

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6 p.m. until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 20th October, 1898.

Libellous Report, and Offender Expelled from Gallery: Threat to Prosecute Sergeant-at-Arms; Correspondence and Debate; Further Letter, an Apology—Mineral Lands Regulations: Select Committee's Report presented—Motion (urgency): Personal Explanation—Metropolitan Waterworks Act Amendment Bill, first reading and remaining stages—Cemeteries Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Municipal Institutions Act Amendment Bill, (streets), first reading—Bush Fires Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Annual Estimates, in Committee of Supply: Mines Department, passed; Attorney General's Department, passed; Colonial Secretary's Department, passed; Estimates completed and reported—Official Receiver in Bankruptcy: Legislative Council's Resolution considered, in Committee—Goldfields Act Amendment Bill: Legislative Council's Amendments considered, in Committee—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

LIBELLOUS REPORT, AND OFFENDER EXPELLED FROM GALLERY.

THREAT TO PROSECUTE SERGEANT-AT-ARMS. CORRESPONDENCE AND DEBATE.

The SPEAKER: Before proceeding with the business of the day, I wish to inform the House that the Sergeant-at-Arms has handed to me the following letter,

which he has received from a firm of solicitors in this city:—

Austral Chambers, Barrack-street, Perth, October 20, 1898.

C. B. Kidson, Esq., Sergeant-at-Arms, House of Assembly, Perth.

Sir,—We have been instructed by Mr. H. P. Colebatch to institute legal proceedings against you for assault in connection with last evening's proceedings. Will you kindly refer us to your solicitor, for service of legal process.—Yours faithfully, Moorhead and Northmore.

May's *Parliamentary Practice* on this question says as follows:—

To commence proceedings in a court of law against any person for his conduct in obedience to the orders of Parliament, or in conformity with its practice is a breach of privilege. According to present usage, however, if such an action be commenced against an officer of the House, the Commons have given leave to the officer to appear in the action, when the law officers of the Crown, either by the order of the House or upon direction given by a Minister of the Crown, undertake the officer's defence: or, if it seems expedient, the Speaker can, at his discretion, place the defence of the officer in the hands of the Government.

I think, therefore, under that practice as given by May, that the House should pass a resolution directing the Crown law officers to defend the Sergeant-at-Arms of this House. He was simply carrying out directions received from me, and which I was empowered to give by authority of our Standing Orders, which empower me at any time to direct any strangers to withdraw from any portion of the House.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I beg to move

That the law officers of the Crown be instructed by this House to appear and do all things necessary on behalf of the Sergeant-at-Arms, in carrying out the instructions of the Speaker.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I second the motion.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): Before this matter goes to the vote, though for my own part I have no intention of opposing the motion, I wish to take this desirable opportunity to review the action which has been taken in respect of Mr. Colebatch. I think I am right, in regard to the resolution passed in this House on this matter, in saying that the amendment moved by the member for Albany, on my suggestion, was to the following effect:

And that steps be taken to discover the originator of those allegations, with a view to his prosecution or exclusion from the precincts of this House.

That was a specific instruction given by this House to the hon. the Speaker; and while I am sure, sir, that every member will support you in your rights and privileges, as far as you are right in excluding any person from the galleries of this House, yet I think that in this particular instance you have not acted so much upon your general powers as upon the specific resolution passed by this House; and I think that is borne out by the copy of correspondence I have in my possession at the present time, and which hon. members will have seen in the newspapers of this morning. In a letter which was sent by you, sir, to this gentleman, you say:—

The evidence adduced in the late action in the Supreme Court against the proprietors and publishers of the "*Kalgoorlie Miner*" for publishing in that paper a false and scandalous libel of certain members of the Legislative Assembly, establishes the fact that this false information was transmitted to the paper aforesaid, and also to various papers in the eastern colonies, by you, and, moreover, that you made no reasonable endeavour to ascertain from competent and reliable persons whether the statements contained in your telegram had any foundation in fact. As Speaker and executive officer of the Legislative Assembly, it devolves upon me to carry out the directions contained in the resolution which was passed by that body, a copy of which is enclosed herewith, and I now, therefore, have to inform you that I have instructed the officers of the House that they are to enforce the terms of the resolution as agreed to by the Assembly, and that you be excluded from the House.

These are the terms in which you, Mr. Speaker, as I am informed, wrote to the person who is alleged to have originated the false and scandalous libel, so called. That letter seems to indicate that you, sir, were of the opinion that, in taking this action, you were simply carrying out the instructions of the House, conveyed in the resolution which was passed. I wish to say that I am not opposing this motion; and, while I acknowledge to the fullest possible extent the rights and privileges which you possess as Speaker, in reference to regulating the galleries and removing any person from this House, still in this particular instance I think that an innocent man, who has merely taken an innocent part as an intermediary in this regrettable incident, is being punished impro-

perly by the action you have taken. This House expressly authorised that the originator of this false and scandalous libel, so-called, was to be ascertained, and that steps should be taken to prosecute him or to exclude him from the precincts of this House. I think that was a perfectly proper resolution, and one which I supported and even suggested; but I did not suggest nor support the idea that any person who was merely an innocent intermediary should be made to suffer by this direction.

THE PREMIER: We all meant the man who sent the telegram. I meant that, at any rate.

MR. VOSPER: The evidence given in the Supreme Court, in the case of the *Kalgoorlie Miner* newspaper proprietors, went to show that the information was supplied, not by a person named Colebatch, but by a person named Buzza; and, if any person should be excluded from the galleries of this House, it is Mr. Buzza. In addition to that, we have evidence to show—and the evidence is sworn testimony, which was uncontradicted—that this information was given, first of all, by an officer in the employ of the Government, who had been specially deputed to give information to the newspaper reporters. Those reporters acted in all good faith; and Mr. Colebatch, in pursuance of his ordinary duties, received this information from Mr. Buzza, and transmitted it to the *Kalgoorlie Miner* newspaper. The so-called libel was published in good faith by the conductors of that newspaper, as is shown by the fact that, after their trial in the Supreme Court, they were acquitted by the jury of the charge made against them. I would ask hon. members to consider what that verdict involved. The question was put by Mr. Justice James to the jury somewhat in this form:—

If they were of opinion that the defendants did not exercise due care and caution in the publication of the libellous article, then they were liable to be criminally punished for the libel they had committed.

The jury found that the accused men were not guilty, and thereby practically announced that those men had exercised proper care and caution in publishing that report. I think the evidence showed also that Mr. Colebatch exercised all the

care and caution which he could be expected to use in the circumstances.

THE PREMIER: The court did not say that, nor did the jury either.

MR. VOSPER: No; the jury did not say that; but I contend that Mr. Colebatch was not on his trial, and therefore could not offer any defence as to the action he took, by showing that he did exercise proper care and caution. That question was not properly before the court, and of course that question in regard to Mr. Colebatch was not raised; but the evidence showed, clearly and distinctly, that he merely acted as an innocent intermediary. Mr. Colebatch has expressed his willingness, in a letter to the Speaker, to apologise to this House for the innocent share he took in transmitting that report to the newspaper. He has offered to make a full, ample, and complete apology to this House for his share in the transaction; but he states that he cannot go so far as to say he himself was the author or originator of this false and scandalous libel. To do that would be to incriminate himself in the grossest way. He has refused to do so; but, as I say, he has offered to apologise for the action he himself innocently took.

THE PREMIER: Where has he offered that?

MR. VOSPER: In his letter to the Speaker. Here is his apology:—

Mr. Colebatch acknowledges receipt of Mr. Speaker's communication of 17th inst., covering copy of resolution of Legislative Assembly. While expressing his regret in the fullest manner possible that the report complained of should have been transmitted to and published by several newspapers, Mr. Colebatch respectfully submits that Mr. Speaker has altogether failed to comprehend the nature and purport of the resolution passed by the Legislative Assembly, and has also failed to attach due and proper weight to the evidence adduced at the recent trial of the proprietors of the "Kalgoorlie Miner."

Then he goes on to say he is not the originator of the article. Then, again, Mr. Colebatch's editor, in a subsequent letter to the Speaker, stated that Mr. Colebatch was prepared to express his profoundest regret to the House.

THE PREMIER: What has he to do with it?

MR. VOSPER: He is this man's employer, and he says Mr. Colebatch is willing to express it.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Colebatch had better say it himself.

MR. VOSPER: Mr. Colebatch has said so himself. I think the right hon. gentleman is making himself wilfully dense on this subject; because, immediately before he interjected, I had read a quotation from a letter by Mr. Colebatch offering an apology.

THE PREMIER: But in that he says the Speaker was doing what he had no right to do.

