

the statement that he would not take advantage to rush Bills through the House; and he doubted now whether it would be legal for the Chairman to report progress, or for the President to put the question to the House.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: With great respect, the Colonial Secretary had better read up the rules of the House, and study his *May*. It was a most silly mistake.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY asked the ruling of the President on the question.

THE PRESIDENT: A Bill of this kind should be passed with a quorum in the House. Although the Standing Orders were suspended for the passing of Bills through the different stages, he did not think that suspension extended to passing a Bill when there was not a quorum; and according to the Standing Orders one-third of the members should be present.

HON. J. W. HACKETT said he had never heard of such a course being adopted before, and perhaps he might ask what now became of the Bill? What was the proper course to be adopted? On the report it appeared to have been discovered that a quorum was not present.

THE PRESIDENT: If a quorum were not formed he would leave the Chair, and the Bill would appear on the Notice Paper to-morrow.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: At what stage?

THE PRESIDENT: In Committee, with the motion of the Colonial Secretary before hon. members.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: And what motion was that?

THE PRESIDENT: That the amendment of the Legislative Assembly be agreed to.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PRESIDENT (after bells had been rung and the usual interval elapsed), finding there was not a quorum, adjourned the House at 10:15 o'clock until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, November 20, 1900.

Papers presented—Municipal Institutions Bill, third reading (debate), division—Annual Estimates, Colonial Secretary's Department, Printing (onward), completed and reported—Loan Estimates (resumed), Nannine Railway; progress—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, Insurance Premiums paid by Government, return as ordered. 2, Federal Referendum Expenses, return as ordered.

By the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Geraldton-Northampton Railway, cost of special train, return as ordered.

Ordered to lie on the table.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS BILL.

THIRD READING.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL moved that the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. JAMES: Every member understood that a Bill of this nature, running into hundreds of clauses and covering 156 pages of print, could not be adequately considered by this House during the present session. The Bill received careful attention in the Legislative Council, and when it reached this House we understood that unless we were prepared to accept it as it came from the Council and without amendment, there would be no prospect of our being able to pass the Bill through this House during the short term of the session now remaining. Hon. members therefore abstained from moving amendments; but he regretted to see that one amendment was made in the Bill last evening, and he now desired to move that the Bill be recommitted for the purpose of striking out that amendment. If the Bill was to be amended at all, it should be amended as much as members considered to be necessary. If, on the other hand, members generally desired to pass the Bill this session, the measure should be accepted as it came down from the Council. He therefore moved that the Bill be recommitted for the purpose of striking out the amendment.

MR. HOLMES seconded the motion.

Motion put, and negatived on the voices.

MR. JAMES called for a division.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	3
Noes	17

Majority against ... 14

AYES.
Mr. Holmes
Mr. Wallace
Mr. James (Teller).

NOES.
Sir John Forrest
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Harper
Mr. A. Y. Hassell
Mr. Higham
Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Locke
Mr. Mitchell
Mr. Moorhead
Mr. Pennefather
Mr. Rason
Mr. Solomon
Mr. Throssell
Mr. Wood
Mr. Kingsmill (Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

Question (third reading) put and passed.

Bill read a third time, and returned to the Legislative Council with an amendment.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed from previous sitting.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S DEPARTMENT
(Hon. G. Randell).

Vote—*Printing*, £31,551:

MR. ILLINGWORTH, referring to item "Extra Labour, £11,000," said this question of extra labour by men engaged in the Government Printing Office had been already debated, and we simply wanted to get fair-play for these men. There were 46 compositors engaged in extra labour, and many had been there three or four years. Their rate of wages was only 8s. 6d., as against 9s. 3d. and 10s. and 9s. and 9s. 4d. in the other colonies. Their wages amounted to £2 11s. a week, and the men did not get the advantage of holidays to the extent of the permanent staff, but only casual holidays. He wanted an assurance that the matter would be looked into. Some of the printing offices in the city had begun to reduce their rate of wages to that paid by the Government, whereas the standard

rate was £2 15s., and there was danger of a labour trouble. The employees in other printing establishments did not get the holidays which Government employees usually had, but these 46 men had not the same holidays as other Government employees. If the men received something like the usual standard of pay, that might prevent serious trouble.

THE PREMIER said he believed the rate paid in the Government Printing Office for extra labour was not so high as that paid in private offices. Men should not be kept an indefinite time on the temporary staff, but if they had been there some years they might be added to the permanent list. Such employees in the Government Printing Office should be placed as nearly as possible on an equality with the same class of employees in the day printing offices in the city with regard to rate of pay, leave of absence, holidays, and all other conditions. He did not know whether that would work out quite to the advantage of the employees, but it would remove the cause of complaint. He had had this paper on his table for some time, because the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) had a motion on the subject, and this was the reply.

MR. PIESSE: The employees would not be satisfied when these conditions were granted.

MR. QUINLAN: The men should receive the same rate of pay as those engaged in outside offices. One grievance they had was that time was stopped from them in cases of illness.

THE PREMIER: Did the employees in private offices receive pay for the time during which they were sick? If so, the Government would treat the compositors referred to in exactly the same way.

MR. VOSPER said he desired to congratulate the Government on having taken action in this matter. The employees would lose some privileges by being placed on an equality with those in outside offices, but they could be trusted to take care of themselves. Perhaps the Government ought also to do something to weed out persons believed to be useless, because by so doing they would to a certain extent economise, and perhaps make up the difference to the revenue caused by the increased pay. If we were going to pay the best wages we should

get the best men. When his motion came on he would have pleasure in withdrawing it.

Vote put and passed.

Registry, £8,440 :

MR. WALLACE, referring to the words "Registrar of Brands," in item 1, said the present system of administration left the door open to a very dishonest practice, which was taken advantage of largely by those engaged in the pastoral industry of the colony. Why had not the Government long before this transferred the department from the Colonial Secretary to the Stock Department? In the other colonies it was a branch of the Stock Department. A large amount of interest was taken in the question, and it was necessary to introduce some proper system for registration of brands. Referring to the Brands Act of 1881, it was there set forth that the registrar should deliver a list of the brands registered during each quarter of the year, and that the brands so registered should be printed and issued to all Resident Magistrates in the colony, to be kept by them for public information. During the fourteen years he had been in the colony, no such system had been pursued. He knew that in Queensland a system of branding had been in operation during some 20 years; the brands there consisting of two letters and a numeral. A particular brand was issued to each applicant, differing in some distinguishing manner from other brands issued to other applicants. There were different sizes of brands according to the different classes of stock; and the system was intended to enable pound-keepers and persons who had stock impounded to readily identify any brand and trace the registered owner. There appeared to be no system of branding in this colony; and even the officers concerned in the issuing of brands did not appear to know the real object of the Brands Act. He was told that the Government Printing Office had no types suitable for printing all the various brands which persons desired to register, and that therefore the system of issuing registered brands once a quarter could not be carried out. Of course if the necessary types were not available, the system would not work.

THE PREMIER: Several Bills for amending the Brands Act had been introduced,

but the Government were unable to pass them. The Queensland Act, to which the hon. member had referred, was also introduced here, but the House would not pass it.

MR. WALLACE: The present system was no protection to the owners of stock, and in cases of prosecution the necessary evidence as to identity of brands was very difficult to obtain, because many brands were not sufficiently distinctive. He believed there were hundreds of brands used in this colony which had never been registered.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. WALLACE: There seemed to be nobody looking after the brands, and there was a total want of system. One officer had said that if a horse had two or more brands on it already, why disfigure it by adding another brand? That showed the officer did not understand the real object of having distinctive registered brands.

THE PREMIER: The brands were all registered and published in the *Government Gazette*.

MR. WALLACE: Many of the old inhabitants of the colony had their own brands, and were unwilling to part with them, so that they did not readily take to any new and better system; still a better system was necessary, and he thought that if the branding of stock were transferred to the care of the Stock Department, this would lead to the adoption of a better system of branding. The impounding provisions of the Trespass Act also required alteration. Persons might impound stock in their own yards, by running them in; then incorrectly advertise the brands, and thus might acquire valuable animals by bidding a nominal price, and practically by fraud.

MR. DARLOT: The Chief Inspector of Stock had recently admitted to him that he was not anxious to register brands, for to do so meant more work for his staff without increased salaries. This officer knew something of branding fox terriers and water dogs, but nothing of branding horses and bullocks. The last speaker's remarks were quite true. As an instance, there was a pastoralist whose brand was U; within 10 miles of him a neighbour registered U with a bar underneath, and another neighbour U with 1 alongside it; consequently the first-men-

tioned proprietor could not distinguish his own stock. It was a disgrace to the Government that the registration of brands, for which the pastoralists paid, should be administered by an officer wholly ignorant of the subject. It was daylight robbery to ask people to register brands and yet give them no security. Owners, knowing that nothing was gained by registration, had ceased to register. One man had told him (Mr. Darlôt) that three years ago he registered a brand, and on recently going to register another he found that his former brand was the last one registered. Pastoralists had lost confidence in the administration of the Brands Act by the present Government. During the recess, the matter should be looked into with a view of introducing early next session the system of Queensland or of South Australia.

