question. I wish to quote the hon. gentleman fairly. Continuing, he said:—

I hold to-day that we must as far as possible give every encouragement to our local products, and the settling of the people on the land of Western Australia.

If the Premier was anxious to attain that end, he should not have increased the railway rates to the Eastern Goldfields so recently. If he was sincere he would, I think, have allowed for the 150 miles difference in the respective railages between Fremantle and Kalgoorlie, and Esperance and Kalgoorlie, and regulated the freights accordingly; that is to say, he would have fixed the freight from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie on a par with what it would have been on a line running from Esperance to Kalgoorlie. Had he done so, the Eastern Goldfields railway would still have shown a profit, and he would have conferred an everlasting benefit on the residents of the Eastern Goldfields and coincidentally on every producer of this State. The member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) advocates the building of the line, and to listen to those who also advocate its construction it would appear that he has made out a case which is absolutely unanswerable. To listen to those who are pledged to support

the Esperance-Goldfields railway, and who take a deep interest in the question, the case made out is incontrovertible. On the other hand, we find in Perth a section of the community which believes that the case made out by the Premier is absolutely conclusive. Even in Parliament there is a section which believes the case made out by the Premier against the railway to be as good as, or better than, the case made out in its favour by the member for Dundas. This leads me to the conclusion that on this subject Parliament and the country alike are divided into three factors: firstly, those pledged to build the line; secondly, those pledged to oppose its construction; and thirdly, the great equalising factor whose power will be brought to bear sooner or later. In order that those constituting the third factor may be able to give an intelligent vote on the proposition now confronting the Chamber we should, I maintain, disregard the comparatively insignificant cost of having the whole matter probed to the bottom by an independent commission. When the finding of such a commission has been given, Parliament will have surrendered nothing, as the Premier said; Parliament will have merely taken ordinary business precautions, and the case before being submitted to Parliament for decision will have been carefully inquired into. There need be no lavish expenditure under the head of policy. Every Government in Australia, and every Government in the old world, indulges in practically unlimited, thoroughly unwarranted extravagance, year after year, under the head of policy. On behalf of the goldfields community in general, and on behalf of goldfields members in particular, I say that there was never any intention or desire to cast a slight on the engineers or officers of the Public Works Department. In this connection I may mention that I am one of the few members of this House who called attention to the miserable salaries paid to the Government engineers of Western Australia. The intention of the goldfields members never was that the Royal Commission asked for should take on itself the framing of estimates of cost. The intention merely was that the commission should call in the experts of the Public Works Department, and take their estimates, and, having got those

estimates, analyse them. The desire never was to bring in a commission to usurp the functions of the Works Department, but merely to constitute a tribunal, the report of which must, under ordinary circumstances, meet with fairer consideration at the hands of the outside, the casual, and even the interested observer, than would a report emanating either from the member for Dundas or from the Premier. A Public Works Committee Bill was submitted to us last session, and I believe we have a similar measure on the table now. What is the object of that Bill? Is it not that before public works of magnitude are taken in hand they shall be investigated and reported on to the House? That, surely, was the object in view in the introduction of the measure. For my part, I enter a protest against a repetition of what we saw last night when the second reading of the Collieries-Boulder railway was moved. I maintain that when it comes to spending thousands of pounds, as in the case of that line, and hundreds of thousands of pounds as in the case of the Esperance line, the matter is worthy of the appointment of such a tribunal as will give at least a fair and clear statement of the probable results of the execution of the project. I believe that Parliament will view with a feeling akin to alarm the circumstance that the permanent survey of the Esperance railway is allowed to go on. Is it not astonishing to find that after a flying survey has been made, a permanent survey should be made of this railway —

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** There has not been a prior survey.

**THE PREMIER:** This survey is being done instead.

**MR. HOPKINS:** It is all the same. The total expenditure involved is estimated at £8,000. I do not say that the estimate will be exceeded, but I do say that £8,000 is a lot of money to throw away wantonly. For my part, I shall never be an advocate for the placation of my constituency, or anybody else's either, by the waste of public money in that fashion. I maintain that £8,000 is too much to be frittered away out of the revenues of this country on a proposition which the Government have not the slightest intention of even inquiring into

as regards its feasibility or practicability. I beg hon. members to bear in mind one thing, that the amendment moved by the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie) does not ask Parliament to surrender even one of its privileges; indeed, the amendment asks Parliament to surrender nothing whatever, its only aim being that Parliament as a whole should join in asking that a Royal Commission be appointed. That Royal Commission, to my mind, might consist of five members qualified to investigate a matter which, I consider myself justified in saying, engages not only the attention of the House, but the attention of at least 35 public bodies. Those public bodies have petitioned Parliament on a question in which the whole of them are deeply interested; and I claim that, seeing the large revenue at disposal and the large expenditure on public works this State is able to afford, a proposition which is advocated by 35 public bodies should surely be granted a reasonably independent investigation. If I believed, as the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond) believes, that the case against the railway is so good as to be impregnable, then I should say, "By all means let us have the investigation." If the building of the Esperance railway is not a proposition on which Parliament can possibly be induced to embark, then the report of the proposed Royal Commission will assure at least this benefit: we shall be able to say to those interested that the matter has been fairly investigated, that the railway has not been held to be a feasible proposition, that we must surrender and turn our attention to other matters of more importance to the whole country. Now as regards the expense involved in the appointment of a commission, I take it that five members would be adequate. The commission, if appointed, would probably meet in the precincts of Parliament House, perhaps in one of the committee rooms, to arrange preliminaries. The commission would advise the Public Works Department, the Statistical Branch, the Railway Department, and the Customs, or whichever department controls the Fremantle harbour, what information was likely to be asked for.

**MEMBER:** Would you appoint a local commission?

**MR. HOPKINS:** I should be perfectly satisfied with the appointment of a local commission, so long as two of its members were residents of the metropolitan district, and two were residents of the Eastern Goldfields. The fifth member should be an independent railway expert, brought from somewhere else. I do not care whence the expert is obtained, so long as he is obtained from outside the State.

**THE PREMIER:** Cannot all this information be got by moving for returns from the various departments mentioned?

**MR. HOPKINS:** I do not think so; and I do not believe that the 35 public bodies who have petitioned Parliament would be satisfied with returns obtained in that fashion. These public bodies want the matter independently investigated. The members of the suggested commission having given notice to the various departments as indicated, would, I presume, proceed to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, and then traverse the route to Esperance by coach. The knowledge thus gained would suggest to them the line of examination they should adopt. The commission could, of course, take evidence while on tour, and then return to Perth to collect the remainder of the information required. The chairman of the commission might be paid five guineas per day, and the other members three guineas per day. I undertake to say that eight or ten weeks would be a reasonable time for the commission to complete its investigations in. If the commission sat five days a week, the whole investigation might be finished within three or four weeks. I feel inclined to urge on the Premier an appeal somewhat similar to one which he made some little time ago—"The Bill to the people." The appeal which many of us would like to make now is that this Esperance-goldfields railway project should be subjected to the necessary inquiry by an independent commission. I should not quibble at the report of such a commission, and I believe the report would be acceptable to Parliament as a whole. The investigation could be made at a total expenditure not exceeding £1,000.

**MR. DAGLISH:** The expert would cost as much as that.

**MR. HOPKINS:** If the services of the expert did cost £1,000, the work would still be worth the money.

**THE PREMIER:** Do you think the report of such a commission would settle the question?

**MR. HOPKINS:** So far as I am concerned, the report of an independent commission absolutely condemning the building of the railway would terminate my advocacy of the project until farther developments of the State warranted its farther consideration. I consider that members who represent goldfields constituencies are actuated by as great an anxiety to do their duty as are members representing other parts of the country. I question if ever an Administration in Western Australia or an Administration in any other part of Australia has treated a petition signed by 35 public bodies with such scant courtesy as was displayed in the debate which occurred a week ago. This is a matter of extreme importance. I do not wonder to hear the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond) referring to differences of opinion between two sections of the community. When 35 public bodies unite to bring a matter of this kind before Parliament, their representations are entitled to more consideration than they have received on this occasion. If the goldfields people do not receive better treatment in the future, goldfields members may be compelled to take in this House such an attitude as will insure the respectful attention of the rest of the community.

At 6:30, the **SPEAKER** left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

**MR. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco):** I would compliment the member for Dundas on the fact that he has made a definite motion; and I think it the duty of any hon. member who believes that a certain course will be for the welfare of the country, or of that part of the country which he represents, to bring forward a tangible proposition and to ask for its definite acceptance. I should far sooner express an opinion on a straight-out motion like this than consent to a proposal like that embodied in the amendment of the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie); because it seems to me that the

scope of the Royal Commission will be very different from that implied in the speech of the member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins). The proposal in the amendment of the member for Kanowna is not that a commission shall be appointed to inquire into the cost of the harbour works at Esperance, or of the construction of the Esperance-Goldfields Railway, but that it shall consider the desirableness of constructing a railway. And we are absolutely asked by a member of this House, supported, I am sorry to say, by other members, to hand over to a small commission the duty of determining for us whether it be desirable to construct this railway. [MR. HASTIE: No.] The hon. member's amendment says we are, and the hon. member says we are not.

MR. HASTIE: The commission will report to the House, and will not determine.

MR. PURKISS: We are not bound by the report.

MR. DAGLISH: I am aware that every Royal Commission reports, not to the House but to the Governor, from whom it derives its power to inquire; but the proposal is, not that the cost or the probable receipts, but that the desirableness of constructing this line, shall be investigated. [MR. HASTIE: That is a quibble.] I think the hon. member has an undoubted knowledge of quibbling, and his proposal is in itself a quibble. But I altogether object to a proposal to hand over the responsibilities of Parliament to any Royal Commission whatever. [MR. HASTIE: Nobody asked you.] I can understand that it is right on occasions to appoint commissions or committees to investigate certain points of administrative detail; and it might be proper to appoint a commission of inquiry into the cost and the probable results of any given railway; but I cannot understand a member, especially a Labour member, proposing to hand over the responsibilities of Parliament in this fashion. [MR. HASTIE: Nobody proposed that.] And I urge that we are absolutely false to the people who sent us here if we are afraid to take up a definite stand on the motion of the member for Dundas. It is our duty to decide whether the railway is desirable or undesirable.

MR. HOPKINS: So we will, sooner or later.

MR. DAGLISH: But what do the advocates of the commission say? They tell us, as did the member for Perth (Mr. Purkiss), who seconded the amendment, that they will appoint this commission; but when asked if they will be bound by the commission's decision, they reply, as did that hon. member, "Certainly not." If, therefore, the commission recommend the construction of the Esperance railway, the hon. member will probably not support its construction; because he is opposed to it, and he does not recognise the commission's decision as binding. What is the use of a commission at all if its decision be not binding? What is the use of getting its recommendation, if such recommendation be of no value? And if its recommendation is to be of weight, then undoubtedly we should make it binding. As a fact, I am assured that if those who are clamouring for this commission be dissatisfied with its finding, they will not for a moment accept it. I do not believe that the member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins), who has argued strongly to-night in favour of a commission, would accept its decision if it reported that the construction of this line was undesirable. [MR. HOPKINS: I should be bound by it.] I am satisfied the hon. member's constituents would not be bound by him, if he were bound by the report.

MR. HOPKINS: They always have been bound by me, anyway.

MR. DAGLISH: The hon. member himself twitted the Treasurer with being pledged to the Esperance railway. [MR. HOPKINS: Not twitted.] Then the hon. member mentioned the fact in a casual fashion, for the purpose of implying that the Treasurer had broken faith with his constituents. [MR. HOPKINS: Oh, no.] But the hon. member himself was undoubtedly pledged to the construction of the Esperance Railway; and yet he now proposes to abandon that pledge and support the appointment of a Royal Commission, and be bound by its decision. In other words, the hon. member proposes to be false to his constituents, unless the commission find in favour of those works which he was returned pledged to support. If the report be against the Esperance railway line, the hon. member will find he has a duty to his constituents higher than his duty to the Royal Commission, and

that is the position which every member who supports the commission will take up. He will find after all that he has responsibilities, that he dare not shirk those responsibilities; and if the report does not suit him, he will set it aside as mere waste paper. And I say it is quite right that he should. Members cannot and should not for a minute hand over or attempt to hand over their powers and responsibilities to a Royal Commission. I object entirely to the amount of administrative work that is being farmed out, and the amount of investigation work that is at the present time being handed over to one and another commission — [MEMBER: You should not object]—and I really do not know what will be the functions of Parliament, if we continue that course. The hon. member says I should not object; but I have from the time I entered this House always been strongly against Parliament parting with any of its powers and responsibilities, and I am now taking the course I have always adopted throughout my career.

MR. THOMAS: What about the Public Works Bill last session?

MR. DAGLISH: That was a proposal to delegate to certain members of this House the responsibility of inquiring into details connected with various works and bringing the matter before Parliament. I am prepared to-night to support the referring of certain questions we as a House cannot deal with as a whole, to sub-committees of the House for the purpose of investigation, just as I am prepared to hand over to the Ministry certain Ministerial and administrative functions which we as a House cannot carry out; but in doing so we do not forfeit one iota of our responsibility, because we still have responsible to this House members to whom we have delegated these matters, whereas members of a Royal Commission have not that responsibility to Parliament. They have no responsibility to anyone at all, and it is for that very fact I object to give them the large powers proposed.

MR. THOMAS: Were you not a member of a Royal Commission?