MR. VOSPER: I am not supporting that view of the position. I am only saying that the resolution of the House has not been carried out in its entirety. The resolution expressly declared that the originator of this false story should be discovered, and should be excluded from the House. Mr. Colebatch has a right to claim that he is not the originator, and he claims that he has been unjustly punished. As far as I know, and I know very little of him, Mr. Colebatch is a respectable member of society, and a respectable member of the journalistic profession. As long as he remains in that profession, it will be a record against him, and it will remain in the minds of all editors from whom he might seek an engagement, that he was excluded from the precincts of this House for having published a false, malicious, and wicked libel. I maintain that the House should not, without the greatest possible proofs, inflict such a stigma as that upon a member of the journalistic profession. I suggest that Mr. Colebatch has not been heard; he has had no opportunity of defending himself either in this House or the Supreme Court. In my opinion, a more appropriate course to adopt would be to summon him to the bar of the House, and receive his apology; or, if not, to carry out the original intention of the House as expressed in the resolution, and make such investigation as will lead to the discovery of the originator of this report, and punish him. We certainly ought not to punish a man who gave what he believed to be a genuine piece of information. The present position of affairs is a very curious one. We have an inquiry with regard to Inspector Orme, and what a farce it is to punish one man whilst there is an inquiry whether another person has been guilty

or not. I have said that I do not intend to oppose this motion, because I think that, if this matter is defended, Mr. Colebatch will have an opportunity of clearing himself to some extent before that court. But, at the same time, I do not think it wise or dignified on the part of this House to punish a person whose guilt has never been established, and whose innocence may be established, perhaps, if there be an investigation of the matter. I think that the House, in dealing with the whole question relating to this libel, so called, has possibly been over-anxious to assert its dignity. I think that the dignity of the House should be of a sufficiently robust character to take care of itself; and that, in being so anxious to assert its dignity and to salve the wounded feelings of its members, the position the House has occupied throughout the whole of the proceedings has been a most undignified one. An action was laid in the Supreme Court, and it failed ignominiously. Now this policy has been carried still further, and a man whose guilt has never been established is to be punished by being excluded from the precincts of this House. As I say, I shall not oppose the motion; but I wish to protest against what I consider the grossly unjust treatment to which Mr. Colebatch has been subjected.

THE PREMIER: Grossly unjust! That is pretty strong, and a very improper remark, I think.

MR. VOSPER: If so, I can be called to order, I am sure.

THE PREMIER: You ought to be.

MR. VOSPER: Oh!

MR. LEAKE (Albany): I hope the expression "grossly unjust" is not meant to apply to the Speaker.

MR. VOSPER: Oh, no; not at all.

THE PREMIER: Whom else does it apply to?

MR. LEAKE: It looks as if it were so; and I would resent such an expression as strongly as I possibly could.

MR. VOSPER: Allow me to explain that perhaps the word used was not altogether a proper one. What I intended to convey was not that there had been any deliberately unjust action on your (the Speaker's) part, or on the part of the House; but I think I am safe in saying that in this case there has been a mis-

carriage of justice, because I believe this man has been wrongly punished. That is my view.

MR. LEAKE: I cannot appreciate the arguments that have been advanced in support of the allegation that an injustice has been done in this instance. You, Mr. Speaker, have had the resolution of the House to deal with; and, as far as I can see, you have done your duty fearlessly, and without favour to either party. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] The resolution passed by the House was as follows:—

That this House directs the Attorney General to prosecute before the Supreme Court the proprietors and publisher of the newspaper, the "Kalgoorlie Miner," for having in the said journal of the 23rd of September, 1898, published a scandalous libel on two members of this House.

The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) was anxious to move an amendment, but he could not do so because he had spoken; and in consequence of that, I moved that the following words be added:—

And that steps be taken to discover the originator of these allegations with a view to his prosecution or exclusion from the precincts of this House.

Inquiries were set on foot, and subsequently the proprietors of the newspaper were tried in the Supreme Court; and I am not sorry to say they were acquitted. But during the course of these inquiries, it was found that Colebatch was undoubtedly the originator of the libel. It would be splitting phrases to say he was not the originator of the libel, or of these allegations. He was, in effect and in fact, the originator of the libel, because it was he who collected these rumours that were current and reduced them to writing, converting into a libel what up to that moment was a mere slander. Slander, as hon. members I presume know, is defamation that is spoken as distinguished from libel, which is defamation that is written. I take it that what the House meant, in speaking of the originator of the allegations, was the originator of the libel. If this matter had been allowed to float about in the air merely as slanderous matter, as words spoken, nothing would ever have happened, and nobody's dignity would have been injured in the slightest degree. But it was the

reducing of this to writing and constituting it a libel that caused certain parties to feel aggrieved. Thereupon the attention of the House was drawn to the fact ; the resolution moved, and the aid of the Speaker invoked, as was said, to maintain the dignity of Parliament. How could the Speaker do anything but what he has done, when we have an admission from this gentleman himself that he transmitted the information to the newspaper? How, I ask, could the Speaker, in the face of this resolution as amended at the instance of myself and the member for North-East Coolgardie, fail to direct that the gentleman should be removed from the precincts of the House, unless I presume he had, so to speak, purged the contempt he had committed? It was open to Mr. Colebatch to have written, and I think it would have been better had he done so, an unqualified apology to the Speaker. I am satisfied that if this had been done, hon. members and the Speaker himself would have said everybody was satisfied, and that no more need be said. But it is not sufficient to express regret to the Speaker, and to say in almost the same sentence that the Speaker is wrong.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. LEAKE: That is not an apology, and consequently I think the Speaker was perfectly right in removing that gentleman from the gallery. If that gentleman likes, even now, to submit an unqualified apology for what he has done, I for one will urge its acceptance. But until he does so, I shall maintain the Speaker in everything he does, whether strictly within the letter of the resolution, or within its spirit. I submit to the House that the motion now before the House is properly brought forward, and properly supported, and really not a word can fairly and properly be said against it. I should be very sorry to think the day may arrive when any single member of this House would say anything to cast the slightest slur upon the integrity or impartiality of our respected Speaker.

SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

THE SPEAKER: If this House will bear with me, I would just like to say a few more words with reference to the question, because I think hon. members will acknowledge I have been extremely forbearing in this matter. As soon as I

knew what person transmitted the telegram—because I consider that was the person meant by the resolution—the Attorney General consulted with me as to whether he should prosecute this man ; and I said, “No ; I think you had better not do that. Let me deal with him under the latter part of the resolution, and exclude him from the precincts of the House.” After that, it was some days before I took any further action. I did not do so until after the trial took place in the Supreme Court, when it became very evident to me that Mr. Colebatch was, by his own acknowledgment, the man who sent the telegram ; and furthermore that he did not take the pains he ought to have done to satisfy himself whether there was any truth in the report. I considered then that I was only carrying out, if not the strict letter of the resolution, the spirit of it at any rate, by taking some action ; and I therefore wrote to Mr. Colebatch the letter, a copy of which has appeared in the newspapers of this morning, stating that in accordance with the office I hold, and to carry out the resolution of the Legislative Assembly, therefore I excluded him from the precincts of the House in accordance with the resolution. I do not think any Speaker has perhaps ever been subjected to so gross an insult as that which is contained in a letter I received last night, and which will have been seen in this morning's paper, written by Mr. Lovekin, in which he defied me, and actually defied me to exercise the authority lodged in me by the Standing Orders of this House ; and, not only that, but he actually invited an officer of this House to commit an assault on the gentleman whom I wished to exclude from the precincts of this House. I do not think a greater insult could be offered to the House and to myself as Speaker ; and, if I had chosen to take extreme measures, I should have reported to the House to-day that a breach of privilege had been committed, and asked the House to take some action in regard thereto. I did not wish to take extreme action, and I think that in this matter I have shown great forbearance. It is not agreeable to me to have to take extreme measures at any time ; but whilst I am here as executive officer of this House, I shall carry out my duty ; and in taking

such proceedings as I am empowered to take by this House under the Standing Orders, no threats of proceedings at law will prevent me from doing so.

Question put and passed, without dissent.

FURTHER LETTER: AN APOLOGY.

[Later in the evening, the matter was referred to again, as follows.]