THE PREMIER: The last speaker had been somewhat severe on the Government regarding the administration of the Brands Act; but if this were unsatisfactory, why were complaints withheld till the close of the session? In this and the other Chamber were many pastoralists who, if the matter were pressing, could have introduced a Bill, or asked the Government to do so, for amending the Brands Act; but neither in this nor the previous session had complaints been made. On two occasions the present Government introduced amending Bills. About three years ago the Government introduced a Bill providing for the Queensland system of brands, consisting of numerals and letters; but the House would not accept the Bill, which was withdrawn. Evidently the pastoralists had themselves to blame, for the gold-fields members and town members were not adverse to such legislation. If the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) had introduced a Bill this session, he would have found support from all sides. The Government would be most happy to assist in drafting or introducing such a Bill at the request of hon. members. The Minister of Mines had in hand the draft of the Bill previously submitted. To give effect to the Brands Act, there was required, not an experienced pastoralist or butcher, but a good system of brands easily distinguishable. People who had valuable stock did not like their animals marked too much with

branding. We wanted a simple brand, and could not get one clearly distinguishable. Therefore all these hieroglyphics were used, and very often they ran into one another, so that it was hard to distinguish them. Some years ago an endeavour was made to classify all the brands in existence, all those that looked like "A" being under A, and those that looked like "B" under B, and so on. The same with regard to numerals. These were published in the *Government Gazette*. They were lithographed carefully, so that the exact brand was delineated. Perhaps that was 12 or 15 years ago, and he did not know whether the system had been kept up since. The number of stock owners in the colony had not increased in a very remarkable manner during recent years, although he was glad to say the stock had increased. There were no new squatters in the hon. member's district, for the best land was taken up, and new-comers would have to go further back, where there was less water and the ground was less fertile. He did not think investigation would show the action of the department deserved the strictures passed upon it by the member for the DeGrey (Mr. Darlôt). Of course the department might have registered brands too much alike, which anyone might do, and if so, it was to be regretted. He (the Premier) would take a note of it, and he agreed with the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) and the member for the DeGrey in reference to a new Brands Act. We tried to get one, and it must have been the fault of the squatters that the Bill prepared did not become law. He would see if we could not have a Bill introduced next session.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The stock owners were mainly responsible and to blame for the fact that a new Brands Bill had not been passed in this House, and he was sorry to hear the strictures from the member for the DeGrey (Mr. Darlôt) on the action of the Government. The hon. member could not be conversant with the facts, otherwise he would not have given utterance to those remarks. Some six years ago a brands Bill was introduced, that being mainly due to the registrar himself, but the Bill met with considerable opposition on the part of members representing the pastoral districts, and had to be withdrawn. The

Bill, which was a very good one, provided for the three-letter brand in this colony. The Attorney General at that time, speaking on the Bill introduced, said considerable opposition had been given to it by members representing the country districts; also that communication was held on the subject with other colonies, including New Zealand, and they all recommended the adoption of the three-letter system as the best. The then member for the Vasse (Mr. Cookworthy) said he thought it would be better to put the matter off, and Mr. Clarkson, the then member for Toodyay, remarked that there had been no outcry among the stock owners as to the existing system. Although not opposed to the Bill in the same way as those hon. gentlemen, he (the Minister of Mines) rather objected at that time to the brands owned by stock owners being taken from them, and to compelling the stock owners to adopt the new system entirely. However, he was quite prepared for the Bill to go into Committee, and be thoroughly threshed out. Since that time the Premier had asked him to bring forward a Bill, but owing to the opposition of the stock owners the Bill was never really introduced. The best thing we could do was to adopt the three-letter system as soon as possible. Stock owners did not like parting with brands they had held for a great number of years, but the step would have to be taken some day, and the sooner the better for the stock owners, in the long run. An excellent Bill was now in print, and it would, he believed, meet with the approval of the majority of members representing pastoral districts. He hoped something would be done in this direction next session. Although the Registrar of Brands might not be a practical stock owner, he had been administering the Brands Act for a great number of years, and perhaps saw defects which the stock owner did not see, it being impossible for the registrar to publish the brands registered in this colony, which had been really a system of hieroglyphics. It would cost a great deal to have the blocks made of some of these extraordinary brands which had been used in the colony for years past. The officer was fully alive to the position, and no one was more anxious that something should be done in the direction indicated.

The registrar had in his office all the particulars in regard to the subject, which would be very useful to the Government.

MR. DARLOT: The registration of brands should not be connected with the office of the Chief Inspector of Stock. No pastoralist would grumble at paying a small tax which would bring in from £3,000 to £5,000 a year, if the Government would not credit the general expenditure of the colony with the amount, but would place it to the credit of the Stock Department, and have the Stock Department carried on properly. One acting inspector at Geraldton passed five bullocks some time last winter that were simply swarming with tick. Sooner than allow those animals to go upon his (Mr. Darlot's) territory he would have shot them. He told the man so, and he took a rifle and cartridges. The Chief Inspector of Stock went up there, and it was only after examination with a microscope that he could tell the difference between cattle lice and the supposed cattle tick. The man who passed those five bullocks and allowed them to go into pastoral country so infested with an insect of any kind ought to be discharged from the service. Apparently when once a civil servant got a billet he was what was commonly called a "lifer." He (Mr. Darlot) moved that the salary of the Registrar of Brands be reduced by £50, and that the position of Registrar of Brands be transferred to the Stock Department.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member could not move the latter part of the suggested amendment, but he could move that there be a reduction.

MR. DARLOT moved that the salary be reduced by £50.

MR. WALLACE: The Premier was quite right in what he had said, but apparently he had not grasped the point as to damage caused to the hides by branding. An outcry was raised by tanners some years ago against the branding of cattle on certain portions of the hide, such as the rump and the ribs. That would have to be considered under the Brands Act, and some provision should be made to prohibit branding on the rump and ribs of cattle, and on the saddle of horses. The Minister of Mines had approved of the system of three letters in preference to the Queensland system of two letters

and a numeral. It was said that the other colonies had used up the numerals, and if so there was no reason why this colony should not adopt some system like the signs on playing-cards, such as an arrangement of hearts, clubs, or spades, and this could be done without blotching the brand. The blame for the present want of system should really fall on the Minister in charge, and the fact was that the Commissioner of Crown Lands was too much concerned in giving away land for nothing, and showed too little attention to matters affecting the branding of stock.

MR. MITCHELL: Something ought to be done for introducing a proper system of branding. He had been living amongst farmers and squatters for 23 years, and had rarely heard complaints; but he remembered that when a system of three letters was introduced, the objection coming from some stock-owners was that it was too expensive to have so large a brand, and they preferred a smaller one. It was said that the publication of brands could not be continued for want of separate blocks for each brand; but surely the expense of providing blocks should not stand in the way of a proper system of registration and publication. Some of the money now spent in preparing and printing voluminous statistics for members of this House in various forms, and to an extent that caused those statistics to be seldom read, might be applied to the carrying out of a proper system of brands for stock. As Mr. Gladstone had once said, people in England were willing to be taxed but not to be teased; and it must be confessed that in Western Australia too much of the legislation was really teasing to the people who had to put up with it. A Bill for putting the branding of stock on a proper basis should be introduced, and without further delay.

MR. DARLOT: With regard to the same brand issued to two different persons in the colony, he could prove that this happened in the case of Mr. James Aiken, of Milly Milly on the Murchison, who registered in 1883 a diamond brand with a line across the top called "diamond T." Mr. A. W. Edgar, of Gingin, showed some cattle at the show in Guildford the other day, and when his attention was called to the fact that his brand resembled

one which had been granted to Mr. Aiken many years ago, that gentleman asked him (Mr. Darlot) to bring the matter before Parliament. The fact was that Mr. Edgar had been defrauded of 7s. 6d. for the registration of a brand which had been previously issued to another stock-owner, and an action at law might result at any time.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps Mr. Edgar had gone to the department to alter that.

MR. DARLOT: He was in town to-day to see about it. This pastoral business needed more attention from the Government. What had the Government done to keep the rabbits back, but liberate a few cats in the bush to die of starvation? This good old industry which had kept the colony going for many years was being neglected by a Government who were too much concerned with novel things.

THE PREMIER: Members of the Government were as much interested in it as was the hon. member.

MR. DARLOT: The members of the Government were neglecting their own interests by sticking to the parliamentary honours they had held too long, instead of attending to matters affecting stock.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member should change sides.

MR. DARLOT: If he did he would be supported by public opinion in the other colonies. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.] The rabbits should have been met at the border, whereas the Government were still considering the sending out of parties to destroy them. Let the registration of brands be transferred to the Stock Department.

Amendment put and negatived, and the item passed.

Item—Temporary clerical assistance, £3,000:

THE PREMIER moved that the words "temporary clerical assistance in connection with general" be struck out, and "of colony, 1901," inserted after "census"; also that the figures "£3,000" be struck out, and two new items inserted in lieu, namely: "enumerators, sub-enumerators, and clerical assistants, £1,750"; and "contingencies and incidental expenses, £1,250."

Amendments put and passed. Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Friendly Societies, £880—agreed to.

Charities, £23,204 11s.—agreed to.

Government Gardens and Government House Domain, £1,678—agreed to.

Public Health, £2,990—agreed to.

Educational, £82,900:

MR. GREGORY: It was hardly fair the Committee should have to pass this vote, without a report from the department as to work done during the year. There had been only a supplementary report showing the number of teachers. There was great necessity for schools in new goldfields districts. A resolution passed last year had been followed by increased activity in this direction, but something more was required. Greater educational facilities would lead to increased settlement at places like Mount Morgans, Leonora, and Kookynie.

THE PREMIER: There was £54,000 provided for schools in this year's Estimates.

MR. GREGORY: The school teacher at Mount Malcolm received £160 per annum, whereas an ordinary miner earned £3 10s. to £4 a week. Higher salaries should be paid.

THE PREMIER: Salaries were fixed by the regulations.

MR. GREGORY: Let the regulations be altered. The Colonial Secretary had been very considerate to outlying places, but a school should be established in each district where there were not less than 15 children of school age. Miners' Institutes should also be utilised. [MR. MORAN: Hear, hear.]

THE PREMIER: The expense would be great.

MR. GREGORY: But it would be recouped, because men would then bring their wives and families to the colony.

MR. A. Y. HASSELL: Several goldfields' schools were now empty.

MR. GREGORY: In the absence of a report, hon. members were in ignorance of the facts.

MR. MITCHELL, referring to item, "Examiners' Fees, £130," asked for explanation.

THE PREMIER: These were paid to examiners of schools. Examination papers were not prepared for nothing.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Examiners of candidates for scholarships and public exhibitions were paid.

MR. MITCHELL, referring to item "Evening schools, £400," asked were not such schools self-supporting? If not, they ought to be.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Pupils paid certain fees, but not for all work in connection with schools.

THE PREMIER: There was an increase. The amount paid by the Government last year was £144, whereas this year the estimate was £400.

Vote put and passed.

Post and Telegraph. £263,631 7s. 6d.:

MR. WILSON: The Post and Telegraph Department would be handed over to the charge of the Federal Government, probably next year, and the salaries in these Estimates would be those at which our officers would be taken over. Many anomalies existed. The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) pointed out discrepancies existing between officers working in this department and officers working in other Government departments in Western Australia. He (Mr. Wilson) wanted to point out, briefly the great discrepancies in relation to the salaries of some of the heads of departments, as compared with salaries paid in some of the other colonies.

THE PREMIER: Which would the hon. member take?

MR. WILSON: All the colonies.

THE PREMIER: Take South Australia. We had some information about that.

MR. WILSON said he would take South Australia when he had the information. The Postmaster General in South Australia received £1,000 per annum, whereas in Western Australia the salary was £650.