MR. DAGLISH: Exactly. I was a member of a royal commission appointed to inquire into a certain matter which should have been investigated by a select

committee, in my opinion, and which would have been investigated by a select committee had Parliament been in session long enough to enable the committee to finish its work. As I have said, I do not object to investigations that cannot be conducted by Parliament being delegated to commissions. A great deal has been said about the cost of this commission. I am not going to dwell on this, because I am hoping that Parliament will still accept its responsibility. The cost of one member of the commission would probably be as great as what the member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) estimated would be the cost of the whole commission. A proposal to have an expert from outside the State is one that does not commend itself to my mind. I think that we in Western Australia are placing too much value upon persons outside the State, and too little value on the capabilities and righteousness of men within our own State. It is no wonder that this State is depreciated by persons who live outside its borders, if we as the Parliament representing the State take every opportunity of expressing our want of confidence in the various individuals who make up the State; and I hope this House, when it does find a necessity to appoint a commission or to appoint any public body, will look throughout the State, and if it looks it will readily find there are plenty of men in our midst in every rank of life quite as competent to undertake any work as are individuals outside our borders. A great deal has been said about the alleged want of courtesy towards the petition that was laid before this House, and towards the motion of the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas). I have not known yet of any petition that has had greater courtesy, and I have not known of any motion brought forward by a private member of the House which has received the same amount of consideration and time, as the motion brought forward by the hon. member. [MR. THOMAS: Hear, hear.] I object to the assumption which has characterised goldfields members that members who do not represent goldfields constituencies are actuated by jealous considerations or by a desire to serve vested interests. I disclaim entirely any such thing, and I claim for myself the

same liberality of judgment from goldfields people as I am willing to extend to them; that is, that in speaking against the Esperance railway project I am actuated by the highest and best of motives. I may be wrong, but I claim the right at all events of being just and honestly wrong, if I am. A great deal of bitterness is always being imported by the goldfields into any question which particularly affects the fields. It has been always urged that the goldfields are not being fairly treated by people who do not live on the goldfields. I contend that as far as this House is concerned there has never been in my experience any unfair treatment of the goldfields people. I am quite satisfied that members will deal with the motion before the House absolutely on its merits, and I object to what seemed to me to be an implied threat by the member for Boulder of what the consequences will be if this motion be not carried. It is impossible for us to properly consider questions affecting not only the goldfields but the whole of the State, if these charges, and charges of a lack of courtesy, are continually hurled at us. It is no wonder that there is or has been hostility between various parts of the State when this sort of thing becomes common. I hoped when this Parliament was elected that we had heard the last of it, and I now hope that in the future we shall hear a little less of it than we have in the past. A curious thing in regard to this debate is that no member who has advocated the Esperance railway has yet thought it necessary to show that the finances of the State are sufficient to carry out this or any other great railway undertaking. It appears to me that the very foundation on which the member for Dundas should have rested his arguments in regard to the Esperance line has been left severely alone. What is the financial position of the State to-day? That is the question the member for Dundas should first of all have placed before us. He should have dealt with the present condition of our loan funds, and he should have dealt not only with the funds as they are at the present moment, but he should have shown us how they would bear the various expenditures to which we are already committed, and how we could raise the money that would

be necessary in order to construct this or any other large railway undertaking. In this matter the onus of proof rests with the member who brings forward a motion like the present, and until the hon. member had established his case he certainly should not have brought the motion before the House. As far as I am able to understand, the country is not at the present time in a position to undertake any new large work, and on that ground alone, if on no other, I am prepared to cast a vote against the motion. Apart, however, from that, I very much doubt if the object of this line is really what we have heard—that is, to reduce the cost of living on the goldfields. The significant point seems to me to be that, if this were the object, members would have brought forward a somewhat different motion. Why should they not have brought forward a motion with the object of getting a concession on the existing railway line? We know that if the motion of the member for Dundas were carried to-night, and if the Government immediately introduced a Bill and made arrangements to borrow the money for the construction of this railway, it would be, I should say on a moderate estimate, from two to three years before the line could be constructed, and until the line was constructed persons living on the goldfields would not enjoy the benefit of any reduction in the cost of living. Are they to continue for those three years to bear the present cost of their various provisions? Why, I ask, did not the hon. member bring forward some motion in favour of a concession on the existing railway, a concession that would have served the same purpose, with this difference, that the advantage could have begun from the very time the motion was carried by Parliament? Then the hon. member would have shown he was genuine in his desire to reduce the cost of living, and his motion would have had the effect, beyond question, of reducing it from the very moment the concession was granted. [Interjection.] Of course Norseman is not entirely the Eastern Goldfields. I am assuming the hon. member can see a little beyond Norseman, and that he is speaking on behalf of the larger area.

MR. THOMAS: How far do you see beyond Subiaco?

MR. DAGLISH: I do not think it is quite necessary to answer that at the present time. I am looking as far as Esperance, and I think I see a little too far for the hon. member on this question. What I was endeavouring to point out was that if the cost of living is to be reduced, we need an immediate reduction of it on the goldfields, and I am willing to support the hon. member if he will try and get that; but under present-day arrangements on the goldfields the goldfields will in no way be benefited by the prospect of reduction in the cost of living which may come about in two or three years' time. There is little reason to doubt that in two or three years' time our farmers will be producing sufficient to supply the country.

MEMBER: We heard that ten years ago.

MR. DAGLISH: The hon. member may have heard it ten years ago, and it may be true, nevertheless. The agriculturists of our own State will, as far as I am able to judge by the figures available, be in a position in less than three years to absolutely supply the whole of the wants of the State. [Interjection by Mr. HASTIE.] If the hon. member looks into figures, he will find that the acreage under cultivation is increasing year by year, and although there may be slight fluctuations due to the difference in seasons, these fluctuations occur in every country in the world, and it is not fair to make comparisons between a good season and a bad one. Members know perfectly well that is not a fair comparison. They know perfectly well, travelling on the goldfields line week by week, that not only is the area under culture increasing year by year, but that agricultural development is taking place nearer and nearer to the goldfields; that the agricultural area has extended during the past three or four years very many miles farther east than ever it was before; that there is an important agricultural district as far east as Tammin now, and probably in a very little while we shall see these centres extending still nearer to the goldfields. Year by year the output is increasing, and I contend that in considering a subject like the Esperance railway question, we must allow our minds to dwell to some extent on the agricultural possibilities of the State,

and on the fact that our agricultural produce is likely to increase in amount very considerably during the next two or three years.

MR. TAYLOR: We have been anxiously waiting on the fields for seven or eight years.

MR. DAGLISH: You will have to wait three years longer if you are to get the Esperance line.

MR. TAYLOR: The agriculturists do not produce one-third of the requirements of the State.

HON. F. H. PRIESSE: Oh, yes; two-thirds.

MR. TAYLOR: Not in wheat, anyhow. The Government statistics do not say so.

MR. DAGLISH: There is one other consideration I wish to lay before the House, and that is in reference to the Transcontinental railway line. We had a strong outcry some 12 or 18 months ago, perhaps a stronger one than at present, in favour of the Transcontinental railway line by both Perth and goldfields people. There was a stronger feeling than exists now throughout the goldfields in favour of the line than there was even in Perth.

MR. HASTIE: I say no.

MR. DAGLISH: If the hon. member does not possess that knowledge, he must go about with his ears very considerably stuffed up then, or he would have had the knowledge that the goldfields candidates for the Federal Parliament advocated the construction of the Transcontinental railway line, and it was advocated strongly by everybody throughout the State. And I think it was thought from one end of the State to the other that there would be a considerable advantage by the construction of that line. In my opinion—I am speaking altogether in this matter as one man, and expressing my own opinion as far as I am able to judge—whatever chance there is of getting the Transcontinental railway line will be absolutely destroyed by the construction of the line from Esperance to the goldfields. We already have our railway from Fremantle to the goldfields to compete with the Transcontinental line when constructed, and whatever chance the Transcontinental railway from South Australia would have of competing for the goldfields trade with a line from Fremantle. I think we would



have absolutely no chance of competing with a line from Esperance. I do not think the Federal Parliament would undertake the construction of the Transcontinental line if we had that short line from the goldfields constructed. Under all these circumstances I certainly cannot vote with the member for Dundas, and I hope before the discussion is over the member for Kanowna will see the wisdom of withdrawing his amendment in the interests of parliamentary government.

MR. T. F. QUINLAN (Toodyay): I have no intention of delaying the House beyond a few moments to put what briefly occurs to me as the principal points of objection to the appointment of a Royal Commission. I had, in the first instance, intended to vote for a commission, for the reason that I did not realise then the danger which I am certain is bound to come, when I refer to the report of the Chamber of Mines, and also to the matter contained in the petition before the House. After a body, comprising 35 persons, sign their names to a document of this nature, I am afraid indeed that I am unable to vote with the member for Kanowna; and I say, with all due respect to those who signed the petition, that we are not satisfied with the arguments contained in that petition. Firstly, the petitioners claim that the port of Esperance is the natural one to the goldfields, and secondly the absence of the line deters miners bringing their families here owing to the cost of living on the fields, caused by the retention of the sliding scale, which will be abolished, in the ordinary course of events, in a few years. The building of the Esperance line, taking it for granted that it is constructed immediately, would probably be completed about the time when the duties, according to the sliding scale, will become extinguished; therefore there is nothing in the argument that this line will cheapen the cost of living. The line itself will cost about one million pounds, and in connection with the construction of the line it is urged that the harbour should also be improved, on which another million pounds would have to be expended. We have almost completed a great work in this State, the Fremantle Harbour, which has cost about a million of money, and we do not want to be burdened with another couple of millions of debt with our present popula-

tion. For these reasons alone, apart from the glaring fact which has always been brought forward in this House, and which is mentioned throughout Australia and is generally admitted throughout the world, that the life of a goldfield has only a certain term of existence, I shall vote against the railway. It has been argued from time to time that the life of a goldfield is 20 years.

MR. HASTIE: By whom?

MR. QUINLAN: That has always been argued and it is admitted by authorities.

MR. HASTIE: Who are they?

MR. QUINLAN: You have only to refer to the goldfields of the other States. It is well-known that certain towns in the other States were established in consequence of gold being discovered, and the populations to-day are living on agriculture. The people were attracted in the first instance by the gold. I do not think for a moment we would be justified—assuming that a goldfield only lasts for 30 years—in building this line, for in such case it would not pay the principal and interest and the working expenses. It has been argued that it would be cheaper to build this line than to duplicate the present line. If the present line were duplicated the buildings along the line would not have to be doubled, neither would the staff. The upkeep would be doubled if there were two single lines, whereas with one line the same staff and the same buildings would be sufficient, and the duplication could be carried out without any great extra cost. There is an argument which has so often been used in favour of the construction of this line, that the construction of the line will lessen the cost of living; but it has no foundation in fact. No one has yet been able to give proof of the statement. It is simply urged by the goldfields people that if the line is constructed people will bring their families over here. I do not believe anyone in the House can prove that statement. If anyone can do so I will vote for a commission. Feeling the danger there is in this question going to a commission, and knowing the activity of the goldfields people, and that no stone will be left unturned by them to bring arguments before the commission to show that that line is needed, which is proved by the statements in the petition and in the report of the Chamber of

Mines, I cannot vote for the amendment. Of course it may be said that it is the duty of those living in the coastal parts of the State to bring arguments to counteract the statements made. But once a commission is appointed—and we have had various experiences of commissions and committees—and assuming for the sake of argument that the commission did not report in favour of the line, that would not terminate the question in the House, because it has been a fixed subject for debate, as far as I can recollect, since the establishment of responsible government. Therefore, the appointment of a commission would not lessen the agitation. If I thought there were good reasons, and even if the land along the line warranted the construction of this railway, I should vote for it. Anyone who has journeyed over the country must admit that it is not a line that will pay on account of the agricultural settlement. If it is claimed that the sand is the attraction, we have plenty of that country already and more convenient to present settlement than this land is. Therefore I do not think the railway will prove a benefit to the State in consequence of the land along the route. It is strange, too, as far as my judgment goes, that those who argue in favour of the construction of the line, or in favour of a commission, which means the same thing, are the very persons as a rule who advocate the construction of work by day labour. If we want to study economy and lessen the cost of living, let us reduce the taxation burden in the first instance. Let us start with the chief person in the State, the Governor, or let us start with the Ministers and members of the Houses of Parliament and reduce the salaries. I think that would be the wiser course to pursue to cheapen the cost of living. Cheapen the cost of administration, lessen the cost of the Government departments by half a million of money, because that is where the money goes. When we have administration at a cheaper rate than we have at present, and not such a large staff managing a small population, out of proportion to what is wanted, then we shall have cheaper living. I have only to instance other places to show what the cost of administration is compared to what it is in Western Australia. These reasons are sufficient to

justify the House in voting against the amendment of the member for Kanowna to appoint a commission to investigate the necessity for the construction of the line or otherwise. I am sorry the member for Boulder has indorsed, judging by his speech, the contents of the petition. I also regret the hon. member has assumed a threatening attitude towards members, presumably those who are more intimately acquainted with the coastal districts. I hardly think the hon. member is justified in that course of action, seeing how fairly this matter has been discussed by both those for and against the railway. I intend to vote against the amendment submitted.

MR. F. WALLACE (Mt. Magnet): I wish to say, straight out, I am going to support any means brought forward in the House for the opening up of the various ports in the State. I have had sixteen years' residence in the State, and I still see the same old desire to make the port of Fremantle the distributing port for the whole of the State, as when I landed in Fremantle 16 years ago. I must first of all say that during the few years I have had the honour of sitting in the House I have never heard a case put forward so clearly, and in my opinion supported with such indisputable figures, as has been this case submitted by the member for Dundas. I am also pleased to say that as far as both sides of the House are concerned members are not making this a party question; but that party feeling does exist will be seen when we go to a division, for we shall find sitting on one side the members for the goldfields, and on the other side the members for Perth, Fremantle, and the coastal districts. I do not say that with any unkind feelings towards the members for the coastal districts, because it is only natural the coastal members fear their vested interests will be affected by the construction of the Esperance line, and there is no gain-saying this fact that when a man's interests are touched he will always be ready to defend his interests. I venture to forecast who will be the members to oppose the motion of the member for Dundas, and I say they will be the members whose interests will, in their opinion, suffer by the construction of this railway.