THE SPEAKER said: It is only just and right I should read to the House a letter I have received this evening from Mr. Lovekin. I made some rather severe remarks on the previous letter which Mr. Lovekin transmitted to me, and I did not think they were a bit too severe at the time. I am glad to say that Mr. Lovekin now offers an apology to myself and the House, and it is only right I should read his letter, as follows:—

Sir,—In view of the remarks made by you this afternoon, it seems to me that I should be wanting in my duty were I to delay taking steps to remove the impression which my letter of yesterday has evidently created. I can assure you that I had no intention whatever of defying either yourself or the House. Any portions of my letter, therefore, which appear to you, or to the House, to be improper or disrespectful I beg leave to withdraw, and to express my regret for their insertion. It is, however, due to myself to add that my object in addressing you was solely to aid in the avoidance of any scene or disturbance within the precincts of the House, in connection with Mr. Colebatch's expulsion; considering, as I did, that in so acting I was assisting rather than defying you in the execution of your duties, and helping to preserve the House from scandal and indignity.

MINERAL LANDS REGULATIONS.

SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Mr. MORAN brought up the report of the Select Committee which had been appointed to inquire into the working of new regulations made under the Mineral Lands Act.

Report received, read, and ordered to be printed.

MOTION (URGENCY): PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): I desire to move the adjournment of the House, for the purpose of giving a brief personal explanation. In this morning's issue of the *West Australian* newspaper appear what purport

to be the remarks made by the Attorney General in this House yesterday, while discussing the question of receiving the report of the Select Committee on the Immigration Restriction Act and the existence of leprosy in the colony. The hon. gentleman is reported to have said, substantially, that I was the originator of the report, and that the other members of the Committee were not aware of its tenour. I wish merely to assure the House that the report which I presented was prepared in accordance with the wishes of the Select Committee; that it was brought before the Committee and read in the presence of all the members except one; that it was subsequently read clause by clause and passed by those present, each clause being put in strict accordance with the Standing Orders; and, subsequently, I was authorised, as chairman, to affix my signature to the report. I wish to make that statement because, from the report which has appeared in this morning's newspaper, it may be inferred that I had the framing of that report and presented it on my own responsibility, whereas I wish to assure hon. members that the Standing Orders were complied with in every particular.

Motion for adjournment not seconded.

METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

No. 2, TO EXTEND BORROWING POWER.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): In moving the second reading of this Bill, I may say briefly that the object of the Bill is to allow the Metropolitan Waterworks Board to borrow a further sum of £50,000 from the Savings Bank. I regret very much to have to move in this direction, which is certainly against my inclination; but the fact of the matter is that the members of the present board have resigned, and their resignations have been accepted to take effect at the end of this month; it being necessary to have some machinery in the meantime for carrying on the work of the

board until a new board can be appointed. The whole question is surrounded with difficulties; but I am inclined to think the best course to pursue is to appoint another board temporarily, on the understanding that the matter may be considered between this and the next session of Parliament, when we will have more time to consider the whole question, and perhaps be in possession of more information in regard to the future requirements of the city. The position of the board at present is that there is just about enough money to carry on with; that the board owe a considerable amount of money as interest due to the Savings Bank, some £13,000 or £14,000, and there are no funds whatever for paying this money, nor for undertaking any new work in connection with the water supply. In fact, the board have expended every penny of cash which they received, and now are dependent entirely on the rates they receive for the water supply. Considering the fact that this House last year supplied further funds to the Board to the extent of £130,000 for carrying out new works, it must come as a surprise to hon. members to find, from the Committee's report, that this money has gone so quickly. I regret that the Government did not keep a tighter hand on the board, financially; but there were various reasons why it was not thought necessary at the time, and we certainly expected they would spend the money wisely, and that the approval of the Government would be more a formal matter than otherwise. Now, however, I have no hesitation in saying here that the board have wasted an immense amount of money, and at the present time we have not got a proper equivalent for it. The sum of £130,000, if economically expended, would have done all that has been done, and would have placed the waterworks in as good a position as they are in at present, besides leaving a substantial balance to credit. The fact is, the whole of that money is gone, and extensions of the water service are required in the city and suburbs, those extensions having been contemplated when the original Act was passed. The people of Subiaco are at present in great distress in regard to want of water, as they have not got any kind of water supply. This diffi-

culty could be obviated to some extent by extending the service along one or two of the streets; but there is no money for that purpose in the possession of the board. Then, again, the reservoir at Mount Eliza, which immediately supplies the city, is very small, and I do not think it holds more than a day's supply at one time: and it was always contemplated that a new reservoir should be built there, in order to keep a considerable supply available, in case of any breakage in the pipes connecting this storage reservoir with the main reservoir at the Canning. That is a work which ought to be carried out, and the board, of course, contemplated carrying it out. They bought cement for it, and then got rid of the cement at a considerable expense; and they had also to pay a considerable sum of money to get rid of the contract. They bought a steam navvy to excavate the tank, and paid as much for that machine as the whole work of excavation would have cost if it had been done by hand. £670 was the estimated cost of the excavation and they bought the steam navvy for this work, at a cost, when repaired, of £650. Hon. members have read the report of the Committee, and they will see there was a great want of economy in the board's practice. I will not say any more about that; but it comes to this, that if we are to make this water supply what we want it, if it is to serve the people and fulfil our obligations, we must have more money. There is one thing that ought to be done: the interest due to the Savings Bank should be paid. A new reservoir at Mount Eliza ought to be built. There is no doubt also that some extensions of the pipe service should be made, and especially, I think, the Subiaco extension along the main road is necessary. That would not cost much, and it is necessary. The only suggestion I have to make is that we authorise the board to raise £50,000 more. That sum will provide more than they want, I think, for this year. Hon. members will notice that in clause 3 I propose to reiterate what is already, perhaps, sufficiently clear in the existing Act:—

No portion of the moneys raised under the powers conferred by this Act shall be expended

by the board without the approval of the Governor.

I only hope the new board, when appointed, will take more notice of that clause than their predecessors took of the similar section in the existing Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What guarantee is there that the new board will be more economical than the old one?

THE PREMIER: We will take good care not to allow them to have money to waste.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Did you take care with the last one?

THE PREMIER: No; we had such confidence in that board that we thought they would be economical.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You will have confidence in the next one.

THE PREMIER: We will keep a tighter grasp upon the money; in fact, I propose, if I am here until Parliament meets next year, to personally supervise the expenditure very closely. I shall take care that no money goes out unless I know how it is to be spent. We are told by the chairman that, having requested the Governor's authority to expend a sum of £43,000 and not having obtained it, he took no more notice of the matter, but spent the money. Apparently he thought if the Governor did not approve of it, it had nothing to do with him. He forgot altogether that he was spending money illegally. That seemed to give him very little concern. I regret very much to speak of the board in this way; but what can I do? I think they have wasted an immense sum of money. No doubt they had difficulties in the way; but after all, anyone who reads that report must come to the conclusion that in spite of their hurry, with a certain object in view, after all they never gained that object. At any rate, I am firmly convinced that there has been a great waste of money.

MR. WILSON: How much?

THE PREMIER: I believe £50,000. The superintendent said they had wasted £70,000. He said half of the money could have been saved. I believe that £50,000 might have been saved. We know that we have a considerable quantity of pipes which are not required. We know that we have bought these pipes at a very high price—considerably higher than should

have been paid. We know very well that they bought things that they did not require and never used; and that the whereabouts of some of those articles is unknown. Of course they are not very expensive things, but a straw shows how the wind blows. The steam navvy, for instance, has never seen Perth. It is up at Midland Junction. Trucks are up there too; pipes are lying somewhere upon the hills, which have never been used, and are not wanted. A railway was laid down, which could have been dispensed with, and the rails are stacked somewhere out of the way.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was a splendid board!

THE PREMIER: All I say is that there has been a great waste of money. However, there are two courses open to us now: to go along as we are, making this board live upon its receipts without carrying out any new works, and allowing the interest to stand over. That course is open to us, and I was rather inclined to adopt it; but I think this other course is the better after all. If we appoint a new board, although they will have statutory powers, I can assure this House that the board will not be allowed to do just as they like, and that the matter will be considered again when this House meets next year. If we do appoint a board, it will be a board on which the Government will have a controlling influence.

MR. MORAN: With the Engineer-in-Chief at the head of it?

THE PREMIER: Well, I do not think so. I think he has too much to do already. At any rate, we will have to take care that, whatever can be said about the past, the Government will be absolutely responsible for the expenditure of the money in the future. I beg to move the second reading.

MR. WILSON (Canning): I wish to speak to this motion for a few minutes, simply because my name has been dragged through this report pretty freely. First of all, I should like to say that it appears to me that the endeavour of the Select Committee, or at any rate of the chairman of that Committee, was to prove that something wrong or underhand had taken place in respect of the transactions which I was

connected with. I could not help feeling that.

THE PREMIER: I do not believe that. Certainly not.