THE PREMIER: The Postmaster General was Government Astronomer, he believed, and he was a man of world-wide reputation.

MR. WILSON said he did not know. He had not the amount paid in South Australia to the superintendent of telegraphs, but the sum paid in New South Wales was £740, and our superintendent of telegraphs got £500. The chief accountant here seemed to be fairly well paid, as compared with the chief accountant of South Australia, the amount here being £460 as against £425 in South Australia, but if we took into consideration the extra cost of living in Western Australia, compared with the cost of

living in South Australia, the chief accountant here was not receiving more than was paid in South Australia. The chief inspector in South Australia got £320, and the chief inspector here £425. The telegraph manager and electrician in South Australia got £320, and the telegraph manager and electrician here £425. He had not the figures showing the salary paid to the manager of the Savings Bank in South Australia, but the amount paid to the manager here was £415, and that paid to the manager in New South Wales £800.

THE PREMIER: The bank in New South Wales was very much bigger than the bank here.

MR. WILSON: The manager of the Money Order Office in South Australia received £425, and here the amount was £395.

THE PREMIER: That officer got £400 this year.

MR. WILSON: The superintendent of mails in South Australia received £425, and the superintendent of mails here £400, including a rise of £5. The superintendent of mails here did about double the amount of work done by the superintendent of mails in South Australia, because the superintendent of mails in South Australia only handled one mail at a time, whereas the superintendent of mails here had to deal with both mails. The officers in charge of the different rooms of the mail branch in Victoria received from £220 to £435, in New South Wales £170 to £300, in Queensland £230 to £245, and Western Australia £150 to £230, so that our maximum was the minimum in Queensland, and almost the minimum of Victoria.

THE PREMIER: Let the hon. member take the operators in South Australia.

MR. WILSON said he had not the information.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was prepared to give only the figures that were suitable.

MR. WILSON: The member for North-East Coolgardie thoroughly dealt with the operators the other night.

THE PREMIER: Whoever supplied the figures took care to leave that information out.

MR. WILSON: The gentleman who supplied him (Mr. Wilson) with informa-

tion was not asked to give him information about the operators.

THE PREMIER: We would find that the pay in West Australia was from £210 to £295, as against £150 to £190 in South Australia.

MR. WILSON: The member for North-East Coolgardie said the other night the operators here were paid equally as well as operators in the other colonies.

THE PREMIER: We were a long way above them.

MR. WILSON: Living in Western Australia was 25 per cent. higher than in the Eastern colonies. [One or two

MEMBERS: No.] It was. One could live in Queensland 30 per cent. cheaper than here. His object was not to say the officers in the different positions in the Postal and Telegraph Department deserved more salary, but simply to point out that we were going to hand over this great department to the Federal Government.

THE PREMIER: We had to pay for five years.

MR. WILSON: The matter was going out of our control, and the officers would be valued by the Federal Government as we valued them. In the other colonies the matter was receiving due consideration.

THE PREMIER: What increase were they giving in South Australia this year?

MR. WILSON said he did not know and did not care.

THE PREMIER: About £4,000 altogether.

MR. WILSON: In this colony Mr. Howlett, who was a very capable officer, got a rise of £5.

THE PREMIER: £400 was a very good salary.

MR. WILSON: A rise of £5 was an insult to an able officer who had been 20 or 30 years in the service, when other were getting increases of £15 or £20.

THE PREMIER: The line must be drawn somewhere.

MR. WILSON: Mr. Howlett was one of the best officers in the Postal Department.

THE PREMIER said he thought so.

MR. WILSON: That officer had been disgracefully treated.

MR. GEORGE: The officer had no friends in court; that was the trouble.

MR. WILSON: Then there was the overseer of letter carriers, who was a very hard-working man, and he got an increase of £10, his salary being raised from £220 to £230. That officer had been sixteen or seventeen years in the department. One wanted, however, to deal generally, and not with individuals. In New South Wales especially, what were called the appeals were to be heard. Our officers should be treated the same way as officers in other parts of Australia. Seeing the advances to the post and telegraph officers were only about 50 per cent. of those given in other branches of the service, the Government should appoint a small committee to classify the officers and see whether they received adequate remuneration, so that when they went under the Federal Government they would be properly graded.

MR. MORAN: Where should we find the money?

MR. WILSON: It was the duty of the Government to find the money. We might well expend a portion of the £7,000 or £8,000 surplus.

MR. GEORGE: The Government had not a penny of surplus.

THE PREMIER: £14,000 was required for payment of members.

MR. WILSON: If the officers in the department were unfairly treated, there was bound to be dissatisfaction.

THE PREMIER: There was no unfairness.

MR. WILSON: The officers in this department would be satisfied if treated on the same lines as those in other departments. They had not been so treated, however, for the average increase in this department was £9 14s., whereas in the others it was £16 7s.

THE PREMIER: We allowed them houses and all sorts of things.

MR. WILSON: We only asked that a committee should be appointed to inquire into the matter.

THE PREMIER: There had been an increase of £20,000 on their salaries and allowances this year.

MR. WILSON: Were there any new officers appointed?

THE PREMIER: Very few.

MR. WILSON: Two or three might be appointed as a committee to grade the officers, so that they should start on an

equality with their *confrères* in the other colonies.

At 6.30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7.30, Chair resumed.

THE PREMIER: It was to be regretted there should be any adverse comment in regard to the Postal and Telegraph Department. He was aware there was some dissatisfaction amongst the staff in the Post Office in regard to increases made in this year's Estimates. The cause of that dissatisfaction seemed to be a fear that those on the staff would be transferred to the Federal Government on a basis less favourable in regard to salary than those in the service of the other colonies. Looking at the question fairly, it would be found that those engaged here in these services were not treated unfairly in this year's Estimates, because he noticed that nearly everyone had some increase of salary, and the general result was that £20,610 more was provided in these Estimates for these services than the amount provided last year. The suggestion that new appointments in the department would account for this difference was not really an explanation of the increase; because while there was some increase of business in one place there was a decrease in others, and the whole result would be about the same in regard to the number of persons employed. The whole of the service of the Post and Telegraph Department would have to be put on what might be called a common basis, when transferred to the Federal Government; and members of this service would soon realise, after the transfer, that then they would not belong to a department of this colony, but would belong to the whole of Australia, and they would consequently have to be moved about as opportunity for promotion occurred, to take positions in various parts of the continent. A postmaster in Perth, for instance, might be transferred to Queensland; and the whole service would be on the same footing as that of a great commercial establishment which had its officers spread over Australia, and moved them about to suit the requirements of business and for purposes of promotion. We must

not forget that in transferring this department to the Federal Government, we should be also transferring the charges incidental to them; because under the federal system of book-keeping which would operate during the first five years, all the expenditure would be charged against this colony, and all the receipts of the establishment in this colony would be credited to it; therefore the colony would have to pay for all its servants in this department during the first five years, in the terms laid down in the Commonwealth Act. Comparisons were not easy to make and were seldom satisfactory, unless the conditions were completely similar. The comparison made by the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) was open to this objection, for the hon. member seemed to forget that the Postmaster General in South Australia, while receiving £1,000 a year, really performed other duties outside the Post Office in connection with the astronomical department, for which services he received £500 a year. He was also a very old officer and a distinguished man, being a Fellow of the Royal Society of London, which was in itself a great distinction, and he was a man of world-wide reputation.

MR. WILSON: When doing other duties he must have someone in the Post Office to perform his duties there.

THE PREMIER: It was the general practice in South Australia for officers to perform various duties in addition to those of the particular office held by them, that being the result of various attempts made to economise from time to time. Some of those officers really performed a multitude of duties. Postmasters had to do various other things besides the strictly postal work. All the electoral work of the colony was carried on by the postmasters, and in one place the postmaster was receiving £30 as harbour-master, £20 as light-keeper, £20 as savings bank agent, also sub-collector of customs, inspector of public-houses, assistant inspector of fisheries (without salary in this case), £25 and fees as returning officer, while acting also as assistant registrar of births, deaths, and marriages. For all these offices he received £150 a year! A fair comparison could be made in the case of Eucla, where the telegraph master on our side of the border

received £340 a year, as compared with £270 and subsistence allowance, with quarters, for the telegraph master on the South Australian side of the border. This instance showed that the Eucla officer on this side of the border received more than the Eucla officer on the other side of the border. As another instance, take the case of Port Adelaide: there the post and telegraph master received £340 a year as compared with the post and telegraph master at Fremantle, who received £400 a year, the officer here thus receiving £60 a year more. The Port Adelaide postmaster was also customs officer without salary, and he performed various other duties, which was not the case at Fremantle. All through the service in South Australia the officers filled various positions and performed various duties and on the whole they did not receive so much payment as similar officers in this colony, who also had less duties to perform. It would be found that South Australian officials were not better paid than those in this colony, if as well paid. Our accountant received more and our cashier less than theirs, the salaries of the cashier being £395 and £310 respectively. Generally, our officers were not badly paid but it was asserted the classification was imperfect.

MR. WILSON: What about the superintendent of mails?

THE PREMIER: Our inspector of mails received £400 a year: in South Australia there was apparently no such office. Their superintendent of the letter branch received £450, and our superintendent £400. During the last two or three years there had been an improvement in postal salaries. Prior to that no doubt these were low; but at that time the means of the colony were not great. The Government never had any desire to treat postal officials worse than others, for those officers deserved well of the community, being attentive to their duties and working long hours. It was stated the service had been classified and the classification upset by the Government.

MR. HOLMES: Upset by the Postmaster General.

THE PREMIER: Of that he had not heard. True, the Estimates had come forward in a certain way; but, as it was not possible to grant all the increases sug-

gested, they were sent back to the Colonial Secretary for revision on the basis already explained. As far as possible, increases up to £275 had not been disturbed, but all over that sum had been curtailed as far as possible, and had to be made the subject of special recommendations. That was the rule all through the Estimates, though some departments were possibly more persistent than others, and received better treatment. But Ministers had been in a difficulty, the demands upon the public purse being in excess of the available revenue. Nevertheless, the Post Office appeared to have come off very well. There had been an increase in fixed salaries of £15,730, in provisional and temporary salaries of £1,032, and in allowances of £3,848. Though it was generally stated South Australia had increased the postal service so that the post office might be taken over by the Federal Government on a satisfactory footing, still with regard to salaries, the increases in the whole vote of that colony last year amounted to only £8,000 and the decreases to £4,000; showing a net increase of £4,000.