MR. HIGHAM: What about the vested interests of the goldfields?

MR. WALLACE: I have two Fremantle members at my right hand, and I do not yet know positively, though I think I can guess, which way they are going to vote. I am asked, "What about the vested interests of the goldfields?" It is true, I admit, that the vested interests of the goldfields are concerned in this motion. I am not passing on the representatives of coastal districts any unfair criticism, or any criticism which I am not ready to apply to goldfields representatives. Goldfields residents, particularly the residents of far-distant fields, are admittedly suffering by reason of the continuation of the old policy of centralisation, which, it seems, is to persist. Even the correspondence of my district, in order to reach the East Murchison fields, has to travel through Perth and around by Menzies so as to arrive at its destination, only 160 miles distant from the point of despatch. This is another phase of the policy of centralisation: everything must come to Perth and Fremantle and be distributed from these places. The member for Dundas has laid on the table of the House certain reports and charts, which I have examined. I defy anyone viewing these charts to deny that there is a plentiful depth of water in the Esperance harbour. The chart shows a good channel, and I think the chart is as reliable as any other information which can be adduced, since it is issued by the Government of the State.

MR. THOMAS: No; by the British Admiralty.

MR. WALLACE: Yes; by the British Admiralty. The chart shows that there is a sufficiently wide and deep channel to allow of any boats trading on our coast to enter the harbour. True, there may not be sufficient jetty accommodation and other facilities of that description; but that consideration I take to be a minor one. If the opponents of the motion are prepared to advance as an objection to the construction of the line the fact that the Fremantle Harbour Works have cost a million sterling, and the assumption that it will be necessary to expend another million at Esperance if the proposed railway is to be of any use when constructed, then opposition will be hard to beat down.

A majority of this House is, I think, against the construction of the line; and if the members constituting that majority intend to put it about the country that to make a safe harbour at Esperance will probably cost a million pounds, outside feeling will be strongly aroused against the project. For my part, however, I believe that assertion to be most incorrect and altogether unfair. Esperance does not ask for all the improvements which Fremantle enjoys. Esperance asks only for accommodation adequate to the needs of boats trading on our coasts. Esperance does not expect large ocean-going boats to come into its harbour just now, or indeed for many years to come. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) gave us as the opinion of men in the Eastern States—I do not know the source from which he obtained his information—that the life of a goldfield is short; I think he fixed the period at from 25 to 30 years. But that hon. member must know, as the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth) has stated in this House scores of times, that in Victoria there are mines which have been working for half a century—

MR. QUINLAN: Those would be exceptional mines.

MR. WALLACE: And that Queensland has mines which have been in operation for the last forty years. There is no occasion, therefore, to say, and indeed I do not think any hon. member will be sufficiently weak in his belief in the permanency of our fields to say our mines will be exhausted in 25 or 30 years. That there is good agricultural land between Esperance Bay and the Eastern Goldfields I have every reason to believe. You, Mr. Speaker, have knowledge of that fact; as also have certain hon. members who I know would not select land for the purpose of merely holding it, but who use the land for pastoral purposes. Evidently, land in the neighbourhood of Esperance must be well adapted to pastoral pursuits, otherwise it would not be so held. That there is land equal to that of Katanning, whence the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse) comes, I do not maintain for one moment.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The Esperance land is good, but there is no rainfall.

MR. WALLACE: I am glad to hear the hon. member say that the land around

Esperance is good. I am taking my information from the member for Dundas, who has given the House certain particulars with regard to the quality of the land in question. We know from what passed recently in the House that within a few days an area of land near Esperance will be thrown open to selection. This goes to show that land which has been inspected on behalf of the Government is considered fit to be taken up by selectors.

MR. NANSON: There is sand about Esperance.

MR. WALLACE: But sand in this State seems to be quite as valuable as land in other States. Some little time ago the necessity for an extension of the Coolgardie line in order to tap forest country was urged. It was contended that the extension was necessary in order that the mines of the Golden Mile might be adequately supplied with fuel. The project received strong support. But notwithstanding the fact that the member for Dundas, who is largely associated with mining, in introducing the present motion pointed out that it was cheaper for the Kalgoorlie mines to buy firewood than to buy coal under present conditions, and that it would be necessary within a short time to throw open the forests reserved, we find certain members opposing anything that, as I may put it, will go in the direction of Esperance Bay, fearing that if they agree to build a line 50 or 60 miles in length, that line may be continued over the remainder of the distance to Esperance in spite of them. I do not think hon. members should be influenced by that fear at all. We have heard from the member for Dundas an immense deal of talk about Salmon Gum and Grass Patch, with which we are in consequence particularly well acquainted. Salmon gum, it appears, is a particularly valuable timber for mining purposes. We should use our best endeavours to assist in facilitating the supply of fuel and timber to the mines. Moreover, the proposed line will have the effect of settling people on the land, thereby creating a larger supply of agricultural produce. That circumstance alone constitutes a reason for favourably considering the construction of the Esperance line. I am aware that many members argue that the line should be constructed merely in order to reduce the cost of living on the goldfields.

That contention has been urged by the mover, among others. I hold, however, that living on the goldfields is not as dear as some people would have us believe. Still, a refutation of the cost-of-living argument affords no ground for opposing the project. Is it not statesmanlike to encourage settlement in every part of the country where people may be prepared to go? I say, give the people the land and facilities for getting to market. There is every reason to believe that by the construction of the Esperance line settlement will be greatly promoted, and that the line will serve not only the mining community, but eventually an agricultural and a pastoral community as well. The fact that good agricultural and pastoral land is to be found in the neighbourhood of Esperance is proved by the circumstance that certain people have been settled there for 30 or 40 years, and have done well. However, we find on the coast people sufficiently selfish to say, "No; we will not give you a line from Esperance to the goldfields, because we fear that such a line will rob Fremantle of some of its trade." I intend to vote for the motion. I regret the member for Dundas has accepted the amendment of the member for Kanowna.

MR. THOMAS: I have not yet spoken to the amendment.

MR. WALLACE: I understand that the amendment has been accepted. I desire that the House should have an opportunity of voting for or against the proposed line. A Royal Commission to inquire into the merits of the project will, it is urged, probably sit for two or three years and cost anything from six to ten thousand pounds. All sorts of arguments have been hurled at the supporters of the line in order that those who are a little wobbly may be induced to vote against the motion and against the amendment. I wish the member for Dundas had persisted in putting a straight-out motion, so that on a division we might learn how forces are divided. Are we to have the goldfields opened up or are we to have everything centred in Perth and Fremantle? It is probable that in the near future another motion of this character will be before the House, and I venture to say that those who oppose the present motion will be found opposing the motion I have in

view. That motion will, likewise, represent an exceedingly hard case, and its rejection will inflict great hardship on the people whom the Government, in pursuance of their policy of land settlement, are urging to take up agricultural country. Fremantle and Perth, I contend, are now sufficiently well established to have nothing to fear from any new line. As the member for Albany (Hon. J. Gardiner) has said, there are many centres without any railway communication whatever, but certainly deserving of railways; and those are the centres whose necessities I wish to see provided for. I hope hon. members will give unbiassed consideration to this matter. Let them vote for the amendment if they have any belief, faith, or spirit of give-and-take in them. Let them afford an opportunity for the full investigation of the proposed railway by a Royal Commission, if necessary; but, I repeat, I would rather have had a straight-out question put, so that members might say aye or no, for or against the motion. I support the member for Dundas.

MR. H. J. YELVERTON (Sussex): I am not convinced by a long way that this country is justified in building a railway from Esperance to the Eastern Goldfields. Two points call for demonstration: the first is whether the construction of the Esperance railway will be to the general interest of the State; the second is whether the cost of the railway itself, and also the cost of making Esperance Bay a safe and commodious harbour, are within the present means of the State.

MR. HASTIE: Give us an opportunity to demonstrate.

MR. YELVERTON: Among all the arguments advanced in favour of the line, I have not heard one sufficient to convince me on either point; and therefore I am for the present opposed to the construction of the line. I do feel strongly, however, that on this, as on all matters, we should be imbued with a spirit of fairness, and should not in any way attempt to burke inquiry. Therefore I shall support the amendment of the member for Kanowna, that a Royal Commission be appointed to inquire into the matter. The hon. member's wording is that the commission shall "inquire into the desirability of constructing the line," but I hold that the commission should

inquire also into the cost of constructing the line and the cost of making a harbour at Esperance. Speaking, as I feel, against the motion of the member for Dundas, I say it is indeed a grave matter for consideration whether we should construct a line to Esperance to allow that port to compete with the harbour which we have built at Fremantle, and on which we have spent an enormous amount of money; and whether we should build a line in opposition to the railway with which—I say this on behalf of the coastal districts—the State of Western Australia has very fairly and even generously provided the goldfields. I think, too, that the goldfields members, who so strongly advocate this line, should be reasonable in their demands and remember the liberality with which they have in the past been treated by the coastal districts. [MR. JOHNSON: Have we done nothing?] I do not say that by any means. I feel that the prosperity which has attended this country within the last few years is mainly owing to the development of our goldfields. I freely admit that while we have been liberal and generous to the goldfields, they have been of great advantage to us; and therefore I say that the advocates for this line and its opponents also should approach the question in a spirit of conciliation. I have heard too much from the Fremantle members in this debate of a spirit of resentment against the construction of this line; and on the other hand, I have heard motives attributed to those members by the goldfields members which I do not think should be imputed. For my part, I believe in the fullest inquiry, not with the object of seeing whether the construction of the line only is justified, but whether the construction of the harbour is justified, and with the view also of inquiring whether we should be justified in constructing the railway and running it in opposition to the railway and the harbour on which we have already spent such an enormous sum. I shall vote for the amendment of the member for Kanowna.

MR. C. HARPER (Beverley): I must congratulate the mover of the original motion on the fairness with which he put his side of the case, and the wisdom he exhibited in reserving some points from his statement. I look upon this as

mainly a question of carriage of goods ; for if we remove that consideration, there is very little left. As far as Norseman is concerned, I think the hon. member has set a good example as a member fighting for his district ; and it is quite right and proper that he should do so. He has done it well. But when the question of the goldfields to the north of that place is brought in, other considerations have to be examined. The hon. member, in dealing with the prospects of this line right through, made a strong point of the reduction of freights and consequently of the cheapening of living on the goldfields. The goods that go to supply the goldfields come from various parts of the world. There are certain centres from which they are consigned. Agricultural produce has in the past been mainly consigned from the Eastern States ports, and some of the machinery also ; but clothing and a large portion of the machinery have come from Europe. Now the hon. member might have informed us—but he did not—that were this line built, it could not possibly affect goods shipped from England or from Europe, because they will always follow the railway where the greatest bulk of the traffic goes, and where they can consequently be carried cheaper. Then there is the timber required for the mines. That will go from our own forests ; and it is impossible to conceive of its being carried to the coast, shipped in coasters, sent to Esperance Bay, put on a train and delivered on the fields as cheaply as it could be taken direct from the forests.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It could be shipped from Albany.

MR. HARPER: Impossible. The cost of handling would kill it at once. If any hon. member will take the trouble to calculate the cost of shipping a ton of goods in our State, where the price of labour is so high, he will see the proposition is impracticable. What I want to point out is what the mover of the motion did not inform us, that with regard to foodstuffs the centre of the supply must in the next few years be moved from, say, the port of Adelaide to a centre somewhere about Northam ; and the competition for that trade will then, supposing the Esperance line to be built, be between Port Adelaide *via* Esperance and Northam. And it is obvious that the cost of transshipment

from Port Adelaide to Esperance, and the difference of something like 50 miles in the land carriage only, would make it impossible for that route to compete against the centre at Northam. So far as the value of that class of traffic is concerned, the line would be useless, and therefore a burden on the State. There can be no question of this. It is not something in a visionary future, but it is an absolute fact which any person who chooses to use his intelligence must recognise as bound to happen in a few years, probably before the railway could be completed, supposing the Bill were to pass to-night. The trade in goods which now come from England or from Europe may to a certain extent be diverted to the Eastern States through the effect of the Federal tariff ; but I understand that the goldfields members and a large proportion of the people of the Eastern States also are clamouring very loudly for a reduction in the tariff on goods from foreign countries. If that reduction be made, it will operate against the construction of the Esperance line ; the prospects for the future of that line must be receding all the time from the present ; and if it failed to make the enormous profits which the mover anticipates, it could be nothing but a burden on the State which would fall very largely on the goldfields themselves. The member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) when he rose mentioned the hostility which he thought was exhibited on this subject by the coastal people to the goldfields. I think that a one-sided way of putting it, because many people on the coast consider that the whole secret foundation of the goldfields agitation for this line is hostility to the coast. I do not say it is ; but if there be any hostility on the one side, it is just as likely to be on the other. The hon. member instanced the fact that 35 important local bodies had almost demanded this line, and made something in the nature of a threat of what would happen were not this demand listened to. But I think we ought to analyse what those 35 local bodies are, and what is the main consideration prompting their action. I do not particularly know those local bodies ; but I venture to chance the speculation that many of them look with considerable anxiety and hope to the advantage they would derive during the

construction of the railway, and not to its ultimate result; and I do not think it fair to take into consideration the temporary advantage conferred on any community through whose territory a railway is built.

MR. HASTIE: That is not considered. Only four places would benefit in that way.