MR. WILSON: The questions put right through seemed to be "drawing" questions—questions intended to draw something out which some one was supposed to be attempting to keep in the background. All my transactions, as far as the Waterworks Board are concerned, are perfectly fair and above-board, as I hope all my commercial transactions are. I represent the Associated Pipe Founders of Melbourne; and I tendered for the supply of a certain quantity of those pipes on behalf of those iron founders, and received the contract for 2,500 tons in all, I think. The whole of the pipes had to be made and delivered in Western Australia within three months. That contract was carried out satisfactorily; and the evidence shows that the price paid for the pipes was 25s. per ton higher than that for which they could have been imported from the old country.

THE PREMIER: Johnson's tender was £6 5s.

MR. MORGANS: It was £6 15s. 6d.

MR. WILSON: The evidence, as I have read in the report, was to the effect that the Waterworks Board might have saved 25s. per ton on those pipes, had they ordered them from the old country. Now, any business man will recognise that 25s. per ton is not an excessive advance to pay for pipes manufactured in the colonies, and delivered in such a short space of time as the period in which those pipes had to be delivered. My complaint is that the Premier, who sat as chairman of that Committee, did not think fit to call me to give evidence before it. Had he called me, he would have found out the whole of the circumstances connected with the contract; he would have ascertained that the price was not excessive in the circumstances; and he would have further ascertained that I earned the large commission or brokerage of 1 per cent. on the transaction. There is another matter in connection with which I was pretty frequently referred to, and that was the sale of a small locomotive for £300. It was sought to prove that I was practically an outsider brought in for the purpose of

selling this locomotive; whereas every business man in Western Australia knows that I have been mixed up with the supply of plant to the Midland Railway ever since I came to this colony. The Government themselves, when they purchased carriages some years ago, could not get delivery till my signature was attached to the order to deliver; and the Government knew very well that I had charge of all the material; that I seized those locomotives when the Midland Railway was stopped; that I seized the stock afterwards sold to the Government—the trucks and everything else connected with it; and naturally I had these articles for sale. I offered them to the Government; the Government did not buy them; I sold one engine to Baxter and Prince, another to Mr. Hedges, and the other to the Waterworks Board. It was a natural business transaction; and why the Premier did not think fit to call me to give evidence upon it, or to call Mr. Hedges with regard to the steam navy, concerning which I know nothing, I cannot understand. It appears to me that the Waterworks Board have been convicted of this extravagance on the evidence of one man, and that man their foreman—an outdoor man who had no recourse to the invoices, and no means of ascertaining the financial position of the board, and who, therefore, knew nothing at all about it. He is the only man who gave evidence; and because he says they have wasted £70,000, his statement is accepted as a fact. Why was not outside expert evidence brought forward? I maintain, as regards the chairman of the board, that he is well known to the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues to be a man who did not stint the expenditure of money when he wanted to get work carried through. That was his recommendation for the appointment. The city was suffering from a water famine at the time. The public were crying out for water; it was a question of getting water at any price; and I believe the instructions of the Premier himself were to get the water into Perth. The board went about that work. They brought the water into Perth; and I am sure, if they had ordered their pipes from the old country, they would not have had their water in the summer fol-

lowing; but they got it by that time, though at a rather extravagant price. I gather from the evidence that the extra cost of the pipes was something like £17,000; and I do not think, as a business man and a practical man, that an extra cost of £17,000 was an extravagant amount to pay to relieve Perth in her dire necessity.

THE PREMIER: But we did not get the water any quicker on that account.

MR. WILSON: Oh, yes: you did. They got pipes delivered here—2,500 tons—from the Associated Pipe Founders.

THE PREMIER: That was for reticulation.

MR. WILSON: But you could not give the suburbs water without reticulation pipes. The reticulation pipes in Perth at one time were 1½ iron pipes.

THE PREMIER: And they are being used to this day.

MR. WILSON: No; they were taken up.

THE PREMIER: Not all of them yet.

MR. WILSON: A great number of them.

THE PREMIER: It was want of pressure that constituted the difficulty.

MR. WILSON: Not at all; you could always get enough pressure from a reservoir 600 feet above the sea level.

THE PREMIER: But the reservoir was not full, and we could not get enough water into it.

MR. WILSON: The board were convicted of extravagance on the evidence of the outdoor foreman, who knew nothing at all about it; and the Committee should have called further evidence, especially in respect of anyone whose name was brought before the Committee, and against whom charges were practically levied. Such people should have been called to give evidence, and to explain their exact positions. I do not wish to delay the House any longer in connection with this Bill. I simply want to ventilate my opinion in respect of it, and to state again that, so far as I know, there has been no underhand work in connection with that Waterworks Board. If I thought there had been, or if I knew anything that would prove that contention, I should be the first man to bring it before the House.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): After the remarks of the Premier, it will be interesting to know what course the Government intend to pursue with regard to the appointment of a fresh board. Perhaps it would be well to have a professional man. I think that if we had an engineer who understands water works, it would be an advantage. Someone should be specially appointed who could advise the Government on matters of importance of this kind, particularly when they are called upon now and again to expend large sums of money in what is practically the engineering portion of the work. I do not know whether the laying of these pipes was done under the control or supervision of the department in any way.

A MEMBER: No.

MR. LEAKE: Then we find they were acting without any professional advice.

HON. H. W. VENN: The chairman is a professional engineer.

MR. LEAKE: He is not a hydraulic engineer.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: He is a railway engineer.

MR. LEAKE: Hydraulic work is a special branch. You want a specialist for that sort of work. There is plenty of work for him. If we find there is not enough work with regard to the metropolitan water supply, I dare say his services can be engaged in other departments; but by all means let us have a properly qualified professional hydraulic engineer associated with this board. Let there be someone of experience who may be consulted on matters where hundreds of thousands of pounds are involved. The salary of a man like this is a mere drop in a cup of water. You save heaps of money by having a proper assistant. Here we find that £70,000, or at least £50,000, has been wasted. £50,000 would pay the engineer's salary for many years. I think that to go in for cheeseparating business is false economy. A suggestion has been made to me that such a person as I have referred to should be appointed. It struck me as being a useful suggestion, and I make it to the House.

HON. H. W. VENN (Wellington): It must be satisfactory and gratifying to the House that the member for the Canning

(Mr. Wilson) has made the explanation he has. In fact, it would have been somewhat strange, in view of the evidence before the House, and in view of the fact that he was not called by the Committee to give any evidence, if he had been silent. It is most gratifying to the House to have heard the explanation of the hon. member. As a member of the Committee, I regret that I was unable to give that attention which I feel I ought to have done. It is very seldom it can be said I neglect my duties on any Committee. I am regular in attendance, and endeavour to carry out the duties as far as my ability will allow me; but I was connected with other Committees at this time, more particularly the Tick Committee, in which I took a very great deal of interest, and it was impossible for me to regularly attend the meetings of this particular Committee; the consequence being that I was not so much in touch with the doings of the Committee as I now feel I ought to have been. I think I attended once or twice, but until the report came before the House I was not in a position to say whether I agreed with it or not. Of course, members will say, "It is your fault, and you ought to have attended." I admit this, but I say that it must have been an oversight on the part of the Committee in not calling the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) before them, because I feel sure that had that member given evidence it would have placed a somewhat different complexion on the matter. Members, on reading the evidence, must have felt that the hon. member was a party to transactions in the expenditure of public money, not at all satisfactory to the House, but he has dispelled that inference this afternoon, and it is most gratifying to himself, and to us also. We have had, and still have, a very high respect for the gentleman who was chairman of this board of directors; and we also hold in very considerable esteem the other members of the board, whose honour and integrity of purpose cannot be impeached by any member of this House. We thought at the time the board was a strong one, and some of us think so still. Some members occupy a high position in the mercantile community, and they are not men likely to run this colony into

extravagance. I feel that somehow or other we may possibly be on the wrong track. Although it may be said that, in the general course of things, the chairman of the board takes upon himself a great deal of the work, still that does not relieve the other gentlemen from their responsibility. The responsibility is there all the same, and they must accept it, and bear the brunt of it. In this particular instance they have to bear the brunt of it, because they have sent in their resignations to the Government. There was a great deal of force in what the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) said. The hon. member stated that the board was condemned entirely upon the evidence of the superintendent. It is a very bad precedent for the evidence of any person holding an important position, but not the head position, in any department, to be taken entirely against his superiors, without strong corroborative testimony.

THE PREMIER: The chairman was examined.