MR. KINGSMILL: But that colony had a better standard to start with.

THE PREMIER: The South Australian standard of classification was not very high. In the second class there was a minimum of £350, rising by £15 increases to £425; in the third class a minimum of £280, rising by £10 increases to £330; in the fourth class a minimum of £220, rising by £10 increases to £270; in the fifth class a minimum of £160, rising by £10 increases to £210; and for cadets, a minimum of £50, rising by £15 increases to £80. Our postal officials were better off than those of South Australia.

MR. KINGSMILL: So they ought to be. Here, the cost of living was higher.

THE PREMIER: During the last three or four years there had been very considerable increases in postal salaries, and the House could hardly be expected to deal exceptionally with this department because it was about to be transferred to the Commonwealth; for this colony must continue to pay the salaries for at least five years. The departmental officers must remove from their minds the idea that they would

continue to belong to the West Australian postal service. They would belong to the Australian service, and any ideas to the contrary would receive a very rude shock. Once the postal and customs departments were taken over by the Commonwealth, officials would come here from other colonies in droves; and, contrarywise, it was to be hoped that some local officers would be promoted to higher positions elsewhere.

MR. GEORGE: As postal officials were the last mentioned in the Estimates, it was natural they should suffer when the pruning-knife had to be applied.

THE PREMIER: That was not so.

MR. GEORGE: It must be the case. The last department in the Estimates must suffer. The chief postal officers had fair claims for consideration, for in other departments there had been considerable increases to men whose services were not longer nor more valuable than theirs. The Premier was unwittingly in error in stating there had been fair increases this year in the department. On last year's Estimates there were 1,589 officers; this year there were 1,704, and the difference accounted for a considerable proportion of the £24,000 increase referred to; in fact, £6,000 was accounted for in contingencies alone. There was a general impression that advances recommended had been disallowed; and it had been said, no doubt rudely and inaccurately, that certain high officials did not entertain the kindest feelings towards this department or its chief. Whether animosities resulting from old quarrels of school days still survived, it was impossible to say. He drew the Premier's attention to the question of telephones. The telephone service in Perth and in Fremantle and between those centres contrasted favourably with that in other parts of the world; but it was a terrible trial to those who had to use it. Apparently there was something in the telephone system that needed considerable improvement. People in Fremantle could hear people in Perth talking most distinctly, whereas a person in Perth could not hear distinctly a person talking in Fremantle. It was probably not the fault of the operators, but of the system. The Estimates contained an item for placing telephone cables underground at

Perth and installing the metallic circuit and so forth. Was that with the object of doing away with this annoyance? Unless the system could be improved many persons would have to give up using it. Perhaps the electric trams had something to do with it. The Government should utilise whatever science could give us to do away with this terrible annoyance.

THE PREMIER: One was under the impression that the interruption of the telephone service was largely due to the trams. The expenditure of money had been authorised to do away with that interruption as far as possible by the metallic circuit, the double wire. He did not know we could do anything more than that. Judging from his own telephone, that was fairly successful, for although there was a noise at times, one could generally hear fairly well what was said. He believed it was intended to have a metallic circuit in all those places affected by the trams, and he expected that in time all the telephones would have a metallic circuit. As to Fremantle there was a difficulty probably because there was not enough wires, for he did not know of any other reason. There was a difficulty in getting communication quickly with Fremantle, but when one got hitched on he could generally hear.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They turned one off in a moment.

THE PREMIER: There must be something defective in the telephone system here, for the officers did not know when one was in communication. Still he thought that telephonic communication in Perth was certainly better than in other places he had been in, including London. He did not think there was any cause of complaint in Perth, except in cases where there was no metallic circuit. The Telephone Department were, he believed, trying their best to improve the service, and the Government were not in any way blocking the department in those endeavours. It was absolutely desirable that the telephone system, which was a good business commercially, should be made as efficient as possible. If there were any complaints with regard to the service and we could remedy them, he would, if members would bring the matter under his notice, do his best to urge the department to rectify things.

MR. KINGSMILL: The chief increases in salaries above £275 were confined to the staff of the Chief Inspector. Seeing that these gentlemen acted as detectives of the postal service, it did not augur well for the rest of the service that they had their salaries raised by a substantial amount whilst others received no increase. He thought all the inspectors were raised £15. Neither the superintendent of telegraphs nor the accountant got a rise. Had any system been followed in cutting down the original Estimates?

THE PREMIER said he thought the salaries high enough.

MR. KINGSMILL: If so, why did the Premier not think the salaries of those who had increases were already high enough? The feeling of the department was that there had been inequality in the distribution of the rises.

THE PREMIER said he did not know one from another, except in a few cases.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A board consisting of the heads of the departments gave a sort of rough classification.

THE PREMIER said he never heard of that till the other day.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There was a board consisting of the heads of departments, who went into the position of every officer, and made a sort of rough classification. It was expected that the recommendations of that board would be carried out; but he was informed the Ministers of other departments did not so fully comply with the recommendations as did the Minister of this particular department.

THE PREMIER said he thought they did.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Perhaps the information was incorrect. Apart from the Post and Telegraphs, and including 775 officers on the fixed staff in the Railway Department, there were 1,035 officers altogether, and the increments in those cases rose from £14 to £22, whilst in this particular department with 1,190 officers, the average increase amounted to only £9 14s. This department would be taken over by the Federal Government. Where the men's salaries had been raised from £195 to £200, and £395 to £400 the small increment of £5 would put a man into another class under the general system of posts and telegraphs, which would be the Australian system by and by.

THE PREMIER: That all depended; if it was anything like South Australia, that would not be the case.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: In many cases an increase of salary from £95 to £100 would lift a man from one class to another. It was felt that no attempt had been made to give fair and reasonable increases, and the officers would go over to the new department at a disadvantage in consequence of not obtaining the increments they felt they were entitled to, and which the board recommended and led them to expect.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Reid said boards would have all the revenue the Government possessed if the Government would let them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Mr. Reid said a lot of good things and a lot of foolish things, and this was one of the latter. If the civil servants were classified the trouble would not exist. Would the Premier make the necessary inquiries and endeavour to see that this department did not go over to the Commonwealth at a disadvantage.

MR. MORAN: What did the hon. member mean by disadvantage? No two colonies were alike.

THE PREMIER: Probably South Australia was the worst.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It had never been suggested that all the colonies were alike.

THE PREMIER: The Federal Parliament would have a civil service of their own.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was not so much a question of the amount of increment as the position which had given dissatisfaction.

THE PREMIER: The officers had never got more than an increase of £10 a year for years and years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: All one asked was that the Premier would consult the head of this department, and see what arrangements should be made so that if possible the grievance might be satisfactorily settled, and the officers would not go over at a disadvantage.

MR. MORAN: A member ought never to make a financial suggestion of any kind without being able to show how the money was to be obtained.

MR. GEORGE: Where was payment of members to come from?

MR. MORAN: We knew where it was going to. In connection with this Post Office vote, there was another fallacy. There was no compulsion for a man to take money he did not think he earned. In connection with the Post Office vote, what did it matter whether this department was being transferred to the Federal Parliament, which no doubt would readily consent to have salaries increased during the next five years if this colony requested that the increases should be made, because this colony during that time would have to pay the salaries. According to the Commonwealth Act, this colony would have to pay every "bean" of the money for carrying on this service during the next five years; and here were members making a fuss about raising men's salaries, when in fact we could next year or the following year make any increases we wished by simply arranging to pay the extra money. As to the men in these departments being put on the same level as men in similar departments in the other colonies, the fact was that no two colonies were alike in regard to post and telegraph services, and the Commonwealth would have to make its own classification. If these services were to be placed on the same footing as similar services in the other colonies, then members might know, by reading such newspapers as the *Sydney Bulletin*, some letter-carriers were paid the munificent salary of 30s. a week. Therefore if letter-carriers in this colony were to be raised to the level of letter-carriers in Victoria, our men would have to keep a wife and family of thirteen kids on thirty shillings a week! It was easy to talk about giving increases, but where was the additional money to come from? If hon. members argued in favour of increases, they should at least show the sources from which additional revenue was to be obtained.

THE PREMIER: This department got £20,000 increase during this year.

MR. MORAN: To add further increases would be a difficult matter, when there was no margin of revenue from which to get the money; and so far from the estimate of revenue being above the probable amount for this year, it was more likely the estimate of expenditure would be below the actual amount. He could see only one way to get additional

revenue for paying increases, and that was to reduce the amount to be spent on public works and buildings throughout the colony. So long as we spent money out of revenue for these purposes, there would be less revenue available for increase of salaries; and if we could cut down the expenditure on works and buildings out of revenue, we might then have the means of using that money more beneficially in other directions. The trouble of the Government was not to pay increases, but to find the money out of which increases could be paid; and he failed to see any movement in this House for cutting down increases which had been given to the more highly-paid officers, with a view of using that money to pay increases to those who were paid at a lower rate. This agitation for increasing salaries looked altogether like popularity-hunting by some members of this House. As to inequality in the postal and telegraph services of this colony as compared with those in other colonies, the probability was that those servants of the Federal Government who were nearest the great heart of the union would receive more consideration than those near the extremities; in other words, the Federal blanket would be found to be too short for Western Australia.

MR. A. FORREST asked why it was necessary to have in the Coolgardie office 29 telegraph operators and about 50 clerks, being the same number as last year. The business done there at present could hardly warrant a continuance of this large number of persons in that office. At Kalgoorlie, the operators and clerks were also very numerous.

MR. MORAN: They were all very busy there.

MR. A. FORREST: It was ridiculous to suppose that such a large number of clerks and operators was necessary at Coolgardie, under the present condition of business.

THE PREMIER: With regard to remarks about the number of operators and clerks at Coolgardie, he was inclined to agree with what the hon. member said; for he had already drawn attention to this matter more than once, and some time ago there was a reduction made. He believed there was plenty of room for retrenchment in this department by re-

ducing the number of persons employed in districts where less business was done than formerly. It might be that Coolgardie was a repeating station. [MR. MORAN: It was so.] However, as his attention had been drawn to this matter, he would again draw attention to it himself and have it inquired into.

MR. VOSPER: Having raised this question of increases several times, the remarks of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) did not traverse the point he had made the previous evening in regard to the unfairness of the increases in salary in several departments. The increases given were altogether disproportionate in this department as compared with increases given in various other departments.

THE PREMIER said he did not admit that.

MR. VOSPER challenged the Premier to deny that it was so, on the basis of the figures quoted before.