MR. HARPER: Indeed? I am glad to hear that those centres have developed such a high degree of patriotism. I am quite ready to accept the hon. member's assurance that the advantage of the construction of the railway from Coolgardie does not affect the people of Coolgardie. [MR. HASTIE: I did not say that.] I think the member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins) has absolutely given away the case, if we analyse a few words he said; and I am sorry he is not now present. He said he considered the condition of the State makes it absolutely impossible that this line could be constructed at once; but he also assured us it was most important that a Royal Commission should be appointed, and he is prepared to abide by its verdict. But the construction of the railway being impossible this year, it does not from his statement appear necessary that the Royal Commission should be appointed now, because he informed us that all the work required to be done by the commission could be finished in five weeks. Then why need we start to do now that which we can get within five weeks of the opening of next session? It appears to me he has given his case away in stating that, as regards the urgency for the appointment of this commission. To appoint a commission in preference to a select committee in my opinion involves the condemnation of the power of this House through its own committee to get the information required. I cannot see why a committee of this House, or if necessary a joint committee of both Houses, could not obtain all the information obtainable by a Royal Commission; and I think that custom has established the principle that if Parliament cannot within its own four walls obtain certain information, then it should appoint a select committee to do so. But why in this case a commission is required I cannot understand. Much has been made both by the petitioners in this case

and by a good many speakers also of the advantage which the State would reap by the construction of this line, and the consequent cheapening of living. It is highly questionable whether it would enable those now on the fields to bring their families from other States. I think there is considerable hollowness in that argument; because, as the Premier informed us the other night, and as was stated before the arbitration court in Coolgardie the other day, the average male adult on the fields spends about £36 a year in liquor. If he spent £6 instead of £36, it strikes me he would be able to keep his wife if he had one. So as far as I am concerned, that argument has very little weight. Regarding the proposed inquiry into this question, I am quite fearless as to the result, and under other conditions I should be quite prepared to support the appointment of a select committee. The member for Boulder has told us there is no urgency whatever in it, and that a year hence the opportunities of judging the surrounding circumstances would be better than they are now. I think it is altogether premature; and I am justified in saying that if one looks between the lines, as it were, of the whole thing he will see it is an agitation prompted by people on the fields, and that members find they are obliged to assist in it not because they believe in it, but because they recognise that their constituents demand it. The member for Boulder said there was no urgency, whatever may be the result. Therefore, neither the main motion nor the amendment is urgent; and I would strongly urge upon the member who moved the motion to have nothing to do with a Royal Commission, for he had better stick to the original proposition, which is a clear and definite issue.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS (Hon. C. H. Rason): I desire to thank the member for Dundas for the painstaking manner in which he introduced this motion. There may be some who will say he attempted to prove too much; but perhaps that can be attributed to his zeal and to his marvellous appetite for figures. In advancing the claims of the Eastern Goldfields and of Norseman and Esperance to this railway, the hon. member gave amongst the reasons that there was a deposit of salt

in the vicinity of Esperance; that Esperance would make an excellent sanatorium for the goldfields; that the railway would develop a great deal of land between Esperance and Norseman, and between Norseman and Coolgardie; that it would be the means of cheapening the cost of living on the fields; and, above all things else, that it would pay. I think the member was somewhat unfortunate in alluding to salt as his first reason. I always understood that, with mining men especially, salt was "taboo," and I am sure, in fact, that anyone of a less established reputation as a mining manager than the member for Dundas would have hesitated before he introduced salt. He can hardly have been serious, I think, in submitting that the presence of a small deposit of salt in the neighbourhood of Esperance was a sufficient justification, or even an important factor, in regard to building a line of railway 228 miles. As for a sanatorium for the goldfields, I was anxious to obtain, if possible, some reliable information in relation to the claim of Esperance, and in making inquiries I found that not very long ago there was a very estimable gentleman, an engineer, in whom I think the people of Esperance profess the utmost confidence, and, like many other eminent gentlemen, this very highly respectable engineer was in the habit of keeping a diary, in which he recorded the direction and force of the winds and the state of the weather and the sea every day during the many months he was there. I think it would be a fair thing if I took December, as being a month we should always allow to be one of the mildest months of the year, according to the season, and probably the most equal of the months of the year in regard to temperature. I endeavoured to ascertain what was the state of things at Esperance during that month, and although I do not intend to go through the whole course, I will give the first few days, which will give members a very fair idea of the excellent climate of Esperance. On the 1st December the direction of the wind was south-west; it was strong; the weather was chilly and the sea was rough. On the 2nd, south-east, strong, cold, rough. On the 3rd, east, half a gale, cold, rough. On the 4th, east, half a gale, chilly, rough. On the 5th, west, light, sultry, smooth. On the 6th,

west, strong, hot, rough—a very happy combination. On the 7th, south-west, gentle, chilly, smooth. On the 8th, east, light, hot, smooth. On the 9th, south-east, strong, chilly, rough. On the 10th, north-east, rough, hot, smooth. In ten days we have pretty well boxed the compass with the wind, and you have every variation of temperature from chilly to sultry. So much for Esperance as a sanatorium. The hon. member went on to say that the Esperance Railway, if built, would undoubtedly pay, and he gave some figures as to what would be the cost of the line. I have endeavoured to obtain some reliable information of the cost of the line from Esperance to Coolgardie, and although the figures I give may be taken as only approximate, yet they are furnished by the authority quoted by the member for Dundas the other night, as being excellent and perfectly reliable in every way. So that, although the figures are approximate, they may be taken as correct. The cost of the line, together with rolling-stock, is estimated at £750,000. In order that the line should be in a position to carry the amount of traffic which would be needed to pay interest and sinking fund and working expenses, it would be necessary that there should be a good harbour at Esperance. I regret very much that I cannot agree with the member for Dundas that there exists to-day a good and safe harbour at Esperance. I have made inquiries of as many sea-going men, as many master mariners, as I could come across who know that harbour, and I am assured that it is not a safe, or as sailors call it a comfortable harbour all through the year. It is true that at certain periods a vessel may lie at the existing jetty there in safety; but, owing to the constant changes, it is never known how long the vessel would be able to lie there; whether it would not have to clear out at a few minutes' notice, even indeed if it could get out with any degree of safety. The cost of the harbour is estimated roughly—and it would be only a very moderate harbour then—at £375,000. The member for Dundas said it was possible to get at a very short distance from the existing jetty, a jetty not a very great length, that would run into deep water. That is perfectly true, and you may say that of almost any port in the world.



But because you can get into deep water with a comparatively short length of jetty, it does not follow by any means that you get a safe harbour or a safe jetty. On the contrary, in the case of Esperance, in any other position almost but that where the existing jetty is, it would be absolutely necessary to protect the jetty with a mole or breakwater. Every authority is agreed upon the point that it would be absolutely necessary to protect your jetty. Then, again, it is extremely probable, if not almost certain, that a dredge would have to be kept at Esperance, because there are evidences of sand travel. I regret the member for Dundas is not in his place, because he would know whether the local circumstance to which I am alluding is true or not. I believe it is true, and I have every reason to believe it. I am informed on credible authority, as an instance that sand travel does exist at Esperance, that a woolshed on the property of Messrs. Dempster Bros., originally built close to the seashore, is now some considerable distance away from it. This is in a very few years. If that be so, and I submit there is very little doubt upon the point, I think it is very strong evidence that sand travel does exist at Esperance. The cost of the line, and of the harbour on a very moderate scale, totals the sum of £1,125,000. Interest and sinking fund would amount to £56,000. When I point out that the profit on the whole of the Eastern Goldfields railway for the year ending 30th June, 1901, was only £58,000, and that the line had to carry freight at an earning price of very nearly half a million of money, it will show, I think, at once that the Esperance to Coolgardie railway would have to carry freight to the extent of half a million of money before it would pay even interest and sinking fund. What prospect is there of that line securing freight to that amount? And if it could, where would that freight come from? The difference between the line from Esperance to Coolgardie and the line from Fremantle to Coolgardie is this, that the Fremantle line carries the produce, not only of one district, but of nearly all the districts of this State, and not only the produce of this State, but produce from the other States and from the rest of the world;

whereas the Esperance-Coolgardie line could carry only a very limited quantity from its own immediate district, and the balance of the freight would have to be made up from where? [MR. TAYLOR: The Commonwealth.] By whom, and with what? With produce grown in the Commonwealth. Then I submit that, if that be so, and the member for Mt. Margaret has himself said it, we are asked to build a line from Esperance to Coolgardie—

MR. THOMAS: No; a portion of the goldfields.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; but is not Norseman a portion of the goldfields?

MR. THOMAS: Yes; but no one suggested Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then we are to build a line from Esperance to the goldfields, no portion of which is included in the terms Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, or Boulder. They are not part of the goldfields!

MR. THOMAS: Certainly they are. No one has raised the question as to which point the railway should come to.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then it will be from Esperance to somewhere on the Eastern Goldfields?

MR. THOMAS: That is better.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: From Esperance to somewhere not yet determined upon. And we are asked to do this to carry the produce of other States to the certain detriment of settlers in this State. That is the position. The member for Dundas said he would allow that this line, if built, might take away one-third of the traffic from the existing line. If that be so, if you take away one-third of the traffic from the existing Eastern Goldfields line, you at once, I submit, take away the whole of the profit, because although you would reduce the traffic, you would not appreciably reduce the working expenses. Certainly if one-third of the traffic is taken away, hardly any if any profit would remain, so that to the interest and sinking fund of the capital employed on the Esperance-Goldfields line and the Esperance harbour must be fairly added the loss of the profit on the Eastern Goldfields line. And why I ask should this State be forced to give this new pledge if it is the desire to assist the Eastern Goldfields? It has been suggested that

the coastal districts are greedy, that they do not desire to do all that might be done for the development of the Eastern Goldfields, but that they desire to retain the trade in their own hands at whatever cost. I submit that is an unworthy suggestion. I submit that the coastal districts have proved beyond all shadow of doubt their desire to deal fairly and generously with the goldfields of this State. This very agitation for the Esperance railway was started when we were actually building the Eastern Goldfields line.

MR. THOMAS : And supported by yourself.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : I beg your pardon ; nothing of the kind.

MR. THOMAS : And voted for by yourself.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : I know what the hon. member is referring to, and to quote his own expression so frequently used, "I will come to that directly." We have, I think, given manifest and undoubted proof of our desire to assist the Eastern Goldfields. This agitation was started when the very line from Southern Cross to Coolgardie was being built. Before that line had reached Woolgangie the agitation for the Esperance railway commenced, and it has been continued to this very day. [MR. HOPKINS : Great foresight.] The member for Dundas says I voted for an Esperance-Goldfields railway, and he does me too much honour. I did nothing of the kind. A motion was introduced certainly to construct a line from Coolgardie to Norseman. For that line I voted, but that is not a line from Esperance to the goldfields.

MR. THOMAS : From Esperance to Norseman.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : No ; from Coolgardie to Norseman, and for that line I voted. That cannot by any means be construed into a line from Esperance to the goldfields. I should like to be permitted to refer to the member for the Murchison's attitude on this question. Judging from what that hon. gentleman had said on the goldfields, and judging by the way in which he attacked the Labour party in this House for sitting where they do sit if they wish to procure this Esperance-Goldfields line, I expected to have heard from the hon. member that

he was prepared at once to construct a line, if he was in power, or that not being in power for the moment he was prepared to support it by all the energy and eloquence he commands ; but, and it is a most important but, if there was not such a response from the Labour party in the House as the hon. member expected, or whether from some other reason he was disappointed, I find as his speech went on, although I gathered he distinctly favoured the line, he was not prepared to recommend it. It must be undertaken either now or in the near future, but he was in favour of the appointment of a committee. Therefore I can only come to the conclusion that the hon. member was indulging in a little political angling. That seems to be becoming a favourite pastime with the hon. gentleman. No sooner does the political barometer point to a certain quarter, than the hon. member indulges in a little political fishing, and those who watch him from afar notice that if he fails in getting a ducking, as I believe he has done on more than one occasion, he proceeds to angle, with what result is best known, and only known, to the hon. gentleman himself. But the hon. gentleman has always held up to us, to my great delight and to my entire concurrence, as a great and glorious example one who used to lead the House. I refer to the Right Hon. Sir John Forrest. He has quoted that gentleman, and is never tired of quoting him, as the one who knew more of the requirements of this State than any other man, with knowledge and best able to judge of its requirements, and whose advice it was on all occasions very safe indeed to follow. That being so, I submit to the House the opinion of that right hon. gentleman on this very question recently expressed, and it is as follows :—

And, talking of organised agitation, take the everlasting outcry for the railway from the fields to Esperance Bay, which has recently been vigorously renewed. What could be more absurd than to ask the State to construct another expensive railway, which would not pay, and would pass through a miserably unproductive country ? Again, it would cost a very large amount of money to make Esperance a safe harbour at all times and weathers. Far better to expend money on improving the present lines, or, as Mr. Hamilton, of the Great Boulder, suggests, in extending the railways through well-known

and proved auriferous areas. The arguments advanced in favour of the Esperance railway are not only futile, but utterly fallacious. I repeat again, that this railway is not required for any purpose whatever connected with either Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie. The goldfields people would be much more profitably employed if they would transfer their attention to the important question of the construction of the Transcontinental railway from Kalgoorlie to Port Augusta.

Will the member for the Murchison follow the advice of the gentleman who, I submit rightly, is always held up as the example we should follow, whose advice we should follow, and who undoubtedly knows, and has every reason to know, perhaps better than any other man in the House, the quality of the country through which that line would pass. He describes that country as a miserably unproductive one. We are told that this line is necessary in order to decrease the cost of living upon the goldfields, and to make the production on the goldfields cheaper, and in the course of the debate reference has been made to the excessive cost of living on the goldfields. I dispute that the cost of living on the goldfields is excessive.

MR. TAYLOR: You ought to live there.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I lived there before the hon. gentleman himself knew anything about the Coolgardie goldfields.