HON. H. W. VENN: If we adopt this principle we shall reach a time when the heads of departments will give evidence against Ministers themselves; and if we accepted that all through, I dare say we should find very ugly things at times. It is, I say, a bad principle to take, without very strong corroborative testimony, evidence of a gentleman occupying the position the superintendent did against the board. This gentleman should have been the guiding star of the whole transaction. He is the man under whose advice the board should have acted. He did not say much about the board having disregarded his opinions.

THE PREMIER: He did.

HON. H. W. VENN: That is not accentuated, but it is merely a general complaint showing up, as it were, the extravagance of the board. It does not show in any way that the board, as a board, totally disregarded the advice of the superintendent. It strikes me the superintendent must have been lacking in his duties from first to last if he found the board was altogether ignoring his advice, and incurring a large expenditure. I take it that the superintendent was a technical and expert authority, and if he found that the board absolutely at all times ignored his advice,

and incurred a large expenditure, the proper thing for him to have done, it seems to me, was to have reported the case to the Government, and to have resigned his own position. But we do not find there has been any collision or friction, or anything but perfect unanimity between the board and that gentleman. The first thing we find after the formation of the Select Committee is that this gentleman stands up as the first accuser. I do not wish to impugn the statement made by him, because it is impossible for me to do so. But, looking at the case in that aspect, it is a peculiar one, and I do not think its parallel has occurred anywhere before in this colony—certainly not in this House. I cannot say much regarding the administrative ability of the board in the way of condemning them for the expenditure incurred, because we must recall the time when not only the Government, but everybody else in the colony, incurred expenditure and liabilities for which they have been very sorry ever since. We know, as a matter of fact, that the Government during the boom time expended very large sums of money. The necessity for a supply of water was most urgent at the time. These gentlemen were appointed, and the very vital point was to obtain water for the city of Perth. Their reputation was at stake, as it were, and they were compelled by the exigencies of the case to have water in this city. What would have been the case if the supply of water had fallen short? If they had said they were economising, I do not think the assertion would have been accepted as a satisfactory excuse. I know of one instance where a man attempted to economise, and it was his downfall. Water was obtained here at a very great cost.

THE PREMIER: They did not get it any quicker by all their hurrying.

HON. H. W. VENN: I think they did.

THE PREMIER: They got the eight miles down, but they did not join the pipes.

HON. H. W. VENN: The evidence did not go to show that if the superintendent's advice had been accepted they would have got the water quicker. They acted on his advice with regard to getting the pipes, and increasing the mains and

the reticulation. Therefore, in viewing this case, it must not be utter condemnation by looking at it entirely from our present standpoint; but we should look back to the time and the circumstances when these gentlemen were called upon to act, and if we do so there is a great deal to be said for the action they took. I am with many hon. members in saying that, from our standpoint now, the expenditure does appear to have been excessive, and that some of it might have been saved; but it is impossible to say what we would have thought, had we been in their position and been called upon to act at that time. We should remember that it was a time of pressure, that there was a great desire to get the pipes laid in the shortest possible time; and, as we all know, if we want a thing done in the ordinary way we can get it done at current rates, but if we put on high pressure and want the work carried out in a very short time, we must expect to pay more for it, as this means extra labour and overtime, which must be paid for at higher rates. I am not prepared to say the £70,000, which is said to have been over-spent, was absolutely thrown away, and that the expenditure could have been avoided had anybody else been in the same position as those gentlemen. It would be difficult for anyone to say, if placed in the same position, that he could have saved the expenditure of that £70,000. I doubt whether the Director of Public Works or the Premier, looking at some of the large expenditure they have had to undertake in different parts of the country under considerable pressure, would have undertaken it in the way they did if they could have looked at the question with their present knowledge, and doubtless they would consider now that they could have saved some of that money. Therefore, as the Government did their best to save at the time, while acting under some pressure, we may reason in the same way in regard to those who were called upon to undertake this expenditure for an increased water supply, and we may infer that the same business capacity was brought to bear in trying to do as much as they could with the money. There are times in our lives when we are forced to do something we would not do, if we had a choice in the

matter, or which we could do better under different circumstances. In viewing the action of this board, we should not condemn it unreservedly, but should take into consideration the circumstances under which the work was done. With regard to the steam navy which was purchased, or the steam engine, or the boring plant, I cannot say much; but the evidence before the House does appear to show that the board did not exercise that clear judgment and business capacity which they ought to have exercised. Still, it is hard for us to say we could have done better in the circumstances. There is no evidence that those gentlemen did not do their best, but there is evidence that they acted without sufficient foresight. I think the House and the colony are bound to take the evidence as it appears before us, and to accept the inferences; and after members of the board have had an opportunity of knowing what evidence had been given before the Committee, I did expect to see in the newspapers some refutation from them.

THE PREMIER: They are going to do that, they say, by-and-by.

HON. H. W. VENN: It would have been better if that refutation had been given already, as otherwise a stigma may hang over them, and an inference may be drawn from the evidence that they are not suitable persons to act as guardians of the public purse. It is a hard thing to say of those gentlemen who are well known to us as having been successful in life, and having proved themselves capable in connection with their own business. It cannot be said, in regard to the chairman of the board, that he was an unprofessional man, because we all know he has been for years a large contractor in this and other colonies, that he is also qualified as a civil engineer, and I believe also as a hydraulic engineer; therefore, we cannot say there was any want of proper advice or proper knowledge, when we know the capabilities of the chairman, and that the board had also a superintendent who was a qualified man. I did not rise with the intention of opposing the second reading of the Bill. The Premier has drawn our attention to the fact that there are no funds to go on with, and that the interest due on money advanced has not been paid.

In order to carry out works which are now necessary, it is desirable that power should be given to borrow more money. I should like to say there is one part of the evidence that seemed to me to want some clearing up, for it is most incredible that the board never thought it their duty to pay the interest on the money they had borrowed from the Savings Bank. I cannot understand how the board absolutely ignored, as they did, the necessity of obtaining authority for the expenditure of the money, and that the board should have made this large expenditure of public money without getting the approval of someone. Not only that, but they went outside of their duty by not paying interest, which should be a first charge on their revenue. This is a point which should be cleared up, and I have been expecting to hear from the members of the board, through the newspapers, some explanation on the point. That fact alone is most condemnatory of the action of the board, and I feel sure that every member of this House, however much he may put aside the question of the purchase of stuff, and what may be called the extravagance in carrying on the work, must be convinced that the fact of not paying the interest due to the Savings Bank is itself condemnatory of the board. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill; and I should certainly like to hear other members address themselves to the question which has been spoken to by the Premier, as to the transactions of the members of the late board.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): There is not much use crying over spilt milk, or over money that has been spent; but I must express regret that any hon. member in this House should find it necessary, or should be forced to get up and make an explanation, to clear his own character from any imputation which may appear to have been levelled against him in the report of the Select Committee. I only regret that the hon. member had not an opportunity, in a correct way, of making his explanation before the Committee. I do not think the day has come when an hon. member should be prevented from carrying on his own business and at the same time working for the country as well: and when anything reflecting on his

character crops up, it would be as well to give him a chance of putting his views also before a Select Committee, as that course would obviate the necessity of his having to rise in his place and explain to this House anything that looks at all shady. The Premier, I take it, would be the last man who would endeavour to level any innuendo against any person. It was perhaps an oversight that the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) was not called before the Committee to give evidence. In the face of the defence of the board which has been offered by the member who has just spoken, we know it is a fact that there has been a lot of money spent, and the general impression is that we have not got full value for it. The public, of course, will not perhaps take into consideration the high pressure conditions under which the work was performed; but, after all, what does it matter? Those gentlemen did their best, and their best, according to the Select Committee, was not a good best. They spent a lot of money, and in the opinion of the Committee we have not got full value for it. I hope that, whilst we are struggling to cure that which is sucking the life blood of the colony by so many people leaving it to make holiday elsewhere or for other reasons, and especially going away in the hot weather about Christmas time, we will endeavour to make Perth a habitable and pleasurable city to live in, so that there may not be the same excuse or necessity for people spending their holidays and their money elsewhere. I think all our efforts will be in vain, if we do not stop this current of people going away for holidays elsewhere; but we should endeavour to make Perth so attractive and so healthy, that people may live in it with comfort in the summer time. With the thermometer at 112 in the shade, and no water for a bath the whole day long, there was room for complaint; and that state of things has brought Perth into great disrepute—that and its insanitary condition have helped to make Perth unpopular.

MR. WILSON: There is plenty of water now.

MR. MORAN: It is all right just at present. We are getting the city into a sanitary condition, though it is not quite healthy yet; but anybody who will tell

me that we have a good supply of water in Perth is telling me something which I know to be wrong. We know that the water is very often cut off for long periods.

MR. WILSON: That was two years ago.