THE PREMIER: Everyone was not prepared to accept the basis of the figures quoted by the hon. member.

MR. VOSPER: Increases of salary should be distributed over all the departments.

THE PREMIER: £10 increase had been given to everyone receiving under £275 a year.

MR. VOSPER: But not in the Post Office.

MR. MORAN: Why not object to other items when they were reached, and show how money could be saved?

MR. VOSPER: Yes; and money saved in that way could be given to others who had not received increases. Money could be saved also by not spending it on some of the objects which appeared in this year's Estimates; for instance, the £3,000 put down for purchasing some land at Peppermint Grove belonging to Mrs. Keane, which land he was told was worth scarcely more than half that amount. That purchase might be put off, at any rate, and the money expended in doing justice to persons who were badly paid in the public service. It was better to have a comparatively small staff, thoroughly efficient and well paid, than to have a large staff partly inefficient and badly paid. They could cut down a number of those employed and increase the salaries

of those remaining, we should effect a great economy. He was told that even in St. George's Terrace, two letter-carriers usually accompanied each other, and why two should be required for the same round he could not understand. The Government might save as much, by economising in various branches of the Post Office, as would meet the extra expense of making these increases; and all that members now asked was that an effort should be made to see whether this could be done, with the view of removing anomalies.

THE PREMIER: Which were the particular items the hon. member wanted to be increased?

MR. VOSPER: It was not easy to point out particular cases, and say this man or that man should have an increase; but a board consisting of heads of departments had reported in favour of a certain classification in the Postal and Telegraph Department; but the Premier, on receiving the estimate and the recommendations for increase, had insisted on cutting down the amounts, and so the system had gone back to that of the old anomalies.

THE PREMIER said he had never heard anything about this board, before it was mentioned the other evening by one or two members.

MR. VOSPER: Perhaps the Premier had heard of it since.

THE PREMIER: No; he had not.

MR. VOSPER: Then, although the Premier had heard of this a week ago, he had made no inquiry in regard to it. This did not hold out much hope of improvement.

THE PREMIER: The Estimates could not be remodelled in the short time available, after they were put on the table of this House.

MR. VOSPER: Then it was useless to discuss these Estimates, if no change or improvement was to follow on the discussion. The Premier had admitted that a saving could be made in some directions, and if so it should be done, and the money applied to increasing salaries. It would be better to report progress, to give the Premier an opportunity of finding whether some remedy could be devised to stop these anomalies.

MR. PIESSE: If anything should convince this Committee that classification

was necessary, it should follow as a result of the discussion that had taken place while these Estimates were before the Committee. During the 4½ years in which he had had opportunities of arranging for salaries in his departments, he found on each occasion great difficulty in dealing with this question of increases for want of a complete classification of officers. In regard to the railways, there was some system of classification, and it worked better than was the case in most other departments with regard to salaries and increases. An effort was made some years ago in the Works Department to bring in a departmental system of classification; and, while it continued, that system worked fairly well, but latterly the system had fallen out of use, and the old practice had been followed of recommendations being made by heads of departments and by the Minister. The attention of the Government having now been drawn to the necessity of thoroughly reconsidering this matter, the Premier might be expected to see what could be done. There ought to be some system of classification throughout the service, and thus avoid the necessity of discussing these Estimates in regard to increasing particular salaries. This mode of bringing out individual officers and recommending them for the consideration of the Government, through the action of this or that member of the House, was certainly detrimental to the service, and it also brought particular officers into a prominence which was not desirable, and in a manner which made it troublesome to officers, to members of this House, and to the Government. There was now a tendency to shorten hours and to increase the pay, and we were coming to this, that we found most of the departments were overmanned, about which he had not the slightest doubt. What was needed was that we should have the best men we could get for the services to be performed, that these men should be paid well, and in this way we might reduce the number considerably in many parts of the public service. There was a danger in advocating the claims of individual officers and of particular departments, and it caused trouble to Ministers. Until some proper system of classification was adopted, there would be no satisfaction to anybody.

Such a system would overcome difficulties, for there would then be no necessity to deal with individual items on the Estimates. The matter should be firmly taken in hand, each department rigorously investigated and cut down where necessary, the best men retained, and a system instituted advantageous to the country and acceptable to the service.

MR. MORAN: The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) had made a practical suggestion that those in other departments who were receiving too much should be cut down; but there was now only one department to be dealt with. If some were to be sacrificed, who would pick out the victims? Was the Premier prepared to recommend the striking out of particular items in the Estimates of his own department, to increase the salaries of other officers?

THE PREMIER: If hon. members had had his experience of the discussion of Estimates, they would have some consideration for Ministers. At this season, dissatisfaction reigned supreme throughout the service. Naturally, in this small colony, there were many officers personally known to Ministers, and who thought themselves treated in an unfriendly manner if they did not get increases. Year after year, hon. members had talked about classifying the service, without result.

MR. MORAN: If a classification were instituted, fixed salaries must be paid.

THE PREMIER: True. Classification was very well; but under it there was little room for promotion by merit. The dolt would be pushed along and the clever man retarded, and less satisfaction given than under the present system. Men of little education and ability preferred classification, for it gave the dullard as much chance as the energetic and capable officer. Classification had worked well in South Australia, because that colony had gone through a period of great depression and difficulty. While prosperous, a colony would always find its civil service dissatisfied; but when retrenchment was being effected in this colony, no grumbling was heard: none asked for increases, but, on the contrary, all were glad to retain their positions, and many officers offered to take half their salaries rather than be retrenched. It was in the large departments—the Rail-

ways and the Post Office—that most was heard of demands for increases. The small departments went by the board, or looked after themselves. Doubtless Parliament must deal with the matter of classification, but when dealt with, no more satisfaction would be given than now existed. He would look into the matter and make an attempt to classify the service; but business men could not afford the time to do this, and it would probably have to be attempted by a board of, say, three civil servants, whose time would thus be occupied for not less than a year; and the last state of the service would then, he believed, be worse than the first. An officer would get into a class and stay there. Classification was detrimental to a good man. In private employment, men were dealt with on their merits. No demands for increases were heard from the servants of private employers, even when numerous. They were content to take their chances. Unless care were taken, the civil service would become a rod for hon. members' backs, for the revenue of the country could not provide these yearly increases continuously. Though he had no desire to incur the displeasure of his friends in the civil service, he was responsible for submitting to the House Estimates which would not ruin the country, and had therefore to bear the brunt of these repeated attacks. It gave him no pleasure to deprive anyone of an increase, but Ministers had duties which they must perform, and he assured hon. members these increases could not continue, one reason being that money was not available. This year the service had been treated more liberally than for the last five years—certainly better than for the last three years; yet there had never been so much dissatisfaction. What was the service coming to? Apparently officers wished to serve the State, and at the same time to rule. Fancy a committee of civil servants meeting and deciding what salaries they should be paid, and hon. members opposite demanding that the Government should follow their advice! Mr. Reid, the ex-Treasurer of New South Wales, had said that if any Treasurer listened to civil servants' advice as to their salaries, then good-bye to the finances of the colony. The House were the employers entrusted

with the public funds, and hon. members must decide the rates of payment.

MR. VOSPER : Nevertheless, officers had a right to make representations to Parliament.

THE PREMIER : True ; but there was a spirit of disloyalty growing throughout the service. Officers, instead of appealing to Ministers, went to hon. members ; and this was unfortunate for members themselves, who were here to deal with public affairs generally, and not with details ; yet we found civil servants making voluminous returns for submission to hon. members, no doubt in Government time —

MR. PIESSE : On Government paper, and with Government typewriters.

MR. GEORGE : The country paid for the information.

THE PREMIER : There would be a day of reckoning, for no institution and no country could afford to pay its servants at their own valuation. He believed the service generally was pretty well satisfied. But there were departments, including the Post Office, of which the officers seemed to think they ought to be better treated, though in that department there was scarcely one who had not received an increase of some sort ; and the sole reason why postal officials grumbled was that they were about to be transferred to the Commonwealth, and therefore feared that unless new arrangements were made, their position on the federal Estimates would be jeopardised. That was not probable. These officers would, he believed, be classified by a Civil Service Act of the Federal Parliament, in which all federal officials throughout Australia would be dealt with generally. How could any other plan be possible, seeing there would be continual transfers from colony to colony ?

MR. A. Y. HASSELL : But even in this colony many men refused promotion rather than change their localities.

THE PREMIER : True. Nevertheless, when the federation had been firmly established, the Post Office would doubtless be managed as one department, and as if it were a private business.

MR. MORAN : Like an army.

MR. HOLMES : There would have been a surplus available for postal officials, had his advice been followed when dealing with the railway Estimates. The

large increases granted to high railway officials should have been cut down. A main blot in the service was that men performing the same duties during the same hours received some £140 and others £160. If each were paid £150, dissatisfaction would be removed.

MR. GEORGE : But men must be graded according to ability.

MR. HOLMES : No ; if any were incapable of performing the duties, they should be disrated or dismissed. Reduce the number of officers and increase the pay. If officers had more to do, they would have less time to grumble. Throughout the whole service, classification was necessary. In the adjoining public buildings would be found cases where one man did the work of six, and others where six did the work of one.

MR. GEORGE : The last speaker might be right in principle ; but in the postal Estimates would be found such men as sorters and letter-carriers. Would the hon. member maintain that these men could be cut down indiscriminately like the "curled darlings" in some other departments ?

MR. HOLMES : Take telegraph operators.

MR. GEORGE : Would the hon. member say there were too many operators ?

MR. HOLMES : Those who performed the same duties should receive similar salaries.

MR. GEORGE : If the hon. member had had more experience of handling large bodies of men, he would know that, though there might be a ruling rate of wages, it was wise for the employer to pay certain men a higher rate, according to their greater skill or longer experience. He (Mr. George) had never been approached by a single officer of the department, and he was speaking generally as to using the pruning knife. It was natural to suppose the Premier would be hardly as big a sinner at starting as later on, when he found the reductions were only a little. He had cut down to the extent of something like £228,000.

THE MINISTER OF MINES : Not much in salaries.

MR. GEORGE : Naturally there was a certain amount of feeling on the part of some officials when they found men in other departments who had not been so

long in the service, and who apparently jumped from small salaries to larger ones, had not had the pruning knife applied to them. It was a farce to discuss the Estimates, because we could not alter them. If the Government had made up their minds, they had a majority that would carry them through. As to any Supplementary Estimates, it was nonsense to talk about them. There was supposed to be a surplus of £8,000, but no provision was made to pay interest on Treasury bills which if not already issued would be issued shortly. Then there was payment of members, and the money had to be found.