MR. TAYLOR: Not for long.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Longer than the hon. member did. The cost of living on the goldfields may be more than it should be, but that it is excessive everyone who knows anything about it will deny, and indeed any old miner who has been on the Eastern Goldfields will tell you, as I have heard them say, not once, not scores of times, but hundreds of times, that for the life of the field and for its distance from a port it was the cheapest goldfield they had ever been on in their lives. That was true then, and it is true to-day. It is nonsense to say that the cost of living is excessive. It is nothing of the kind. It might be cheaper—I only wish it was—but to say it might be cheaper is not to say it is excessive. It is not the way to make the cost of living cheaper on the goldfields to construct a line which you know has no possibility of ever paying, and it will only increase the burden of taxation

on everyone in the State. If it be absolutely necessary in order to encourage the gold-mining industry and the cost of production on the goldfields to have the machinery carried at a less rate and the food products carried there at a less rate, that object can be attained without the Esperance railway, and it can be attained without damaging the interests of those who should be our consideration just as much as the residents of the goldfields, the producers of the State. If the dwellers on the goldfields and if the gold-mining industry are entitled to consideration, and I admit they are, are the producers of the State entitled to no consideration at all?

MR. TAYLOR: They have had all the consideration.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Have they shown no consideration to you, if I address the hon. member as a goldfields member? Have they not built a railway? Did they not build a railway to connect the goldfields with the port early in the history of the goldfields, earlier in the history of the goldfields than any other State in Australia ever did? Has the State not incurred a liability in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme such as no other State in the Commonwealth had for the benefit of the goldfields alone? Then the hon. member says no consideration has been shown to the goldfields, and that the producers have had the consideration all the time. I say let us be fair both to the residents on the goldfields and to the gold-mining industry, and fair to everyone else in the State. I say without hesitation, if it be necessary, and it may be—I do not admit it now—if it is demonstrated that it is absolutely necessary to reduce the cost of living and the cost of production on the Eastern Goldfields or any other goldfields, that object can be attained by reducing the rates on the existing railway just as well as if there was one from Esperance.

MEMBER: The rates were increased the other day.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is true the rates were increased not very long ago. It was pointed out that was a tentative measure, and it has been argued that that comparatively trifling increase in the rates has increased the cost of living on the goldfields.

MR. HOLMAN: So it has.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then if it has, if that be true, when I tell the House that it is the intention of the Government to reduce these rates as from the first of September, then it follows that the reduction will decrease the cost of living on the fields.

MR. THOMAS: Less than now?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then the cost of living on the goldfields is within reasonable distance of being reduced, and that reduction will have been effected, not by building the Esperance railway, but by treating the railway we already have in a business-like way. I do not wish to weary the House, but I want to come to the question of the appointment of a commission. It is said it is the duty of the House to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into this matter. Why, forsooth? Because if you did not it would be an insult to 35 public bodies who have signed a petition. I take a totally different view from that of the question and of the whole position. I cannot imagine any more direct insult to 35 public bodies, composed doubtless of estimable gentlemen, 35 bodies of repute in this State, who say that in their opinion this Esperance-Goldfields line is desirable, than the insult conveyed by the mover of the amendment, who in effect says, "Oh, that [a snap] for your 35 public bodies: let us appoint a Royal Commission to see whether the construction of the line is desirable or not." By the amendment we are asked not to accept the statements of those 35 bodies whom we are to be so careful not to insult, but to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire whether those 35 bodies have or have not told us the truth. I can imagine no greater insult. For my part, I am quite prepared to accept the assertion of the gentlemen comprising those 35 public bodies that from their standpoint the construction of the line is desirable. But—and it is again a most important but—if those 35 public bodies say so, and if we believe them, and if a commission said so, and if we believed the commission, what follows? The project may be desirable, but there are many things which, while desirable, are yet incapable of attainment. If we were told by a thousand public bodies in the State, or anywhere else, that the building of the

Esperance railway is desirable, would it bring us any nearer to the building of that railway?

MR. TAYLOR: No; it would not alter things one jot.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Perhaps the member for Mount Margaret, in his wisdom, will tell us how he would build this railway if he had the power. Where is the money to come from? Will the member for Mount Margaret, or the member for Boulder, show me where the money is to come from? We have many great works already sanctioned, already under construction, in this State; and it will be necessary to raise money to undertake and complete those works. Moreover, there are other portions of the State which, in my opinion at all events, are more entitled to railway communication than is either Norseman or Esperance. If we can afford to build railways anywhere, certainly the Esperance-Norseman is not the first railway we should undertake; not the first by any means. It is a matter of grave doubt, however, whether we should be justified in going on the loan market to borrow money for the purpose of building any railway in the immediate future. I do not profess to be an authority on the point, but I own to grave doubts with regard to the advisability of such a course. As I said at the outset of my speech, I have no desire to say one word or to do anything which can possibly be construed into antagonism towards the goldfields. I desire to do everything in my power, everything that can be done, to render justice to the fields, and justice to the State as a whole. But I submit we have a duty to the whole State rather than a duty to any portion of it; and, for myself, I shall always decline to do anything I think is for the doubtful benefit of one part of the State and to the certain detriment of the State as a whole. Therefore, I cannot support either the motion or the amendment.

MR. P. STONE (Greenough): I have listened to the debate with considerable interest, and from what I can gather it seems to me that the facts are somewhat mixed. I congratulate the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond) on the able manner in which he put the position from his standpoint, and on the multitude of facts and figures which he

brought forward in support of his contentions. I have also to compliment the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas) on the able speech in which he introduced the motion. If the question were only one of the first cost of constructing the Esperance railway, the work might well be taken in hand; but the line brings so much expense in its wake, in the shape of harbour improvements and public buildings, that I think the State cannot now afford to do what is asked. Another point against the project is that the new line would enter into competition with the line now existing, which we understand is shortly to be duplicated on the broad gauge, as a first section of the Transcontinental railway. The advocacy of the Esperance line, it seems to me, proceeds mainly from storekeepers, and from land-jobbers who desire to make a profit out of the sale of land in the neighbourhood of Esperance.

MEMBER: Who are the land-jobbers?

MR. STONE: I do not care to mention names. I have to offer my congratulations to the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie) on the skilful manner in which he came to the rescue of the mover when that hon. member was in trouble, and by a rear-guard engagement in the shape of an amendment proposing the appointment of a Royal Commission, opened a line of retreat. I suppose nobody seriously intends to support the amendment. The wisest and safest plan in this matter is to get rid of the whole business by voting against both the proposal to construct the line and the proposal to appoint a Royal Commission; and that is the course I intend to take.

MR. J. RESIDE (Hannans): After hearing the views of many hon. members I have come to the conclusion that undoubtedly this is a geographical question, and that one can pretty well indicate the sentiments of any member when one knows the situation of his electorate, without consulting the member himself. There is no chance of Eastern Goldfields residents getting a fair deal from this House, since so many members are biassed by considerations of vested interests and local concerns. The knowledge of this fact induced Eastern Goldfields members to move the amendment suggesting the appointment of a

Royal Commission. We members representing Eastern Goldfields constituencies desire that the question shall be submitted to an impartial board for a report. That I think a reasonable proposition; and if members generally are actuated by that spirit of fair play and justice which they claim moves them, they should grant the Royal Commission, at all events. I am surprised at the attitude taken now by certain members who, in times gone by, supported the proposition that every port shall be granted the trade to which its geographical position entitles it. For example, the member for Greenough (Mr. Stone), whose port is already open, wishes to deny the Eastern Goldfields people an opportunity of having their natural port opened. Another curious aspect of the case is that while last session we were almost unanimously in favour of a Public Works Committee, certain members now oppose the amendment of the member for Kanowna, which embodies merely a demand for the submission of the Esperance railway project to what I may term a special Public Works Committee. The advantage to be gained from referring the question to an impartial commission is that the report of such a body will furnish the House with a means of deciding whether the assertions made by either side are correct. There is no use in bandying arguments from one side of the House to the other. The question is argued backwards and forwards, and all sorts of statements are made, but no decision is or can be arrived at. The only way to settle the question is to submit it, as suggested, to a special board of inquiry. We have heard tonight a vast deal of the good things which the coastal residents have showered on the goldfields. I do not think, however, that coastal members were right in mentioning the Coolgardie Water Scheme in this connection. If the course now proposed with regard to the Esperance railway had been adopted in connection with the proposal to pump water from Helena Vale to Coolgardie, the country, I venture to say, would not have been saddled with the frightful expense it has now to bear. The scheme will yet furnish one of the most difficult questions which the House will ever have to deal with, namely how the work is to be made a

financial success. As a resident of the Eastern Goldfields, I do not know that the mining community were so very anxious that the scheme should be undertaken. The desire on the goldfields was rather that a sum of money should be expended in the local conservation of water. This wild-cat water scheme would never have been carried through the House if it had been submitted to inquiry at the hands of a board of impartial experts. Such a board, I venture to assert, would have presented such a report on the proposal to pump water from Helena Vale to Coolgardie as would have prevented the scheme from being adopted by the House.

MR. STONE: What base ingratitude!

MR. RESIDE: Certain agricultural members maintain that the goldfields have only a few years of life before them. I ask the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) to point to any Australian goldfield of importance which has become extinct. Such statements will not bear the test of experience, at any rate so far as Australia is concerned. West Australians are continually boasting of the great Coolgardie goldfields, which are considered to be the greatest goldfields in the world; and I maintain that certainly it is not right on the part of agricultural representatives to cry down the mining industry. Had it not been for the goldfields, those members would not now be so rich, or so greatly advantaged in respect of property in the coastal districts, as in point of fact they are. Undoubtedly, the construction of the the Esperance railway would result in the opening up of much new country and in the creation of work for a much larger population. We hear continually the cry that the greatest need of Western Australia is population; but although our present numbers are absurdly small in comparison with the enormous area of the State, it cannot be denied that even now we are faced with an unemployed question. It is certainly wrong that the spirit of centralisation should be so strong in Western Australia. The time has come when this vast State must be opened up from many different ports. If we are to have a larger population, security for farther loans, and the opportunity to reduce the debt per head, we must open new avenues of profitable

employment. I feel, therefore, that hon. members, if they will not grant the Eastern Goldfields what is asked for by the direct motion, should at any rate grant the commission asked for by the amendment. The suggestion to refer the question to an impartial commission is certainly in every way fair. Eastern Goldfields representatives believe that the report of the commission will be in their favour—that their case will be strengthened by the report. I hope that in justice and fair play the House will carry the amendment, at any rate.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (HON. H. Gregory): I feel somewhat in a quandary with regard to this motion. I have been elected several times to this House, and on every occasion I have promised to support the construction of a railway to Esperance Bay. The motion tabled by the member for Dundas, however, asks that the railway shall be constructed at once. If that motion were pushed to a division, I certainly should vote against it; because I do not think that in the present circumstances, seeing the large amount of money necessary to carry out works already authorised or in hand, any member is justified in voting for a motion of the kind. The country is not at present in a position to find the money for the construction of the Esperance line; therefore, as I say, if the motion were pressed to a division, although I have promised to support the Esperance railway, I should nevertheless vote against the member for Dundas.

MR. THOMAS: My motion says "at the earliest possible moment."

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Which would mean an instruction to the Government to construct the railway as soon as possible; and at present that course is not justifiable. To corroborate that assertion, I would point out that two years ago, although pledged to the construction of the railway, I voted against the Bill for connecting by rail Coolgardie and Norseman. I felt I was then justified, and I should now be justified, in voting against this motion. But the amendment of the member for Kanowna is something different. I do not think the amendment will have any great result; but it will certainly give us some good information which we badly want.

Many assertions have been made as to the cost of the railway, the facilities at present obtainable at the Esperance Harbour, and the mineral and agricultural resources of the district; and possibly the commission may be able to throw some light on the subject, and show us whether the project has greater justification than some of us at present believe. The reason why I think this railway should in due time be constructed is that I have always favoured decentralisation. I think we have no right to try to make Fremantle and Perth a sort of octopus in this country. We should open up as many ports as we can, and give due facilities to each of them. I do not think it worth while discussing the merits of this railway to-night. If the commission be appointed, all necessary information will be collated for us, and we shall then be able to discuss the question with much more authentic data than are now before us. No doubt if the railway were constructed it would open up very large mineral resources. We know there is a fairly good low-grade field at Norseman; we have other mining districts between Norseman and Coolgardie; and we have to consider also the fact that the grade of the ore in this State is gradually being reduced, and that every facility must, therefore, be granted our mining companies to obtain, not their machinery only, but their food supplies also, at the lowest possible rate. In constructing a railway from Esperance to Coolgardie, I do not think we should be doing any injury either to Fremantle or to the agricultural districts. With the great harbour we now have at Fremantle, the advantages obtainable there, and the farther facilities which will shortly be available, I say Fremantle should be able to hold its own and to defy any competition that can come from Esperance. Again, with regard to ordinary food supplies, I say that when our agriculturists can place their foodstuffs on the railway, and have them delivered direct to the fields on the same day, then they should not fear any competition from countries from which we are separated by two to four days' sail. But the mining people demand every consideration, and it is our duty to let them have their supplies as cheaply as possible. So far, this State has not shown

that it can supply potatoes, onions, and many other foodstuffs which are essential for the fields. Owing to the Federal tariff, we have a large demand for mining machinery from the Eastern States, and we must allow that machinery to be delivered on the fields as cheaply as possible; therefore I think that in due time the construction of this line will be justified. Nor do I think it will injure the coastal or the agricultural districts so seriously as is anticipated; for, owing to the larger market we shall have on the fields, I feel satisfied that the injury will be non-existent. Then, again, the line will give us a continuous railway system from Esperance via Coolgardie to Perth, to Geraldton, to Nannine, and I hope from Menzies to Leonora, thence to Lawlers, and right round again to Geraldton. That is the policy at which we ought to aim—to have the whole of our ports connected by rail.