MR. MORAN: I say there were any number of places last year also where water was not obtainable; but the point I want to make is that we have a large and thriving suburb at Subiaco, and it is our duty to give it a water supply. I hope this £50,000 will be wisely spent, and that Subiaco will benefit by the expenditure.

THE PREMIER: We must pay the interest first.

MR. MORAN: I do not think the supply at Subiaco would cost more than £6,000 or £7,000. That is my opinion about it. Our leading suburb, and the working man's suburb of this town, ought to be given a water supply before next summer. I shall support this Bill very cordially, and hope that if there have been mistakes in the past, those mistakes will serve at least to teach us to act more wisely and more carefully in the future. Perhaps a little blame rests on the Government for not exercising supervision over the expenditure of this money. If there is not blame due to the Government, there is certainly room for discontent with them for not being more jealous of the expenditure of this money, and for not getting more in return for it. However, it will teach them a lesson in the future; and we hope that the Premier himself will exercise due care in expending this further money it is proposed by this Bill to give the board the power to borrow.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I should like to get an assurance from the Premier that Subiaco will receive the attention of the new board. We have been waiting patiently.

HON. H. W. VENN: Have they got a bore?

THE PREMIER: Yes; they have a bore.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The existing board has promised definitely that a sum of about £6,000 would be expended in continuing the pipes from the Perth boundary down to Subiaco. If we are to confer increased borrowing powers on

this board, I think a suburb of such importance as Subiaco ought to have some assurance and some hope given it that the loan will prove of some assistance, at any rate, to it—not perhaps in the matter of the reticulation of the whole of the streets, but that the water may be brought within a measurable distance of the centre of the suburbs. On the general question, I should like to say that, when this board was appointed, we must take it for granted that the Government used their best judgment in forming it. I am very sorry to find that, at this stage, the Government that appointed the board have so much to say in its condemnation.

THE PREMIER: We are not responsible.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Premier has felt bound to say a great many things in regard to the expenditure and the operations of this particular board. I say it is a matter for regret that the Government which appointed the board should, within so short a time, have to make such strong statements concerning the board's operations. But I want this House to take into consideration a definite fact. When that board was appointed, some suburbs of Perth only got a supply from watercarts at midnight. People had to sit up, as I have had to do, to wait for the supply—those further away than Newcastle-street—till 12, 1, and 2 o'clock in the morning. This condition of things was most intolerable: and I do not think any board that had been appointed would have proved satisfactory to the citizens if they had been dilatory in supplying the water: and some allowance must be made for the way in which the board had to set about their work. Now, regarding the effect: last summer, while perhaps there might have been a few places in Perth left unsupplied with water, despite all the extension, there was no outcry of the same kind. The board succeeded, perhaps at a big cost, in getting over this very great difficulty; and for that they ought to receive some credit. They undoubtedly overcame difficulties. Perhaps it cost them too much to do so: I believe it did: but still, they did get over the difficulty. They were expressly charged with a certain piece of business: that was, to supply the city of Perth with water at all costs and at all hazards.

They did it. It cost money; and it is a little too bad to complain, perhaps, of the cost. That there has been some waste during their hurry, I am prepared to admit. With regard to this Select Committee, I regret that the evidence given before it was so distinctly one-sided. I think that many other persons might have been called, and that this House would then have had a much more satisfactory report than we have before us now. However, we have to deal with things as they are. I should like to have, if it is possible to get it, an assurance from the Premier that, as far as possible, Subiaco will not be forgotten in the expenditure of this £50,000. It is not a very big expenditure that is required by that suburb; and therefore I should like to have a definite assurance before this Bill passes that Subiaco will get at least £6,000.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie): Hon. members will admit that the Premier's statement that £130,000 have been expended in one year on a water scheme is rather a startling fact. I listened with interest to what the Premier said on this matter, and I take it that there is no doubt a considerable amount of money appears to have been spent upon this scheme which might have been saved. That appears on the face of it. The Premier tells us that he considers £50,000 of this £130,000 were wasted. Well, that is a very large sum of money; and, if that were so, it is quite clear that some other arrangement is necessary for the future handling of this very important question of the distribution of water. However, it appears to me that, in view of many circumstances connected with the position of that board, there are some valid excuses for the board. It would appear there was a great scarcity of water in Perth at that time—I can speak for myself, for I know well there was a great scarcity of water, and water was repeatedly cut off from the inhabitants of several places, at great inconvenience to them. Therefore I can quite understand that the board found this a very difficult question to deal with; and knowing the great necessity there was for supplying the inhabitants with water, I can quite understand they would be anxious to relieve the pressure of public opinion upon

them, and be prepared to make even extraordinary efforts to satisfy public demands. Something has now to be done. The Premier says he intends to appoint a new board. It appears to me, if that board is appointed, that the suggestion of the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake) is a good one, that there should be a hydraulic engineer upon that board. Whatever may be said on the question of the expenditure of money on public works, we know quite well that all engineering departments have their specialists. We have railway engineers, mechanical engineers, and hydraulic engineers, these being special branches of engineering; and it appears to me that, if the Premier could secure the services of a really competent hydraulic engineer to act upon that board, either as chairman or as an ordinary member, it would be to the great advantage of the city and of the community generally. With regard to the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), I am glad he had the opportunity of making the explanation he has given to the House, which I am pleased to say, so far as I am concerned, and I believe so far as every member of this House is concerned, is satisfactory in every way. I quite share the opinion of the hon. member with regard to this contract for pipes, that there was a great pressure and a great outcry for them; and when people are in a great hurry to have a certain work done quickly, they must be prepared to pay extra for it. I know quite well that, when I have required any particular work in connection with mining, if I want it within the ordinary time, I expect to pay only the ordinary prices; but if I want that work done specially, and in an exceptionally short time, I must be prepared to pay special prices for that; and I take it that this is what happened to the Waterworks Board. At any rate, the point is that the board have to be reconstructed; something has to be done. The Premier tells us that the board have not a cent now to meet any liability; and that they have not paid the interest on the loan. The Premier proposes that the new board should have £50,000 more placed at their disposal; and it is absolutely necessary they should have it, because they have firstly to pay the interest, and secondly there are certain works they must carry out,

and those works are absolutely necessary. The House will, no doubt, agree to it; and I think the Premier should take into consideration the proposal that, when the new board are formed, there shall be at least one practical hydraulic engineer upon it. I think, further, that the Premier would have a perfect right to put a strong business representative of the Government upon the board, in order that the Government, in view of the fact that they are advancing all this money to the board, might have a strong control over it; and, with a good engineer and a powerful financial and business man upon that board representing the Government, I think that in the future the expenses incurred by the board should be far more satisfactory to this House and to the country than they have been in the past.

THE PREMIER: With regard to the observations of the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson), I may say there were two or three reasons why he was not called to give evidence before the Select Committee. First of all, it was a very busy time of the session, and we did not have much time to take evidence. The second reason was that the information we received seemed to clear up everything that could reflect upon the hon. member. If I had thought for a moment that there was anything in the evidence reflecting upon him, I certainly would have called him; but I thought the explanations we received seemed to be all right, and perfectly satisfactory. And, in regard to the questions asked, the hon. member seems to think there were questions asked with the intention of diving into something of an underhand character. I may say, as chairman of the committee, that all the questioning, or nearly all of it, devolved upon me; and, with respect to any information that came to me in regard to these matters, I felt it my duty to ask questions, and I did so in the interests of persons affected. Even in the case of the chairman of the board, the questions asked were perhaps questions that he might have taken as reflecting upon him; but they were really asked in his interests as much as in those of anyone else, because it was useless to hear rumours and not inquire into them. I take it that anyone who has anything to do with matters coming within the

duties of a Select Committee would welcome, rather than otherwise, any questions which might, without explanations from him, bear a wrong construction. At any rate, I can assure the hon. member that the reply I received was considered by me satisfactory with regard to himself, or we certainly would have called him to explain it. I am glad to hear the explanation he gives to-day, though it is not news to me. I was convinced it was a business matter, and no doubt the hon. member, in his private capacity, was acting as an agent for others or for himself. I think it was generally for others. We had to consider the points, not as they affected the hon. member, but as they affected the board. It seems to me that when there was one tender for £8 5s., I think it was, and another for £6 15s., it was not a right proceeding to enter into negotiations with the tenderer at £8 5s. without entering into negotiations with the tenderer at £6 15s. If one person offers to do work within a certain time, and another in a longer time but at a much cheaper rate, it is not right, I say, to enter into negotiations with the higher tenderer in regard to reducing the price, and not to enter into communication with the lower tenderer. If I were the lower tenderer, I would not like it.