THE PREMIER: One did not wish to delay the Committee, but he would like to say once for all, and he hoped everyone would understand it, that as far as he was aware the salary of no civil servant mentioned in these items had been reduced. An arrangement was made by which up to £275 a year the Minister arranged the salaries, and after that the salaries were arranged by special recommendation of Ministers. He (the Premier) personally never used the pruning knife. As the Minister of Mines stated, the pruning knife was applied to contingencies, to the public works and the public buildings, and to the items at the end of the departmental estimates.

MR. PIESSE: The complaints were not so much in regard to increases, though no doubt there were anomalies, and some officers received more than they should, whilst others got too little. Classification was required, but it would be difficult to bring about a classification which would be acceptable throughout. There was another way of meeting the difficulty, by which we could save money. We should employ good men, pay them well, and the hours should be increased from 9 to 5; and even then the hours would be shorter than in business establishments in the city. Moreover, at present there was many a quarter of an hour short, and if a man was more than 10 minutes late that should be known. That was the rule adopted in the Works Department, and with very great satisfaction, and it should be adopted in every other department in the service. It was the rule, he believed, but was the rule always carried into effect? With regard to retrenchment, there was no more painful period during

the time of his administration than the eighteen months when 340 officers of the Public Works Department were retrenched in consequence of the cessation of work, and other causes. We should have to go into this matter very soon, and it would be necessary to pick out the best men, and let those not worthy of their pay go.

MR. GREGORY: Many who received from £160 down to £80 a year were, instead of working from 9 to 4, working fully eight hours, and in many instances nine and ten hours, without extra pay. He knew of several instances in which men who had to discharge most responsible duties, and were married, received only from £130 to £140 a year. An eight-hours day was long enough, and if it was necessary for the men to work nine or ten hours, they should be remunerated. He did not say that what he spoke of was general. He hoped that if the member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse) got into power again he would see that some of the curled darlings in the Lands and Public Works and Mines Departments, and other departments, would have to work something like eight hours a day, and that those in the Postal and Telegraph Department would not have to work any more than that.

MR. QUINLAN said he had been asked to bring this question before the notice of the Government, more especially in order that this department should be placed in a similar position to the departments of other colonies which would be handed over to the Commonwealth Parliament. Salaries had been raised within the current year. He had a paper called the *Transmitter*, which showed there had been a number of increases. An assistant electrician had his salary increased from £350 to £400, and two assistant station managers had theirs increased from £350 to £375.

THE PREMIER: What colony was that?

MR. QUINLAN: New South Wales. There were instances of managers getting £600 and £700, and electricians £500 and £600. Part of the public service in this colony would be transferred to the Commonwealth, and the officers would be at a disadvantage with respect to their salaries as compared with officers in other colonies.

MR. MOORHEAD: Did the hon. member wish the salaries to be raised to the points mentioned?

MR. QUINLAN: Salaries here had been raised so far as the inspectors were concerned, but he understood they had not been raised in other cases.

MR. PIESSE: The member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) referred to payments of £60 or £80 a year. In some instances salaries were small, but as a rule during the last five years there had been a considerable increase in most departments. Those who once received £60 or £70 a year and held the same position as they filled four or five years ago, were now receiving from £100 to £120. Not only had there been an increase in regard to postal officials, but others as well. If a man filled a position he should be paid according to the work he did. If classification were introduced, men would be put at one rate of salary, but that would not work. There must be at least four grades in every class. As to the rate of pay, 25 years ago people had to do the same work at salaries of £60 or £70 a year perhaps, and one man had to deal with a matter on which to-day three or four would be engaged. It took all influence and possible representations to get an increase of £5 a year, and when one received the magnificent salary of about £80 a year, he was considered almost a lord. People were now only working six hours and were receiving £230 for the same service as that rendered 20 years ago for £70. A man who went into the country got £60 a year, and probably £15 allowances, and had to work 12 hours. There were no three shifts in the old times, and if anything had to be done a man perhaps had to work 24 hours.

MR. MITCHELL referring to the item, "Narra Tarra Postmaster, £30," said the post office was kept by an old servant who had been employed for forty years.

THE PREMIER: Was this person a farmer?

MR. MITCHELL: Yes. The place was coming to the fore, and a considerable number of letters had to be dealt with. He hoped the Premier would see fit to give this old servant £10 a year for rent.

THE PREMIER said he did not know anything about this matter, but he supposed the amount on the Estimates was

a sort of fee to some settler who kept a post office, and the mail probably arrived once a week.

MR. GEORGE said that in his district the person who attended to the postal duties got £10, and there was a mail delivered every day, letters being received for, probably, some 60 or 70 persons.

MR. MOORHEAD, referring to receivers of mailbags at Meekatharra and the Golden Horseshoe, in the North Murchison district, urged that as they received nothing for this service it was desirable some allowance should be made. In the case of the Golden Horseshoe, about 220 people were settled there, and a battery of 100 head of stamps was being erected, so that there must be considerable postal business. He hoped these cases would be considered.

THE PREMIER: There was a general vote out of which receivers of mailbags were paid, but he would inquire into these cases.

MR. GEORGE, referring to item "Incidental expenses, £2,650," asked if this provision was sufficient, seeing that in the two previous years the amount actually expended under this head was considerably more? Had this amount been cut down?

THE PREMIER said he could not answer the question. The amount could not be increased now without a Message from the Governor.

MR. GEORGE, referring to item "Subsidies, costal steamer services, £27,550," asked for explanation of the increased amount.

THE PREMIER: The importance of the Phillips River goldfield rendered it increasingly necessary to continue the mail steamer service along that coast. The contractors had threatened to knock off the service between Albany and Esperance unless an increased subsidy was paid; and the Government, rather than stop the service, consented to increase the subsidy, especially with a view to the convenience of people at the Phillips River goldfield, and for the benefit of Albany.

Vote put and passed.

Audit, £6,037 13s. 4d. :

MR. GEORGE, referring to item "Chief Inspector of Accounts (7 months at £350 per annum), £204 3s. 4d.," said

this officer's services appeared to have been discontinued, but there was no provision for another officer. In connection with this reduction in the staff of the Audit Department, he must call attention to a painful inquiry which had been held during the last few weeks affecting the Railway Department, and one result had been a general desire expressed in the public Press and in this House for the railway accounts to be audited by the Audit Department of the Government, so as to have an independent audit in addition to any audit by officers of the Railway Department.

THE PREMIER: The Chief Inspector in the Audit Department had been performing the duties of Resident Magistrate at Katanning during that officer's absence. The Resident Magistrate would return about the end of the year, and then this officer would resume his duties in the Audit Department. The duties of this officer had presumably been performed by other officers in the Audit Department during his absence.

MR. GEORGE: Seeing that the Auditor General had from time to time in recent years reported this department as under-manned, and that the duties were increasing, it was to be regretted these repeated requests for increases of strength had not been complied with, and that the representations on this point made by the Auditor General had been practically ignored by the Government and by this House. Was it right to have an officer in charge of this department whose requests and recommendations continued to be persistently ignored?

Vote put and passed.

Observatory, £3,325 0s. 4d. :

MR. KINGSMILL: Some anomalies in the salaries appeared in the Estimates of this department. The Meteorological Computer and Astronomical Observer had received an increase of £10, making his salary £260; while the Astronomical Computer and Observer had received an increase of £50, making his salary £250. Thus the first of these officers had an increase of £10 on a salary of £250, and the second had an increase of £50 on a salary of £200. Why this apparent slight on the first of these officers, who was stated to be most deserving, and had practically to do the whole of the executive work of the department?

THE PREMIER: Those Estimates came to him in the present state, and he could not explain the difference. If he hazarded an opinion on the circumstances, he would say both these officers were valuable men in their positions, and were about the same; but the one who had the senior position and a higher salary got an increase of £10, while the second officer who had been receiving much less got an increase of £50, making the two more nearly equal.

MR. MORAN: The first of these was of a higher class than the second.

THE PREMIER: These three officers, the Astronomer and the two Computers, were poorly paid for the work they had to do; but the Estimates were just as he received them, and he regretted that these men were not better paid, as all three ought to receive higher salaries. Referring to the work of this department, it would be gratifying to members to know that the time-ball now showed Greenwich time at one o'clock daily at Fremantle; and in addition to the time-ball dropping at one o'clock, a signal could be given by arrangement at any time, so that captains in the harbour could ascertain the exact Greenwich time whenever it was required. This arrangement put Fremantle in the same position as a first-class port in any part of the world, as far as longitude time is concerned. The work done by this department was of great value, and although the total charge on the Estimates was £3,325, yet by far the greater part of this was a charge in existence before, under the old arrangement for making and recording meteorological observations throughout the colony. The salaries and some contingency expenses, made necessary by the starting of the Observatory, amounted to £1,655.

MR. KINGSMILL expressed pleasure at hearing the Premier's remarks. These three officers should be put on the same level as those in other colonies who were doing the same class of work, and all three were underpaid. The Astronomer was paid much less than Astronomers in any other part of Australia. The Astronomical Computer and Observer in Sydney was paid £450, and had residence provided. In Adelaide, the officers started at £350, and rose by £15 increases to £425. In Victoria, the officers received about £500 a year. This comparison

was proof to anybody that officials in this colony connected with the Observatory were extremely poorly paid, and the Government should endeavour to increase the salaries.

Mr. QUINLAN supported the remarks of the hon. member, and said his attention had also been called to the comparisons of salaries paid to similar officers in the other colonies. He hoped the Government would take this matter into consideration.

Vote put and passed.

Lithographic, £6,640—agreed to.

This completed the votes for the department, and concluded the Estimates for the year.

Resolutions reported to the House.

RECOMMITTAL.

On motion by the PREMIER, Estimates recommitted for correcting total amounts in the Customs, Harbour and Light, Railways and Tramways, and Public Buildings votes; some errors having crept in during the hurried completion of the Estimates.

On motions by the PREMIER, the total of *Customs* was altered to £31,490; the total of *Harbour and Light* to £20,248; the total of *Railways and Tramways* to £920,736; and the total of *Public Buildings* to £182,666 13s. 4d.

Further resolutions reported.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE.

Consideration resumed from previous sitting.