MR. THOMAS: The sooner the better.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: But the financial considerations are much more important than the small amount of good that might now be done to our industries. We know we cannot at present afford to borrow money for this work; and that is why I think the motion is now injudicious. Much has been said about the harbour facilities at Esperance; and to my mind they are much better than those existing in Fremantle five to six years ago, when there was merely the old jetty. So that the arguments adduced by the member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond) as to the charges at Esperance to-day and the charges at Fremantle, would hardly hold good; for I contend that with the expenditure of a very small sum of money, accommodation at Esperance would be equal to what existed some few years ago at Fremantle.

MR. HARPER: Could you get ships to go to Esperance?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I am quite satisfied we could get most of the steamers to go. But I should like to draw attention to a remark of the hon. member interjecting, which I do not think fair. He is usually very fair in his arguments; but when he said that the supporters of this railway were, to his mind, urging its construction on

account of the small amount of trade that would be done on the fields while it was being constructed, I think his statement was unwarranted, and I am sure it was not worthy of him.

MR. HARPER: I said that might reasonably be supposed.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member should recollect that such a view of the subject would affect only two townships, Coolgardie and Norseman. I hardly think such an argument would carry weight with Kanowna, Kalgoorlie, Menzies, or any other of the districts farther north. The appointment of the commission will certainly involve some expense; and I think it would be better were it to consist mostly of members of Parliament, on a system somewhat similar to that proposed last session with regard to our public works. We want an inexpensive commission which will yet give us good evidence, obtainable from the various departmental officers. I object to outside engineers being brought in to recommend the expenditure of money in this country. I think we should place more reliance on our own officers. If they are not good enough, the sooner we get rid of them the better. We have engineers paid by the State; and the Government should be able, at the request of this House, to get from them all necessary information.

MR. HASTIE: As was done in respect of the Coolgardie Water Scheme?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I shall not go into that to-night. If outside men be appointed on the commission, we may not get the report we desire. We want first-class information which we can take as reliable; and I hope the commission will be composed to some extent of members of Parliament, with the addition of several departmental officers. The fullest information can then be elicited; and one reason why I think this matter should have been left over to a slightly later period is the fact that the survey of the land is now being prosecuted. Last session the Government placed a sum of money on the Estimates for that survey. As soon as it is completed, the information gathered should be available; and I feel satisfied that early next session this motion could be brought forward, and we should be able to deal with the question

on its merits, which we cannot do now. Though I support the appointment of a commission, I for one will not be bound by its report. I think the needs of the goldfields justify the railway; and as soon as the financial condition of the country is such as will warrant prosecuting the work, then I shall vote for its construction. But at present, when we have such rich fields being opened up farther north, any small grants the Government can spare would be much better expended on them. Consequently, I cannot now see my way to support the motion. If a reasonable time be allowed to elapse, then I think, not only will the goldfields members vote for it, but we shall be able to secure the support of many people on the coast who will see that its construction will not mean the injury to them which they at present fear.

MR. G. TAYLOR (Mount Margaret): I am well aware of the burning desire on the goldfields for this line, having been there for about nine years, and being among the first who took up the agitation for its construction. I feel there was a lot of sound logic in the argument of the Treasurer, backed up by the Minister for Mines, that it was necessary to connect the northern gold-mining centres by rail from Leonora to Lawlers, from Lawlers to Mount Magnet, and from Malcolm to Laverton *via* Mount Morgans. The portions of the fields at present provided with railway communication are the most anxious for the Esperance railway; and that is only to be expected. Though the feeling on the Eastern Goldfields is unanimously in favour of the line, yet the desire is greater where the people already have railway communication. The member for Subiaco argued that we should make in favour of the goldfields a concession on the present railway freights, which would obviate the necessity for building the Esperance railway. Members will recollect that some time ago the goldfields Press advocated that people on the fields should be charged with carriage for a distance of 210 miles, as from Esperance to Coolgardie, instead of 387, the actual distance from Fremantle to Coolgardie. But there is a strong feeling on the part of the goldfields people that such a concession would not meet the difficulty; because, as pointed



out clearly by the member for Dundas, the new railway would open up a large auriferous and also a pastoral and agricultural country. I think the House will agree that the hon. member has most ably advocated his motion, giving full statistics from most reliable sources to bear out all his arguments. There is no doubt as to the opening up of some splendid country in the event of this railway being built, and I certainly believe that the argument of the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) will not remove the difficulty. I think also there was not much soundness in the argument that in two or three years this State would produce all the foodstuff required for the whole of the State, and that cheapness of living would thus be brought about. Government statistics show that the amount of wheat produced for the year 1901-2 was 933,101 bushels. That is barely one-third of the total consumed; and if we took out the quantity used for seed it would make a great hole indeed in the amount. We should have to wait considerably longer than three years before this State would be able to produce all that is required for consumption by the people of Western Australia. After waiting so many years as I have done on the goldfields, for this State to produce the provisions required, I am getting somewhat tired. It is of no use to shut our eyes to the fact that we have to depend in a large measure on the Eastern States for our produce. The only outside trade which the Esperance line would convey would be Commonwealth trade. I suppose there is no doubt Fremantle would be the port for foreign vessels. The Commonwealth trade would land at Esperance, and that would, to my mind, facilitate and cheapen living on the goldfields. As to the argument of the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan) regarding the life of the goldfields being only about 30 years, I think it would be horrifying to the House and to the country to know that in something over 20 years from to-day—taking into consideration the fact that our goldfields are 10 years of age—the goldfields would be “duffered” out. That would be a very bad thing to look forward to. In my opinion the hon. member’s argument is fallacious. So far as Australia is concerned, none of the goldfields with reef gold have “petered”

out in that time. The assertion is perfectly right if applied to alluvial. I suppose the hon. member has a very hazy idea of the places where alluvial was found. Good pastoral, agricultural country was found close to where alluvial was discovered, and after the alluvial was worked out, if there was no reef left behind, there was always a flourishing population from an agricultural point of view. Unfortunately in this State we are not so favourably situated. If the goldfields in Western Australia were similarly situated to those in the Eastern States, then this country would be the best the sun shines upon, and we should be in a flourishing and splendid condition. During my time in this State I have been where 3,000 men have been working for alluvial gold and have obtained it, and I have gone five or six months afterwards and found only about a hundred, whilst 18 months later there may have been only three or four. If that rush had taken place in the Eastern States, it would have left behind it a smiling population of selectors and squatters. It is not so in this country; not owing to the bad soil, but to the want of regular rains. I feel confident that if the Eastern Goldfields, especially the part I have the honour to represent in this House, had regular rains, they would be able to grow anything. They have soil which could be irrigated, where they could grow vegetables, and in some places they have produced fruit equal to anything I have seen on the coast. In many instances it is only through the want of rain that we cannot go in for agricultural pursuits. I am going to refer to a matter in relation to which the member for Toodyay is not alone. I say that taking the financial position of the people on the coast to-day and comparing it with their position ten years ago, they are something like 50 per cent. or many times better off than they were then. That is owing not only to the prosperity of Perth, but to the prosperity of the goldfields. As the goldfields prosper the coast will flourish, and agricultural centres likewise. I have no desire to advocate the interests of the goldfields as against those of the coastal districts of the State, but I think the goldfields have not, so far as the railway to Esperance is concerned, received fair consideration in this Chamber; not during this debate alone, for I have watched the

debates which have taken place in the House year after year, and from what I see in the Chamber I assert that unless this motion be carried it will continue year after year. I am perfectly certain that if the Labour members, and goldfields members who are not Labour members, did their duty in this House, they would give this country a repetition of the position of the Irish party in the House of Commons. They would stand and fight in this Chamber, and they would block every business it was possible to block, until the people on the goldfields received justice at the hands of the representatives of the coastal districts. If the goldfields members who are Labour members, and every other member from the goldfields, took up this position, they would only be taking up an attitude which the people on the goldfields would laud them for. I am sure the people of the goldfields expect that from the present members. [MEMBER: Not at all.] They do. They expect them to make their position strong, and to defend their rights as they should be defended. If the goldfields members threw the same amount of fire and force into their arguments as has been infused into arguments against this railway by the coastal members, it would open the eyes of the people on the coast to the necessity of doing justice to the people on the fields. So far as this cry about the generosity of the coastal people to the goldfields people is concerned, I assert that the goldfields people have had to pay practically for all they have obtained. The goldfields people have built the railways in this country, and have helped to build up the country as much as any others in the community, and far more. That is beyond doubt. Let the goldfields fail to-morrow, and how soon would this brilliant Perth drift back to the condition it was in ten years ago? Members say they hope this matter will be discussed with calmness, and that men will not raise their voices or do anything to arouse people's ire; but if people have right on their side, and if they are not getting justice, is it their bounden duty as men to raise their voices with no uncertain sound. That is what I expect to hear from the representatives of the goldfields. I am speaking perhaps somewhat strongly on this

matter. I have advocated it for many years. I have been nine years on the goldfields, and I know how heavy the cost of living is. There are members to whom the cost of living is perhaps a small item, but I had to work hard for the money I obtained on the goldfields; consequently I know exactly the cost of living, and I assert that it is very high, and that every opportunity should be taken by the Government to reduce the cost of living on the goldfields. The Minister for Works, in very plausible language, of which he is perfectly capable, said it would be refreshing for the Chamber to know that they are going to reduce the rates from the 1st September, and that this will cheapen the cost of living. The hon. gentleman did not say they put the rates up about two and a half months ago or thereabouts to raise the cost of living, and that now they are going to reduce the rates and try to make the people on the goldfields believe the cost of living is going to be lower. The argument is very hollow. I say, in conclusion, I am very pleased to hear that the Minister for Mines (Hon. H. Gregory) is going to support this inquiry. That is proof conclusive to the Chamber, unless they are dead to all sense of reason, that the goldfields people—not alone the members representing the goldfields people, but the goldfields people as a whole, the 35 bodies who signed a petition to this Chamber—are perfectly satisfied that their case is good and sound and will stand the closest investigation. If members on the coast are afraid to put their case to a test, then they cannot feel sure of their ground. The very fact of people on the goldfields allowing this matter to be considered by an independent board is a proof that they have justice on their side, and that they are not afraid of letting the light of day shine upon it. I hope the members in the coastal districts will allow the board of inquiry to be appointed. With these remarks I will resume my seat and support the motion.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Williams) : This subject is one which may be termed an evergreen one. It has come up from year to year in this House. It has been dealt with under many different conditions. We have had railways proposed

not only from the port of Esperance, but from the railway line at Coolgardie to connect with Norseman. It seems to me that notwithstanding the fact that the amendment and the motion may perhaps meet with an adverse fate, we may expect this subject to be again revived. It will be revived from time to time no doubt by those who strongly advocate the construction of this line, doubtless believing it is necessary in the interests of the goldfields; but I think the principal arguments adduced by most of the speakers to-night and by speakers on previous occasions have been more with regard to the cost of living. They have advocated that as a reason why the line should be constructed. Admittedly the construction of the line would reduce the cost of living slightly, if we take into consideration the slight difference between the amount we would have to pay for the carriage of goods between Esperance and some point on the goldfields—take Kalgoorlie—and that which we have to pay for the carriage of goods between the port of Fremantle to the same point upon the goldfields; but when we come to analyse the matter we shall find that the difference is so very small that it is not worth taking into consideration. We look around and see the advantages the people on the goldfields have obtained in so many directions; and, as has been pointed out by some speakers, they obtained them at a very early date in the history of these fields. Let us take the amount that it costs to live. The distance from Esperance to Kalgoorlie is 250 miles; from Fremantle, we know the distance to Kalgoorlie is 387 miles. Take the rates according to the classification table. We find there are alphabetical classes and numerical classes, and the cost of conveying goods from Esperance to Kalgoorlie will be under M class 16s. 8d., A class 25s., B class 33s. 4d., class 1 £3 11s. 8d., class 2 £4 14s. 1d., class 3 £5 16s. 6d. From Fremantle to the same point it is 22s. 10d. by M class, 34s. 3d. by A class, 45s. 7d. by B class, £5 0s. 8d. by class 1, £6 12s. 5d. by class 2, and £8 3s. 9d. by class 3, or a difference in favour of the proposed Esperance route of 6s. 2d. class M., 9s. 3d. class A, 12s. 3d. class B, 29s. class 1, £1 18s. 4d. class 2, and £2 17s. 3d. class 3. I think everyone will admit

that the articles of consumption are carried according to the A and B classes, and classes 1 and 2. The difference in class A is 9s. 3d., or, if we reduce the value per pound, it means in decimals 0.188, or about one-fifth of a penny per pound. That is a very minute increase. If we take the increase on class 1, it is 29s., so after all it is only a very small addition. Looking at the increase in another way, it is not a very big thing, and I do not think it is sufficient to justify the construction of the line. That is one reason. Now I come to the question raised by the member for Beverley, which is an important matter, that in time to come, probably before the line can be constructed, the bulk of the products required for the consumption of the people on the goldfields will be taken, say, from Northam, that is taking a centre of the country. We are to convey the goods from that point to the goldfields, and we find the rate from that point to the goldfields will be 29s. 4d. For the rate from Esperance to Kalgoorlie, taking the same point, which would be 280 miles, according to class A the amount is 25s., or a difference of 4s. 3d. in favour of the Esperance line, which, after all, reduces the difference between the two rates to a very small proportion. If 4s. 3d. per ton on the articles of consumption which we know will be produced and conveyed to the fields is put forward as a reason why the line should be built, it seems to be a very small argument, and not sufficient to cause the people on the goldfields to quarrel with the people on the coast as to any injustice to the goldfields. Notwithstanding the fact that the Minister for Mines has stated, and the member for Mount Margaret has stated, that this country cannot produce that which is required for the consumption of the people, I say without doubt and without any fear of contradiction, that this country will produce all that is required for consumption, and that very soon too. [MR. TAYLOR: Inside of three years?] Inside of three years the country will produce much more than is produced to-day, and we are gaining very rapidly on the requirements of the people. We have seen a great difference in the last five years, and I will give one instance as a reason why I undoubtedly believe this. In my own district, four