MR. WILSON: It was in England.

THE PREMIER: Johnson and Company?

MR. WILSON: In Scotland.

THE PREMIER: Yes; but I think they have agents in Sydney.

MR. WILSON: Oh, yes; but they would have to ship material from the old country.

THE PREMIER: At any rate, they might have had an opportunity of lessening the time, and there is no doubt if any one will take the trouble—I do not expect any one to do so now—to look through the evidence, he must come to the conclusion that the extra expense incurred in getting the pipes more quickly did not result in the water being obtained in Perth any sooner. Pipes were laid across the plains on the Canning, eight or nine miles, and it was intended at the beginning that they should be connected with the old main, so that the water should run from where the pressure was greatest, the stronger pipes being used for that portion.

It was understood, if that were the case, that if they could put on full pressure from the reservoir, sufficient water would come into the tank at Mount Eliza—at any rate as much water as there was in the hill reservoir. When the board got to the stage that they could connect this larger and stronger pipe with the old main, the summer had so far advanced, and the demand for water had so lessened, that they did not connect it, although all this expense of hurrying, of putting down a railway, and of getting five miles of cast-iron pipe, had been incurred. If they had gone much slower, they would have been ready for the following summer. That is clearly borne out by dates and figures in the report. Of course I regret very much to make this statement. These persons are friends of mine, and they are men of repute in the community, but, at the same time, that is one of the unpleasantnesses of public life. You are placed on a committee to investigate a matter, and in doing so you ask questions, some of which, perhaps, are resented by witnesses. Still, you are bound to ask questions, and to make a report, and perhaps you have to say that people have been extravagant, the end of it being that you have a personal quarrel over it—that is, I say, one of the unpleasantnesses of public life, but we have to put up with it. I will not budge from the opinion I have formed with regard to this board, though I know that there are honourable men upon the board, and men of repute. With regard to two of them, I feel quite sure that they did not dive as deeply into this business as they might have done. I do not blame them too much for that, because I think the chairman generally manages the business, or, at any rate, has most to do with it in many cases, and executive officers advise. At the same time, I have formed an opinion, and that opinion is that we have not got full value for our money, and that the board have been extravagant. I did not hesitate to frame the report, and I do not think there is anything very offensive in it, or anything that one could take exception to. We do not go further than saying that they were not economical, and should not be continued, and the matter should be placed on a different footing.

MR. MORGANS: I do not think there is anything offensive in the report.

THE PREMIER: No one likes to be found fault with. In regard to the Subiaco matter, no one desires more than I do to give water to those people. I know they suffer under a disability with regard to the subject, but it only shows what a great mistake we made in having anything to do with the water supply of Perth, when the whole responsibility is thrown upon the Government. The Perth council should have managed its own affairs. Many people say "I really think this water supply is a municipal matter, and they should have managed their own business in their own way."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If they gave it to Perth, they would not give it to Subiaco.

THE PREMIER: I think the Municipal Council should manage their own water supply; but the Government might lend them money, as is done in Queensland.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What about outside municipalities?

THE PREMIER: They, also, must look after themselves and manage their own business in their own way. It seems to me that in this colony everyone is desirous of having municipal government long before it is necessary; and as soon as they get it, they want someone else to do everything for it. They forget that the idea of municipal government is to be self-contained, and to manage their own business, getting votes of money from the Government if they can, and doing everything necessary for themselves. If matters were arranged in a different way, we might have some representatives of suburban municipalities on the board. What I should like would be to either let the Government be absolutely responsible for the water supply of these places, or else let the municipalities do it. I do not think it is a good plan to have this half-and-half business of a board with the Government really behind them, finding the money and being responsible for everything. Look at Subiaco: the people were displeased with me because I said I would not receive a deputation. It would be of no use for me to receive a deputation when I could not tell them anything; but I was doing more than that—I was preparing this Bill to assist

ernment should be placed in the position of supplying all municipalities with water. It is a new idea growing up here. We will have the Cue authority coming forward, too.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes.

THE PREMIER: And I am thinking of my own constituents, who have a running river within two or three miles of them, but still there is no water supply, and they are always bothering me about it. I would like to say, "Get your own water supply." There are a great number of suburban municipalities around Perth; and, supposing we put a main along the main road, from the boundary of this city, and the board put a main down as far as the railway, would that satisfy the Subiaco people? Not a bit of it; they would want every street reticulated; and Leederville and every other place would want the same.

A MEMBER: Victoria Park.

THE PREMIER: I do not see why Victoria Park should not have it as well as Subiaco; and then we have not enough water in this big tank, and we would want another £100,000 to build a new reservoir.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You would get more revenue.

THE PREMIER: I hope so; but this is getting into big figures—£400,000, whereas it was to be only £200,000. I may say £400,000 is due already by the people of Perth for their water supply; so that the outlay is getting to nearly half a million, and it is a serious matter, the interest being £16,000 a year at present, at 4 per cent. The income is not more than £20,000.

HON. H. W. VENN: The interest was not paid.

THE PREMIER: If the money had been due to a bank, the board would not have thought of leaving the interest unpaid. The chairman told me quite cheerily, "We thought it was much better to look after the water supply of the city, and look after the people of Perth, than to look after paying our interest to the Government or to the Savings Bank." While there are difficulties, I propose to appoint a board for a year, and I will think over what the hon. member has said. It is difficult to get a board to be economical,

and to do what we want ; But, at any rate, we will do what we can. Before I sit down I desire to say that if there is anything in the report, or the questions I have asked, which is offensive to the member for the Canning, I regret it. These things are taken down by the shorthand writer when you ask the questions, and you never see them again and revise them ; so you really do not know what is printed, or what the questions will look like when you see them in print. I can assure the hon. member I was satisfied it was not necessary to call him, or I certainly would have called him.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

At 6.29 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair.

At 7.30 the SPEAKER resumed the chair.

On the motion of the PREMIER, the House resolved into Committee on the Bill.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and report adopted.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

CEMETERIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by MR. SOLOMON, and read a first time.

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL (STREETS).

Received from the Legislative Council, and read a first time.

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council, and, on the motion of MR. MONGER, read a first time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed (from the last sitting) at page 85.

MINES DEPARTMENT (Minister, Hon. H. B. Lefroy).

Vote, *Mines*, £89,882 10s. :

MR. HUBBLE, referring to item 10, asked whether the warden of the Ashbur-

ton goldfield was to be dispensed with, as his salary was provided for only six months.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Yes ; the intention was to abolish this office, as the work could be carried on in the Gascoyne and Ashburton districts by the two mining registrars. The output of gold had been only 955oz. during the past 12 months, and the revenue received from the Ashburton and Gascoyne districts was only £260 in the same period. Therefore it was considered that to keep a warden at £500 a year, besides considerable expenses for travelling, would be extravagance. While regretting that this step was necessary, the circumstances required it to be taken, and until further developments took place, a warden would not be necessary.

MR. HUBBLE said he agreed with the remarks of the Minister to a certain extent, and that the work could be done by the two registrars. As far as Bangemall was concerned, a battery was being erected there, and would be working before Christmas.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The registrar in each of these districts could be made the acting warden, and the work would be performed economically and better.

MR. MONGER: The salary of the warden at Coolgardie, £750, was ridiculously small. The salaries of wardens on important goldfields were totally inadequate, and ought to be increased next year.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The Government fully recognised the important and onerous duties performed by wardens ; but it must be remembered that their salaries had been gradually increased year by year. The warden at Coolgardie had a salary of £750, an allowance of £150, and a house. The remuneration was fair and adequate.

MR. MONGER: The warden at East Coolgardie, whose salary was £650, was perhaps the most important officer of his class in the colony. Why was his salary smaller than that of the Coolgardie warden ?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: When framing the Estimates, the Government decided that no salaries above £160 should be increased this year. This principle had been adopted throughout all the

departments, and for that reason the salary of the worthy officer at Kalgoorlie could not be raised.

HON. H. W. VENN: The wardens' salaries were high enough. With allowances, they amounted to about £1,000 a year, which was a magnificent salary to be paid in a country with a population of 180,000 people.

MR. LEAKE: Undoubtedly. Even the Ministerial salaries were low enough.

HON. H. W. VENN: The Government had actually gone out of their way to give high salaries to wardens, in order to place them in a position of security and independence. No further increases should be made.