Vote — *Railways and Tramways*, £506,876 5s. 9d.:

Mr. MORAN, referring to item "Geraldton to Murchison Goldfields Railway, £25,000," said such a thin House when this important line was being discussed was an object lesson on the present state of Parliament. It would be most unbecoming if hon. members did not ask the Commissioner of Railways and the member representing the district (Mr. Moorhead) for full and complete statistics regarding this railway and its prospects. The member for the district seemed to think hon. members had already made up their minds on the subject.

Mr. MOORHEAD said he did not know where their minds were situated.

Mr. MORAN: The hon. member should not invite opposition; for if the Committee did their stern duty, they would not listen to fresh loan proposals; and if the Opposition followed their policy of this session, he (Mr. Moran) would support them. Nevertheless, this projected railway had special claims which the Norseman line did not possess. This was a trunk line railway, tapping a country which might become a great gold-bearing district; there were several centres in the Murchison district, whereas at Norseman there was only one; and therefore he would ask for information regarding the population, mining returns, etcetera, so that hon. members might have some excuse for fulfilling the promise of a railway which had been given four or five years ago. This was a serious matter, for the line would cost £500,000, seeing that, to be of any service at all, it must be continued to Peak Hill. The hon. member representing the district should say something in favour of the line.

Mr. MOORHEAD: Having some consideration for the Committee, he would keep silence.

Mr. MORAN: What!

Mr. MOORHEAD said he did not wish to act as a jack-in-the-box.

Mr. MORAN: The hon. member might do so for once. The public debt of this colony had nearly reached its extreme limit. In six months' time there would be a general election, when the country would probably say this line was not justified. He asked the Government and the hon. member interested for full information, and it was highly improper for the hon. member to answer him with sneers.

The PREMIER: The last speaker probably knew as much about the line as anybody, having been a member of Parliament so long. For a long while Nannine had been an important centre. In 1896 the House agreed to construct the line, but, there being many other works in hand, this had been deferred. In that district there were now the Peak Hill goldfields, Meekatharra, Yalgowra, and Lake Way; and when this line had been built, the traffic to Lake Way would go *via* Nannine. On the route was Tuckanarra, which, though not flourishing, promised well for the future.

MR. MORAN: Give a few figures.

THE PREMIER: There must be some 1,000 people at Nannine and neighbourhood, nearly that number at Peak Hill, and perhaps 500 in the Lake Way district, where a big company had spent much money, and had stated that when this railway were built it would place £50,000 worth of machinery on its mine.

MR. GEORGE: Would the railway pay?

THE PREMIER: No doubt it would pay very well, and would be the means of peopling the district and opening up new centres.

MR. MORAN: The present railway did not pay.

THE PREMIER: Indeed? That was not certain. Moreover, the line would cheapen the food supply of the metropolis: meat could be brought from Nannine by rail, and the pastoralists would thus be benefited. The item was the fulfilment of an obligation Parliament had entered into in 1896, and since that time the House had never said the line should not be constructed. Four years ago the line had been authorised, the money had then been available, the special Act had been passed, and now the project came before hon. members in the only possible way—on the Loan Estimates. True, it might have been brought up by an abstract resolution, but there had surely been no expression of opinion against building the line.

MR. MORAN: The Opposition had opposed it in their policy, as was evidenced by their speeches.

THE PREMIER: But hon. members opposite, after hearing his explanation, now knew there would be no difficulty in raising the money. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Oh, oh!] The only difficulty in raising money was one of payment. It was not even a question of security, as some hon. members might think. At times, no matter what security was forthcoming, a loan could not be floated, and people would not lend it. In regard to this colony at present, and for years past, it had never been a question of security, but of money being available at the price, and he had no anxiety as to finding all the money we wanted. This work ought to be carried out in accordance with the promise made, and it would give great satisfaction to all that part of the country. It would give the people renewed hope, as

the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Oats) knew, and especially would it give much satisfaction to Geraldton. Everyone who knew anything about the subject would say we had done quite right.

MR. MOORHEAD: Speaking on behalf of a constituency sadly neglected by those who ought to have discharged their duties to the country at large, he said the member for East Coolgardie and other members who formerly voted for the Murchison goldfields railway must have known they were voting for a line to Nannine, and to Nannine alone. At that time the district was undeveloped, but places had since sprung up, and the returns from the Murchison district amply warranted the expectation that this would be the coming district of the colony, or at least one of the coming districts. The Premier had given the names of one or two centres, and he (Mr. Moorhead) could supplement the list by saying that between Cue and Nannine was the district known as Meekatharra, and we had other places starting up such as Abbot's, Star of the East, Quinn's, Stake Well, Munara Gully, Gabbanintha, Barnacoora, Peak Hill, Ravelstone, Horseshoe, and Pinnacles. Without counting Lake Way, the inhabitants of which numbered about 400, the population immediately to be served by this line would be something like 2,500. As to the gold returns, the heads of stamps at present on the North Murchison numbered 160, exclusive of Peak Hill and Tuckanarra. At Peak Hill there were 50 head and 100 were to be erected at Horseshoe, besides which there were now at Cue 300 tons of machinery for the Horseshoe. Altogether there were something like 300 head. From Peak Hill alone, the return for the ten months ending October this year showed 25,460 ounces, and the return for the rest of the district indicated about 27,000 ounces, making altogether a return of 50,000 ounces from that particular district. Moreover the returns this year were lower than last, through a considerable downfall of rain in that district which led to the total cessation of mining, especially in the locality of Nannine. The mines were closed down for over six weeks through want of firewood, and some, he believed, had not yet started again. That circumstance was one of the strongest argu-

ments in favour of the construction of this line. In addition to the settled population, there were a large number of prospectors, and, taking them at 200, we had a total population of 2,700. He could not understand how it was that the line from Geraldton to Cue had not paid, seeing that every train was crowded with passengers and goods. With both those requisites a line ought to pay, and he was astonished to find that this line did not pay.

MR. GEORGE: The line did pay. There was an excess of revenue over expenditure.

MR. MORAN: It did not pay. Let the hon. member read the railway report.

MR. PIESSE: It paid working expenses, and there was a balance of £23,000 towards interest.

MR. MOORHEAD: The matter seemed inexplicable.

THE PREMIER: The line paid more than working expenses.

MR. PIESSE: It did not pay interest.

MR. MOORHEAD: The line from Cue to Nannine would pay from its inception. The batteries in the district were increasing in number, and there was also an increase in population. We were justified in concluding the district deserved the line, especially in view of the fact that five years ago, when the district was undeveloped, the House considered the line would be warranted. The hopes of the people had been buoyed up. The line would assist in developing the country, and it would pay.

MR. GEORGE: There was no desire on the part of any hon. member to block progress in any district in Western Australia. The motives that actuated the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) actuated a number of members. Was it wise, on the eve of the greatest change possible for Western Australia, to commit ourselves to what perhaps would be a much higher expenditure than was patent at the present time? Personally, in his own business it was far better for him to do everything he could to give communication to the goldfield districts, but he asked himself whether he would be doing his duty to the country in voting large sums of money which he felt we could not afford. The country now owed something like £14,000,000,

and was it wise to add materially to that indebtedness?

MR. MORAN: The amount was £15,000,000 now.

MR. GEORGE: One was not desirous of hindering railways in the colony if we could afford them, but he would enter his protest against the Geraldton to Murchison railway, and against any extension of railways, until we knew where we were.

MR. PIESSE: The Northern railways cost £846,797, and the total interest was £32,228. There was a profit, after paying working expenses, of £23,460, so that taking interest into account the net result was a loss of £8,768. We must not forget that a portion of this amount was expended on a railway that was not paying too well, and the money for which was borrowed at a high rate of interest, namely the Northampton railway; so that deducting £6,552 from the apparent loss, we would have an actual loss of £2,216, which would be infinitesimal as compared with the advantages that would accrue and had already accrued to the Northern district. Therefore, after all, it was rather a matter for congratulation to find this railway had been so successful. The traffic during the last two and a half years had been more than was anticipated when the railway was constructed; and the returns placed before hon. members would show that, after deducting from this railway the cost of the Northampton line, which had never paid, the apparent loss was very small. There was sufficient in the argument used by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) to show a justification for the extension of this line another 25 miles at any rate; and although he (Mr. Piesse) had earlier in the session opposed the construction of a railway to Norseman, the cost of which would have been very large, still the continuance of this Cue-to-Nannine railway would not involve anything like so great a cost to the colony as that other proposal. It was proposed also to use some of the material from another railway; and if this line were constructed as far as Tuckanarra, it would be a great help to that district, although we must be careful to carry out the construction at as low a cost as possible in the first instance.

MR. A. FORREST, in supporting the vote, said some members, more especially

the member for East Coolgardie, because he could not get his own way at the beginning of the session, now wished to throw out the proposal for this railway. What had another election to do with this railway, when the money had been voted for it in 1896? The reasons why the work was not carried out at that time were that the colony could not well afford it; also that Nannine was not progressing, and Peak Hill was practically not known. But those who had visited Nannine recently, as he had done, would say at once the people there deserved a railway, not only for themselves, but to allow further traffic to be carried inland, for enabling them to get machinery on to the ground, and enabling them to live at a cheaper rate. In sending this railway inland, where railways ought to go, we were taking the right course; for he did not believe in the construction of coastal railways, but liked to see railways going right away inland, so that farmers might send produce into the back country and the people there might bring down their gold. Members of this House had voted for themselves a salary, although this Parliament was said to be moribund; therefore it was not too moribund to authorise the construction of this railway for 25 miles further inland. After the speech of the member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse), and seeing that the Geraldton-Cue railway had realised a surplus of £22,000 on the year's working, while it had tacked on to it a railway (Northampton) that did not pay, it must be evident that an extension of this line for 25 miles was one of the most important factors for bringing traffic to the Cue line.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: In reminding members of the history of this line, they would recollect that the first proposal was for a railway to Cue; and when a tender was accepted, it was found that the cost of the line would leave a surplus of about £84,000 on the estimate of the Engineer-in-Chief. Immediately that was known, he asked a question, and indeed pledged the Government that the surplus of £84,000 should not be removed from the Murchison district, but be used in railway construction and extension there. As a consequence, in 1896 a Bill was passed for the construction of a railway from Cue to Nannine. The survey

was made, but for various reasons, there being a depression in the colony at the time, that vote was trenched upon, and of course he disapproved of that course being taken, although the money was spent in the district, and the promise of the Government was kept so far by certain waterworks and other public conveniences being provided, until the vote was reduced to about £45,000. He wanted to make it clear to the Committee that when we started the present session, members on the Opposition side of the House opposed any increase of loan expenditure for reasons then stated.