years ago the area under cultivation was 4,000 acres. The area under cultivation for the last year, and it has been increased by another 10,000 acres this year, was 37,000 acres, which is a very rapid increase in that time. We read a very interesting report in yesterday's newspaper, emanating from the land agent in my own district, giving evidence of the immense settlement in that district. The amount collected in rents from the people five years ago, in 1897, when the land was first thrown open by the Lands Office, was £2,000. Last year the amount collected was £13,700, thus proving we are slowly and surely gaining ground. When we recollect that the amount paid for the rents of lands is only a small portion of the purchase money, this £37,000 represents a considerable area which has been taken up for settlement. And it is not an area which has been taken up, like land is taken up in some parts of the country, for pastoral purposes; it has been taken up by the people who have come here—the very flower of Australian farmers—and have thrown in their lot with us to produce the requirements of the country. I do not say they have done this from philanthropic motives; they have done it to benefit themselves, and at the same time they are doing good for us. This is an undisputed fact which we can refer to in regard to agricultural development. Taking the very question raised to-night by the Minister for Mines, in speaking as to the requirements of the people, the production of potatoes and onions in the South-Western district, where we have land equal to anything in Australia, the time is not far distant when the whole of the requirements of the people in that direction will be produced. Why we have not produced these articles as rapidly as they have been produced in other countries in Australia in times gone by is because we have not had the people here. So many of the people in the country wished to accumulate wealth as quickly as they could; and people always try to accumulate wealth rapidly. There have been so many inducements for people to do so. The goldfields held out great inducements. Then there are the timber companies, who employ 20,000 people in my part of the country. These companies held out greater inducements by larger

wages than could be offered by farmers for working on the soil. That is becoming past history, and we shall soon find the people successfully producing these articles as in other countries, to advantage. I have every faith in the country's capabilities, and I am sure that which we have heard so often said in this House, that the country is not capable of producing the requirements, that it cannot overtake the needs of the people, is really a matter that should be now passed to oblivion. The Premier, when speaking the other night, in no unmistakable terms—and I was very pleased to hear him express himself as he did—said that to enable people to live cheaply we must produce our own requirements, and to produce our own we must help in the initial stages and give assistance such as that given in other countries. In the first instance, the people are helped by protection, and that protection affords an opportunity for developing the country in a way that all lovers of the country like to see. It is not a good argument to say that the country cannot produce what it requires. The day is not far distant when we shall produce all that we need, and hence the very argument put forward to-night in favour of the Esperance railway is disposed of. We shall soon carry from Bunbury, from Fremantle, from Katanning, and from the northern parts of this country all that is needed to feed the people in the various parts of the country. I have always recognised this, and I have expressed my opinion in regard to it frequently, that the success of the farming community of the country dates from the time of the discovery of gold in Western Australia. We know that if it had not been for the goldfields we should still have gone on in our quiet way, probably making sufficient to live on, and no doubt we should have been a contented people in many respects. We find ourselves in Western Australia, the only State of the group which to-day is successfully carrying on its undertakings, with a people satisfied and flourishing. And there is no doubt that the date of our success goes back to the discovery of the gold. I do not wish it to go forth that I, as a coastal member—I do not like the term coastal; I do not think we should have this division between the

coastal members and the other people of the State, because our interests are in common—do not recognise the benefit the goldfields have been to this country. We in the coastal districts are a people who hope to feed the large numbers of people on the goldfields, and from them we hope to receive the money they are willing to give us, and which they are winning by their exertions from the ground. Notwithstanding all that has been said in favour of the Esperance line, I am convinced, if it were built to-morrow, it would not do all that has been said of it. Even the machinery which is required for the development of the mining industry must come through the port of Fremantle. All that we consume, and that which is produced here, must undoubtedly be carried over the railways; some of the machinery which is imported would go to Esperance, but a large proportion of it will still come to Fremantle, going over the existing line. Therefore, I do not see what there is to justify the building of this railway. Take the port of Esperance as a health resort, it is near to the fields, and if the line were opened up, no doubt people in time would go to that port, and it would become a health resort. But are we to build a line for that purpose alone? Already we have a line of railway from the fields to Albany and a second line to Fremantle. There are excursion rates, as has been pointed out by the Minister for Mines, and it is a question of representation. Let us reduce the rates if need be, rather than carry out a work which will involve an immense outlay, and a large expenditure for interest, which will have to be borne by the country. There is one other matter which has been touched on by the Minister for Mines, the conveyance of the products of the country to the port of Albany, then by ship to Esperance, and thence to the goldfields. That would be a mistake altogether. Take the centre at Wagin, for instance, that centre is 148 miles from the port of Albany, and the cost of conveying goods at the lowest rates—the rates which are termed special for agricultural purposes—would be 14s. 6d.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** I referred to the timber supply.

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** This matter has been alluded to by other members.

Take the lowest cost by sea, say 7s. 6d. per ton. That would be 23s., and the cost from Esperance to Kalgoorlie by rail at the present rates would be 25s., a matter of 47s. Then if we take the present rate by rail from Wagin to Kalgoorlie for these articles of consumption it is 37s., or a gain of 10s. in favour of the present railway. Therefore, how is it possible to expect goods to be carried from these points to Esperance and then by sea and rail so as to satisfy the people on the goldfields? I have mentioned nothing about the deterioration of the goods at Albany, consequent on the handling, and the deterioration at Esperance together with the wharfage, still we find ourselves with a difference of 10s. in favour of the present system. The cry of reducing the cost of living as an argument for the construction of the Esperance railway should be altogether and finally extinguished. If some better argument for the construction of the line can be advanced, I am prepared to listen; but if its supporters advance that as the most cogent reason, then I reply that they rely on a fallacy.

**MR. HOPKINS:** What are you supporting, the motion or the amendment?

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** I shall support neither. This matter has lasted long enough. It has been raised year after year. The cry for the Esperance railway reminds me of a child crying for the top brick of the chimney; the child wants the brick; he does not know whether the brick will be any good to him when he gets it, but nevertheless he continues to cry for it. Certain people on the goldfields are constantly endeavouring to create a division between the coastal and the mining community, a division which should not be allowed to exist. There would be none but peaceful and amicable relations between the people on the coast and the people on the fields, if it were not for certain goldfields agitators, who continually raise the cry of the Esperance railway.

**MEMBER:** Are all the people on the goldfields agitators?

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** No; but some are. I say without fear of contradiction that very few people on the fields ever trouble themselves about the Esperance

railway. The goldfields newspapers write the subject up for fear the goldfields people generally should forget all about it. I do not agree with the member for Dundas that the line will open up an area of good agricultural land. I have visited Esperance; and while I admit that there is some agricultural land within a little distance of the town, I must say that its productive capacity is not equal to that of land in other parts of the State. The rainfall is not sufficient, and the quality of the soil is inferior to that of the land within the rainfall range. Esperance land will produce vegetables of a good type, but not cereals or other foodstuffs. This Esperance railway has been talked over in the House so many times that we ought really to be tired of it. Travelling in the train last night, I was asked my opinion on the Esperance railway by no less than four people whom I had never met before. The interest in that railway is simply due to its having been made a burning question on the goldfields. No doubt, from the geographical point of view, a good deal is to be said in favour of the line. However, having once constructed the present line of railway at immense cost, and being burdened with the payment of interest on that cost, having also built at Fremantle a harbour capable of meeting the vast requirements of our shipping, the country may well wait awhile before turning to the construction of a railway which is in the nature of an experiment. Let us rest satisfied for some time to come with what has already been done. The member for Dundas, of course, advocates the construction of the Esperance railway in the interests of his constituency. We must not forget that the Norseman goldfield is entitled to some means of communication, provided the developments of the field justify the necessary expenditure. If the Norseman mines are developing as many people say they are, then the district has a right to railway communication; but at present I think, notwithstanding all that has been so ably urged by the hon. member, there is not sufficient to justify the construction of a line. In conclusion, I hope it will convey itself to the minds of the people of this country that the question of the food supply of Western Australia is in the safe hands of the West Australian farmers, who will pro-

duce all that is required for the consumption of the people within the next few years.

MR. HOPKINS: Nobody disputes that.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (in reply as mover): I quite recognise that were I to deal adequately with this important subject I should be kept here for some considerable time. I recognise, also, that whatever arguments and proofs one might adduce, certain members have, irrespective of logic and reason, made up their minds as to how they will vote. Various members have undoubtedly decided, and decided a long time ago, before this motion was ever tabled, that no matter what arguments might be adduced in its favour they would oppose the Esperance railway. I shall reply to only a few of the contentions raised by various speakers. First of all, I desire to thank the Premier heartily for the kind consideration he has shown to goldfields members in allowing ample time for the discussion of the motion. I am sure I express the feeling of goldfields members generally when I say that I thank the Premier most sincerely. The hon. gentleman made rather a lengthy speech on the motion, though certainly not nearly so lengthy a speech as my own. In the course of his long series of remarks the Premier, I maintain, failed to raise one single valid argument against the proposed line, and failed likewise to refute a single argument or figure I submitted to the House. The Premier treated me most unfairly in saying that I wanted the line built for the benefit of one mine at Norseman. I wish to repeat that this was a most unfair construction to put on my remarks; because I plainly told the House that I should deal with Norseman generally, and that I should give no figures but those as to the correctness of which I was absolutely certain, referring as they did to a mine under my control. The Premier made a great point of the decrease in acreage held under mineral lease in the Norseman district at the present day, as against the acreage in 1897. I shall not go much into figures to-night; but I ask hon. members to refer to the report of the Mines Department for 1901, from which they may learn that in the case of every mining district except three—Day Dawn, Malcolm and Peak Hill—there has been a great

decrease in the acreage held under mineral lease. I shall simply adduce one instance. The House knows the figures which the Premier gave regarding Norseman. Now, in the case of East Coolgardie I find from the Mines Department report that, in 1897, 665 leases of an acreage of 11,634 were held. In 1901, the leases had fallen to 295, and the acreage to 4,665. At present, only 247 leases are held on the East Coolgardie goldfield. Therefore, if the argument which the Premier applied to Norseman applies also to East Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie must of necessity be a place that is dead and buried. We know, however, what Kalgoorlie is; and I contend accordingly that the argument adduced by the Premier is utterly fallacious. The hon. gentleman told us that if the Esperance line were built, the goldfields would have to pay for two lines. I think I proved conclusively, both in my speech introducing this motion and in speaking on the Address-in-reply to the amendment of the leader of the Opposition and to the general question, that the goldfields have been paying for the whole of the railways of the State. I may add that the goldfields do not greatly object to having the upkeep of one or two more lines cast on them. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond) was the only member who attempted in any way whatever to refute a single figure I gave. I have been told that my speech fairly bristled with figures. It did; and I meant it to do. I gave the figures in order that they might be placed on record in *Hansard*. A report of my speech appears in *Hansard*, with every figure in cold print; and not a single member, except the representative of South Fremantle, has even attempted to pick those figures to pieces. I shall now deal with the criticisms of the member for South Fremantle. He took, as his basis of calculation, the assumption that the freights from the Eastern States to Esperance Bay would remain what they now are, after the Esperance railway has been built; but he knows full well, if he has given the matter a single moment's consideration, that at the present time the tonnage of goods delivered at Esperance is very small, and that freights must, therefore, necessarily be high. I take the hon. member even on his own figures, however. I have proved conclusively that the saving in railway freight to the

Eastern Goldfields from Esperance, as against railway freight from Fremantle, will be 40 per cent. On flour, onions, and similar commodities the cost of carriage *via* Esperance, the hon. member maintained, would be £2 19s. 3d. per ton, with a steamer freight of 35s., as against £2 15s. 5d. *via* Fremantle. The hon. member stated the freight through Esperance at 59s. 3d. With regard to machinery, his figures were £4 4s. 2d. from Fremantle and £4 8s. 5d. from Esperance; whereas the difference of 40 per cent. would make the freight through Esperance £3 16s. 1d. I refer to these figures mainly to draw attention to the fact that the member for South Fremantle is wrong in taking 35s. as the steamer freight which will rule from the Eastern States to Esperance after the building of the Esperance railway. The Melbourne Steamship Company, at any rate, who are laying down a good many boats at home, state that if the railway were built the freight from the Eastern States to Esperance would be less than from the Eastern States to Fremantle, and that the rates of insurance would be the same. I quote this authority in contradiction of the authority which the hon. member has quoted, namely the Adelaide Steamship Company. As regards land settlement, I shall not labour the subject, except to remark that it gives me the opportunity of drawing the attention of the House to the fact that the night before last all the Fremantle members, with the exception of one, mounted the public platform to advocate a railway designed purely to open up an agricultural area. They advocated that railway on the ground that it would cheapen the cost of living in Fremantle. Thus it appears that the Fremantle members are prepared to support the building of a railway designed to cheapen the cost of living for a handful of people in Fremantle, but are not prepared to support the construction of a line which will reduce the cost of living for 60,000 or 70,000 people. Those hon. members, while prepared to cheapen the price of commodities for themselves, are not prepared to assist the large body of residents on the Eastern Goldfields.

MR. HIGHAM: That is not correct.