MR. MORAN: And the hon. member mentioned this work amongst others.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: True; but he had said that not even for the construction of the Nannine railway should we borrow further; and if this were a proposal to borrow money in addition to that already voted and available, he would oppose the railway as firmly as anyone. But the Government, he understood, proposed to expend the balance of the original vote of £84,000—between £40,000 and £45,000—in carrying this railway towards Nannine, perhaps to Tuckanarra. Would the Government say how it was proposed to construct the railway—departmentally or by tender?

MR. PIESSE: It should be by contract.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And how far—from Cue to Tuckanarra? It was proposed this £25,000 should be exclusive of expenditure on rails and fastenings; and presumably the cost of rails and fastenings would represent the balance of the money available. The Premier had said this expenditure would take the line to Tuckanarra. If so, the proposal committed Parliament to nothing but the departmental construction of the line to that place. If, however, it was to be built by contract, how far was the railway to go? He would object to being committed to expending £25,000 on a railway which might go to Peak Hill.

THE PREMIER: By the special Act, it could not go further than Nannine.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A new gold-field had recently been discovered in the district, and to take in that field it might be desirable to alter the route, and by so doing the distance to Peak Hill might be shortened. Would the tender be let for a line to Tuckanarra or to Nannine? If

the latter, how did the Government propose to raise the balance of the money?

MR. MOORHEAD: Would the hon. member vote against the line to Nannine?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That would depend upon the answers to his questions.

MR. MOORHEAD: The hon. member had advocated such a line.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And did so still.

MR. MOORHEAD: Apparently the hon. member was still "sitting on a rail."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member was talking politics. He (Mr. Illingworth) was asking for facts. Would the tender be let to Nannine, or as far as the money available would carry the line? That question ought to be asked and answered, for it was useless to propose to start the railway without knowing how the money was to be raised.

THE PREMIER: Borrow some.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Who would do the borrowing?

THE PREMIER: The hon. member, perhaps.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Then the present Government proposed to incur responsibilities which a future Government must take over? That had been the "game" during the whole session. The member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) had jumped to the conclusion that he (Mr. Illingworth) was opposed to the railway to Nannine. Why, there would have been no money for the railway and no special Act, but for him. He had never opposed the railway, and was not opposing it now. But this Parliament could not spend money it did not possess; and in the Loan Act passed this session there was no provision for the extension of the line, consequently the only money available was that in hand, the balance of the money left over from the Cue railway. Therefore, in voting for this line in these circumstances, he was not violating the principle with which he started this session, that principle being to oppose any new work involving further borrowing. The crux of the question was whether the Government intended to accept tenders for a railway to Nannine, when there was no provision to raise the money. If so, Ministers must show the Committee how the balance of the money was to be raised, and must get the requisite authority. If the railway from

Cue to Nannine were dependent on further borrowing, he would vote against it; but he still favoured the spending of the money he had ear-marked in 1895, and procured to be voted in 1896.

MR. GEORGE: Was the hon. member justified in doing so, if circumstances had changed?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Circumstances had changed for the better.

MR. MORAN: The financial position was not better.

THE PREMIER: The revenue had doubled.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Deal with one thing at a time. The warrant for the construction of a line to Nannine was not so good in 1896 as now. At that time Peak Hill was only a prospecting field, but was now an established goldfield, around which other centres had grown up. Then the only valuable mine beyond Nannine was the "Star of the East"; but since, new goldfields had been discovered beyond. During recent floods the district could not be reached by mail coach, and the inhabitants had been in danger of starvation, so there was no doubt of the desirableness of the railway; but it was not justifiable to borrow more money for building the line.

THE PREMIER: Not even if it would pay?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No. We could spend 20 millions during the next five years in building lines that would pay; but it did not follow it would be wise to borrow the money.

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was a question of policy. If this £25,000 were to come out of the balance in hand, and the rails and fastenings could be purchased with the remainder of the money available, and the railway could be carried as far as Tuckanarra, he would vote for the item.

THE PREMIER: This money would be expended in extending the railway towards Nannine; and the Government had no intention during the present financial year, until Parliament met again, of spending more, or incurring any liability greater than the amount authorised, £42,000 odd. He did not know how we should build the railway. We should be guided by the Engineer-in-Chief, to a large extent. Very likely we should

build it by day labour, as we had decided to build the Leonora railway by day labour. That being so, we could go on with the work, and we would do so as quickly as possible. Under existing conditions, we could not spend this £42,000 before the House again met. The House would then be asked to authorise more to continue the line on to Nannine. But we were not going to anticipate the authorisation Parliament had given us, nor was there the slightest reason for doing so.

MR. HUTCHINSON : The district beyond Cue had a right to the proposed railway, and if it were built it would pay, provided we had a proper classification of rates. He did not believe it would pay with the present classification. Under present conditions, flour, grain, potatoes, onions, or chaff might be sent from Fremantle to Cue at £1 11s. 1d. The same class of goods would be taken on to Nannine from Fremantle at the rate of 1s. per ton per 100 miles. The same goods from Geraldton to Cue had to pay £1 1s. per ton ("A" rates). Had not the time arrived when we should have the goods rates re-classified, so that the district which had railway communication should pay for it? We should not allow Fremantle, Perth, or any other portion of the colony to be practically subsidised by the State in order that they might rob the other parts of the colony. If one wanted to send agricultural stuff from Geraldton to Cue, he had to pay £1 1s., and it could be sent from Fremantle for £1 11s. 1d. We would be justified in building this railway, but the Commissioner of Railways ought to insist upon men paying for what they got, and upon Fremantle merchants being placed on the same footing as merchants in other parts of the colony.

MR. PIESSE : The Albany man had the same chance.

MR. HUTCHINSON : Would the hon. member say we were justified in carrying at these rates?

MR. PIESSE : It was on the principle which many members had pressed for, that of differential rates.

MR. HUTCHINSON said he had never pressed for differential rates. A deputation waited on the Commissioner of Railways recently, and he gave a reply that

would be an insult to a seven-year-old schoolboy. If goods were carried on the present classification, we would be carrying goods from Fremantle at 1s. per ton per 100 miles. He would support the construction of the railway under discussion, but if hon. members would look into this question of rates, they would see that he was justified in what he had said.

MR. MITCHELL, in supporting this railway, said if the Government did not intend to build the railway at the present time, they would be breaking faith with the people in that district. The member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), who had advocated it, represented a constituency which would prefer not to see this railway go farther than Cue.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : They were not dog-in-the-manger, there.

MR. MITCHELL : The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) had gone out of his way to attack the pioneer Northern railway, which had been dubbed a "white elephant"; but without disputing as to the colour of the "elephant," the Government had put all they could against it, and it was a case of "give a dog a bad name and it will stick to him." He (Mr. Mitchell) had tried to dissociate the accounts of this railway from those of the other line to which it was joined, and he had always met with a lot of difficulties. A few days ago he got a motion carried in this House, affirming that a return should be produced showing the cost of running a special train from Geraldton to Northampton and back. And, now that he had got the return, he intended to have it published in the newspapers, for it was an insult to himself and to the district he represented.

MR. GEORGE : And yet the hon. member sat on the Government side!

MR. MITCHELL read the "return" or answer supplied by the General Manager of Railways, as follows:—

With reference to the enclosure, it is difficult to arrive at a cost closely approaching the actual expenditure. The working expenses for last financial year were 49.04 pence per train mile, which very nearly approached the charge made of 5s. per mile. The balance of about 11d. per mile might be made to cover special charges incidental to special trains run on short notice, as in this case.

Was that a fair answer, after the motion

had been carried? He had asked for water, and they had given him —

MR. MORAN: Whisky; hear, hear.

MR. MITCHELL said he would have this reply published in the newspapers, to show how the Railway Department treated this unfortunate pioneer line. He would support the extension of the Cue railway to Tukanarra, and in a future session, if he had an opportunity, he would support the further extension of this line, because it would not have to stop at Tukanarra, but must go farther. He would take this course notwithstanding that he had not the help of a newspaper to blow his trumpet; but still he believed he would be in the next Parliament.

On motion by Mr. GEORGE, progress reported and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 21st November, 1900.

Question: Burning off and Bush Fires—Motion: Guano (Abrolhos), to permit export (adjourned)—Motion for Papers, Gold-mining Lease 35m —Return: Contingents, Deferred Pay—Municipal Institutions Bill: Reinstatement after Count-out, Assembly's Amendment, Divisions—Fire Brigades Board Debenture Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading—Truck Act Amendment Bill, Administrator's suggested Amendment—Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, in Committee, Clause 58 to end, Divisions, reported—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—BURNING OFF AND BUSH FIRES.

HON. R. G. BURGESS asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, If he is aware that the Government is allowing persons to

burn in all the eastern districts up to the 30th November? 2, Is the Government aware that the matter has been reported to the Minister of Lands? 3, Can he state why the Minister of Lands has taken no steps to alter such date? 4, Is the Government aware that large fires are now raging through the eastern districts at the present moment, by reason of this not being attended to? 5, Does the Government intend to take immediate steps to stop the continuance of this burning?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1. Yes; the date of the commencement of the prohibited period in the Eastern Districts was altered during last year from 1st October to the 1st December at the request of the Conference of Roads Boards held at Northam on 9th October, 1899. 2: Yes. 3. Steps have been taken; the date has now been amended to 1st November, and the alteration will be notified in the next issue of the *Government Gazette*. The Resident Magistrates at York, Northam, and Newcastle, and the Government Land Agent at Beverley have been so informed, and instructed to make the alteration public. 4. The Government is aware of fires having lately occurred in the Eastern Districts, but can offer no opinion as to origin of same; inquiries are, however, being made. 5. Yes; see reply to No. 3.

MOTION—GUANO (ABROLHOS), TO PERMIT EXPORT.

HON. R. S. HAYNES (Central) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, it is unnecessary that the restriction on the exportation of guano from the colony should be further enforced.

Some two years ago a motion was passed providing that no further leases should be granted to persons for the exportation of guano, on the ground that the guano was required for agricultural purposes in the colony. The only place where there was a guano lease of any large proportions was on the Abrolhos Islands, and under that lease, which expired in about three years from now, the lessees had the right to export guano, on every ton paying a royalty to the Government, though on the guano used in the colony there was no impost at all. The lessees