MR. THOMAS: I am commenting on the speeches delivered by hon. members. The Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines was

asked to sign the petition in favour of the line, but refused to do so in the first place, saying, "We must first of all appoint an independent committee to inquire into every phase of the question, and to give definite answers to a series of questions; then we shall decide whether or not we can sign the petition." The result of the inquiry was that the Kalgoorlie Chamber of Mines did sign the petition. The Fremantle Chamber of Commerce, however, when asked to sign the petition, instead of taking a similar course, discussed the matter for a few minutes in a general way, and decided that the Esperance railway should not be built, that a Royal Commission should not be appointed, and that the matter, in fact, should receive no consideration whatever. I am sick and tired of seeing the Fremantle members try to run Western Australia. I say unhesitatingly on the floor of the House, and I shall continue to say, that their dictation ought not to be submitted to.

MR. HIGHAM: You flatter us.

MR. THOMAS: The Fremantle members have run Western Australia for some time, but they will find at any rate one man who is not prepared to submit to dictation from them. The Fremantle members have dictated to this State quite sufficiently in the past. The member for South Fremantle (Mr. Diamond) referred to the Broken Hill trade, and in reply to an interjection of mine stated that if New South Wales had wanted to keep the trade within its own borders the nearest point with which it could connect with Broken Hill would have meant a line 400 miles long. That is correct, is it not? I do not want to misquote.

MR. DIAMOND: I appealed to other members of the House as to whether I was correct. I was not perfectly sure.

MR. THOMAS: We will take it at about that figure. And in reply to an interjection of mine, the hon. member said the distance from Broken Hill to Port Pirie was about 270 miles. I do not know what is the difference, but one member says it is 310 miles. However, say it is 270 to Petersburg.

MR. DIAMOND: It is 180 from Petersburg to Broken Hill.

MR. THOMAS: But taking it at 270 gives a difference of 130 miles. It will

be agreed the New South Wales Government were prepared to allow the trade of one portion of their country to go through South Australia because that would save 130 miles; and yet we are not prepared to open up another port in our own country, though we could save 150 miles by so doing.

MR. DIAMOND: But it is about 800 miles from Sydney to Broken Hill.

MR. THOMAS: We are talking about the nearest port.

MR. DIAMOND: No. We are talking about the nearest railway point.

MR. THOMAS: A few remarks in regard to the member for Albany (the Treasurer). I cannot understand his attitude to-night. He spoke regarding the permanent survey, and failed to understand why a survey was being made at all. The first member who spoke in this House during the present Parliament was the hon. member himself, when he moved the Address-in-reply; and he said:—

I am pledged to support two railways—a railway from Menzies to Leonora and the Esperance-Goldfields railway. Although we are not to have any construction of railways, we are promised surveys of railways; and I think that if this be the case, one of the first trial surveys should be that of the Esperance to the fields railway. We have heard a great deal lately of the Collie railway, and I think the member for Collie is to be congratulated on the great amount of energy he has shown in his desire to educate the people as to the necessity for that line. But if the arguments which are adduced in justification of a trial survey of that line are conclusive, how infinitely more emphatic are they as applied to the Esperance-fields railway! Surely, then, the fields make out a very strong case indeed.

Then again, when I made a motion that every port should have the trade to which it was geographically entitled, the hon. member said:—

Whether it is a wise thing to open a railway from Esperance to Kalgoorlie is a question we shall probably have to debate later on. That railway is one of the railways to which I am pledged. I have heard it said the railway will mean a loss of revenue that we now have from here to Kalgoorlie. They did not make a great study of the loss of revenue with regard to the Great Southern line when they took away the steamships from Albany. They purchased the line for £1,100,000, and about 18 months afterwards took away the greatest portion of revenue, the passenger traffic.



Later on in that speech he continued :—

There is no necessity for him to bring in a catch motion so far as I am concerned, because I am pledged before my electors to support the railway from Esperance to the fields.

And again :—

It stands to reason if you have to take your stuff 160 miles, as against 400 miles, unless there is a zone system, that must materially cheapen the cost to the consumer. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

During that speech which I quoted the other night, he said we should not feed this country through one mouth, that every mouth must be open, and that every pound by which we could cheapen the cost of production would mean one pound more spent on the development of the State. I cannot reconcile those speeches of the hon. member with the speech he has made to us to-night.

THE PREMIER: It shows how a man improves.

MR. THOMAS: The member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) adduced no arguments worthy of answer, except that the financial position of the State does not justify the line, and also that the cost of a Royal Commission would be exorbitant. As regards the cost of the commission, if such be appointed, I would ask what was the cost of the commission which has recently completed its labours in respect of the Coolgardie Water Scheme—[MR. HOPKINS: And which saved that scheme]—and in regard to public works generally? That commission had a tremendous area of ground to cover, and it was covered in quick time and with a low expenditure of money; and therefore I certainly claim that a Royal Commission of this sort would not necessitate a longer time than the Coolgardie Royal Commission, and would not cost more. The financial position of the State, it is said, will not allow of the construction of the railway. I have maintained, and will always maintain here, that the best way to improve the financial position of the State, to increase our borrowing power, is to show to the public at home that we intend to develop the vast resources placed in our care. And if we were to go to the London market with a bold policy of development, with the system of railway construction outlined to-night by the Minister for Mines, and farther outlined by him when

speaking on the Address-in-reply, and were to show conclusively that we were united to do the best we could do to open up our country and to bring as much money as possible into our coffers, we should have no difficulty in raising the necessary funds. Regarding this matter I intend to ask the Government whether, if definite promises with deposits be made to them, they will take the matter into consideration. I will show them whether the money is available, and will guarantee to make an offer to the Premier of a loan to carry out this work if he will promise to accept it and build the line. The member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) backed up by the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), raised the point that the centre for food supply would in future years be Northam.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Not the centre the base.

MR. THOMAS: Those hon. members gave figures showing what produce would be sent from Northam to the fields, neglecting that to be sent from Esperance to the fields, thus presupposing that the whole of the produce would go from Northam, and that there would be no produce traffic through Esperance. No farther comment is necessary. I come to the Minister for Works (Hon. C. H. Rason). I refer to him simply because he stated that he had supported a motion for the construction of a line from Coolgardie to Norseman, and had never supported in this House any line from Esperance to Coolgardie. The member for Dundas at that time (Mr. Conolly) moved for the construction of a railway from Esperance to the Dundas goldfields; and the ayes in the division list read: "Messrs. Gregory, Illingworth, Kingsmill, Leake, Morgans, Rason, Simpson, Wallace, and Conolly." I give that simply to show that the Minister did support a railway from Esperance to the goldfields. He quoted to us Sir John Forrest's statement at an interview in England regarding the Esperance line; and he referred to Mr. Richard Hamilton also. Mr. Hamilton's name has been freely used in this discussion; and I wish to say that Mr. Hamilton's statement was made at a banquet some time ago in Kalgoorlie, and he then said he had not studied the

question, had no facts and figures to guide him, and that if these could be adduced he was prepared to alter his opinion. Mr. Hamilton was the president of the Chamber of Mines, a member of the committee appointed to inquire into the matter; and my only answer to the quotations from Mr. Hamilton is that the report of the committee was unanimously adopted. And now I have finished regarding all the speakers who have preceded me, and the tenor of the whole has been the continuance in this State of the wait-a-while policy. I am not content with that. I am not content to sit quietly in this House and allow stagnation to continue. I am not going, if I can help it, by my voice or vote, to allow a continuance of the policy of centralisation in this State, which is still carried on, and which apparently has so strong a supporter in the Premier. I could, if I wished, bring forward farther arguments, but I will not do so, because the time is late and I do not wish to weary members. I again most urgently appeal to members to look the matter fairly in the face, and say if I have not proved every one of my points up to the hilt. The speeches which have been made prove it. I appeal to members if they cannot see their way to go as far as the motion indicates, if they cannot vote for the motion, to vote for the amendment and not to baulk any investigation, but allow the just demands of the goldfields to have this question made a subject of inquiry. The goldfields would be satisfied to have the matter inquired into by a Royal Commission appointed by the Government, and it is hardly fair for any member to baulk inquiry and say, "You shall not pass the motion or have any inquiry." I again say I hope that if members cannot see their way to vote for the motion, they will at least see their way to vote in favour of the amendment.

Question—that the words proposed to be struck out stand part of the resolution—put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	12
Noes	...	...	...	29

Majority against ... 17

AYES.  
Mr. Butcher  
Mr. Hassell  
Mr. Hastie  
Mr. Holman  
Mr. Johnson  
Mr. Monger  
Mr. Morgans  
Mr. Reid  
Mr. Reside  
Mr. Taylor  
Mr. Thomas  
Mr. Wallace (Teller).

NOES.  
Mr. Atkins  
Mr. Daglish  
Mr. Diamond  
Mr. Doherty  
Mr. Ewing  
Mr. Foulkes  
Mr. Gardiner  
Mr. Gregory  
Mr. Harper  
Mr. Hayward  
Mr. Hicks  
Mr. Higham  
Mr. Holmes  
Mr. Hopkins  
Mr. Hutchinson  
Mr. Illingworth  
Mr. James  
Mr. Kingsmill  
Mr. McDonald  
Mr. Nanson  
Mr. O'Connor  
Mr. Piesse  
Mr. Purkiss  
Mr. Quinlan  
Mr. Rason  
Mr. Stone  
Mr. Throssell  
Mr. Yelverton  
Mr. Jacoby (Teller).

Motion (Mr. Thomas's) thus negatived.

THE PREMIER asked if the House desired any farther discussion on the question. If so, he would move the adjournment of the House; but if there was a desire to have a division at once, it might be disposed of.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Divide!

Amendment (inquiry by commission) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	...	...	...	19
Noes	...	...	...	22

Majority against ... 3

AYES.  
Mr. Atkins  
Mr. Butcher  
Mr. Gregory  
Mr. Hassell  
Mr. Hastie  
Mr. Holman  
Mr. Hopkins  
Mr. Illingworth  
Mr. Johnson  
Mr. Monger  
Mr. Morgans  
Mr. Nanson  
Mr. Purkiss  
Mr. Reid  
Mr. Reside  
Mr. Taylor  
Mr. Thomas  
Mr. Yelverton  
Mr. Wallace (Teller).

NOES.  
Mr. Daglish  
Mr. Diamond  
Mr. Doherty  
Mr. Ewing  
Mr. Foulkes  
Mr. Gardiner  
Mr. Harper  
Mr. Hayward  
Mr. Hicks  
Mr. Higham  
Mr. Holmes  
Mr. Hutchinson  
Mr. James  
Mr. Kingsmill  
Mr. McDonald  
Mr. O'Connor  
Mr. Piesse  
Mr. Quinlan  
Mr. Rason  
Mr. Stone  
Mr. Throssell  
Mr. Jacoby (Teller).

Motion and amendment thus negatived.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10.55 o'clock, until the next day.

# Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 28th August, 1902.

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

## PRAYERS.

### QUESTION—SPARK ARRESTER, TRIAL.

MR. J. EWING: I desire to ask the Minister for Works and Railways, by leave without notice, whether engines 276 and 279, class F, recently imported into the State and now in traffic, are fitted with the Drummond patent spark arrester; and if not, what engines will be so fitted?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS: In reply to the hon. member, I beg to state that those two engines are not fitted with the Drummond spark arrester, but that it is proposed to fit two class E engines with the arrester.

### QUESTION—POLICE PAY, RESIGNATION.

MR. F. C. MONGER asked the Colonial Secretary: Why ex-Police Constable Casserley was not entitled to full remuneration for services rendered upon his resigning from the force.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: The Police Benefit Fund Board in this instance granted an amount which, in their opinion, was merited by the ex-constable's record of service under the regulations.

### QUESTIONS (2)—MAIL STEAMERS, PORT CHARGES.

MR. HASSELL asked the Premier: What amount (if any) do the P. & O. and Orient Steam Navigation Companies

pay for pilotage, light dues, and tugs at Fremantle.

THE PREMIER replied: The above companies pay £30 each per steamer in lieu of tonnage dues, light dues, and pilotage. A tug, if available, is provided by the State at £5 per trip, which arrangement terminates on 31st October next, after which date the companies will have to provide their own tugs. Previous to 31st July, the date of present arrangement, the steamers had the services of two tugs free of charge.

### S.S. "SOPHOCLES."

MR. HASSELL asked the Premier: What amount (if any) did the "Sophocles" pay for pilotage and light dues at Fremantle.

THE PREMIER replied: No charge was made; therefore nothing was paid.

### QUESTION—RAILWAY ENGINES, COST.

MR. RESIDUE asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What is f.o.b. London price of the fifteen class F engines, now landing. 2, What is the additional cost per engine for putting same on traffic. 3, What is the highest price paid in any of the Australian States for a narrow gauge (3ft. 6in.) locomotive. 4, Whether the Minister is aware of any instance where over £3,000 has been paid for a 3ft. 6in. gauge locomotive engine. 5, What is the cost of putting locomotive engines on the road. (a.) Now. (b.) Prior to 1900. 6, Is it a fact that the new F class engines recently introduced will not carry sufficient water in their tenders to take a full load from Midland Junction to Chidlow's Well.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, £69,975. 2, Freight, insurance, erection, etc., £1,648, including £933 for duty. 3, No information available to answer this question. 4, Yes, class O engines, imported, weighing 58½ tons in running order, in 1897, cost £3,156 each on traffic; the Compounds, weighing 73 tons in running order, cost, with erection, £3,236 each. 5, (a.) Class C, 1902, weight in working trim 64½ tons, £2,998 per engine, which includes £411 duty; class E, 1901, 73 tons, £3,236; class F, 1902, 81½ tons, £6,313, which includes £933 duty; class N, 1901, 44½ tons, £3,074; (b.) class A, year 1885, 30 tons, £2,010; class B, year 1884, 32 tons,