Item, Reward to Messrs. Perrin and Hay for discovery of coal at Collie, £100 each:

MR. LEAKE: The Government were evidently misinformed in regard to this item, inasmuch as the reward was to be divided between two gentlemen, while there was only one discoverer. Why did Mr. Hay share in the reward, when Mr. Arthur Perrin alone discovered the coalfield, and Mr. Hay only came in afterwards by arrangement with Mr. Perrin? All that Mr. Hay did was to join Mr. Perrin in securing some land on the Collie field. This was proved by a memorandum from Mr. Hay to Mr. Perrin, dated 28th September, 1889. About the same date, the two parties entered into an agreement that, in consideration of Perrin showing Hay the locality where coal had been discovered, Hay undertook to take up 300 acres of land, and to do one or two other matters. Such rewards should not be divided among the general public.

THE PREMIER: The amount was small.

MR. LEAKE: But it was a matter of importance to Mr. Perrin, who should have the credit of being the sole discoverer.

MR. KENNY: There were evidently two stories of this discovery. That which he had heard was that three men, one of whom was Mr. Hay, went up the river in that district and found coal by diving.

THE PREMIER: Yes; Messrs. Heffingstone and Sloan.

MR. KENNY: Having heard their story, he considered that Mr. David Hay was entitled to the reward, for he and his friends expended a great deal more than

the amount offered as a reward, in making the matter known and bringing in coal to have it tested.

HON. H. W. VENN: The Premier and himself knew as much about this question as anybody. There could be no shadow of doubt that Mr. Perrin was the man who first discovered coal in the colony. Mr. Perrin was a squatter, and not being a man of keen commercial instincts like Mr. Hay, he did not at the time of the discovery quite realise the importance of it. For many years he never told a word about it, but at last he communicated with Mr. David Hay, who recognised the importance of the discovery, and stimulated Mr. Perrin. An agreement was entered into between Perrin and Hay, and they went away together. If there was to be a reward for the first discoverer, Mr. Hay's name should not be bracketed with that of Mr. Perrin; but Mr. Hay was entitled to credit for his energy in bringing the matter before the public, and going up there at personal expense and trying to boom the discovery for himself. The lion's share of the amount should go to Mr. Perrin, and it should be a much larger sum than that proposed on the Estimates. The probability was that the deposit would last for all time, and would represent millions upon millions of money. In the future the coal would be absolutely invaluable. Any man who read the history of coalfields in other portions of the world would know the important part coal was playing in New South Wales and in England. Fifty or 100 years hence, the name of the man who discovered the coal here would be revered and respected. A hundred pounds was a paltry sum to pay to the discoverer. If a sum was to be given at all, it should be much larger. There was something more than money in a matter of this kind. Probably the first discoverer of gold in the colony was a prouder man when he saw the great success achieved by the goldfields here, than he would have been if he had received £5,000. We recognised that this was not a time to offer to anyone a large sum of money as a gratuity, and he fancied it would be almost better to expunge the sum altogether from the Estimates this year, and allow it to be carried on to better times, the Government then

coming down with a sum three or four times larger.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): There was no doubt Mr. Perrin was the first to discover coal upon the Collie, and he kept it secret for a long time until Mr. Hay got hold of the matter. He took Mr. Hay up there, and they got some specimens. From that time a good deal of money had been spent relative to the discovery, in trying to boom it. He knew Mr. Hay himself spent a good deal in not only taking up leases and trying to sell them, but also in taking people to the locality. No one in those days had any difficulty to get Mr. Hay to take him out in his trap to the Collie coalfield. No doubt it might be said he did so in his own interest, but still for all that there was a public spirit about him which we all desired to appreciate. In regard to the amount, it was small; but on looking at the Estimates we found that Mr. T. J. Cue, the discoverer of gold at Cue, was very willing to accept an honorarium of £100.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He would rather have £500.

THE PREMIER: He was not entitled to anything under the regulations, because the Government had already paid a reward for the discovery of the gold-field at Nannine, or near Nannine. Then there was Peter Lawler, the discoverer of Lawler's find, who was not entitled to anything, but was glad to accept an honorarium. While he (the Premier) agreed with the member for Wellington (Hon. H. W. Venn) that Mr. Perrin was the first to find coal on the Collie, he still thought Mr. Hay was equally entitled to this small honorarium, for the exertions he put forth in bringing the discovery under notice, and for the great energy he displayed. The amount was small; but, after all, he had seen Mr. Perrin, who expressed himself certainly not as dissatisfied, but as grateful for the consideration that was to be shown to him. He did not know what Mr. Hay's views were, but doubtless he considered the sum small. Perhaps the term "reward" was not a good one, "honorarium" being better. Though the amount was small, the Government gave it with a good grace. The House would not be doing wrong in passing the item as it stood on the Estimates.

MR. MORGANS: In connection with the discovery of coal, he had been making some inquiries, and found there were six or seven persons in this colony who claimed to have been the discoverers; but, as far as he had been able to see, Messrs. Perrin and Hay were those who were really entitled to the reward. The others were more or less in the position of Mr. Albert F. Calvert, who discovered Australia, and then wanted to discover Western Australia, but, after starting out from Roebourne in a buggy for the purpose, found he had forgotten to put any tins of condensed milk in the buggy, and had to turn back. He (Mr. Morgans) agreed that the amount now proposed to be paid was altogether inadequate, the discovery of coal being of great importance to the colony. He had been down there himself, and taken samples of coal and got them analysed. Although it could not be said the coal was of first-class quality, there could be no doubt it would play a very important part in the development of the gold-mining industry, and that it would also be used for industrial purposes. One objection was that it contained a large percentage of combined moisture, the samples he saw containing from 10 to 12½ per cent.

A MEMBER: What percentage of carbon?

MR. MORGANS: The percentage of fixed carbon, as far as he knew, was 40.

A MEMBER: That was low.

MR. MORGANS: But there were certain hydro-carbons. The coal was an exceedingly good one for general purposes. For steam boilers it was exceedingly good, and there was no doubt that as the goldfields were developed, and the timber within reach of the mines was gradually destroyed, and it was being rapidly destroyed at the present time, this coal would be valuable for the gold-fields, and he supposed a large trade would be done. No doubt Mr. Perrin was the discoverer of the first coal; but it was due to Mr. Hay's energy that the importance of the discovery was brought to the attention of the Government, and of other people interested in the development of the colony, and therefore both of them deserved a great deal of praise and credit. He hoped the Government would see their way not to

make this a final payment, but that they would on some future date, as the coal became developed, give a further reward.

MR. LEAKE: Some years ago a reward of £1,000 was offered for the discovery of coalfields, and really Mr. Perrin was entitled to that amount.

THE PREMIER: Not at all. The conditions had not been complied with. It would be necessary to ship 5,000 tons.

MR. LEAKE: There was no intention on his part to assert that Mr. Perrin could demand £1,000; but the fact that such amount was offered showed the value the Government placed on the discovery of coal. Mr. Perrin discovered it many years ago, when he was stock-hunting in that part of the country. He (Mr. Leake) did not wish to deprive Mr. Hay of £100, but he thought Mr. Perrin was entitled to more than that sum.

MR. MONGER: What was the good of talking? The amount as it stood could not be increased.

MR. LEAKE: It was not fair to couple the names of Mr. Perrin and Mr. Hay. The man who made the discovery should have the credit of it. An extract from Mr. Perrin's diary showed that Mr. Perrin had, on September 24, 1889, first pointed out the locality of the find to Mr. Hay. He (Mr. Leake) had also in his possession a copy of the agreement [copy read] in which Perrin agreed to show Hay the locality.

HON. H. W. VENN suggested that, as the House did not perhaps at present realise the future importance and the value of this coal, hon. members might agree that, when a certain quantity of coal had been exported, 200,000 or 300,000 tons, or even ten times that amount, the value of the field would have been sufficiently proved to justify a further reward being given, and in that case Mr. Perrin might be paid the balance of the money, say up to £800.

MR. MONGER: Was the hon. member in order?

HON. H. W. VENN: This suggestion was stimulated by the remark that a reward was offered some years ago, and the Premier's statement that the conditions were not fulfilled as to the export of 5,000 tons of coal. The fact of offering a re-

ward for an export of that quantity was a recognition of the value of the field; and if it was proper to give a reward of £1,000 upon an export of 5,000 tons of coal, the Committee might recognise now that a reward would be more fully justified upon an export of 200,000 tons, in which case a further sum might be paid to Mr. Perrin.

MR. LOCKE said he was sorry to hear so many persons giving all the credit to Mr. Perrin and taking it away from Mr. Hay. The real finder of this coalfield was a shepherd, who was some years ago mind-ing sheep for Mr. Perrin at the Collie; and he brought down some small samples, which Mr. Perrin kept for seven or eight years before the secret became known. When it became known, Mr. Hay persuaded Mr. Perrin to show him where the coal was got; therefore the whole credit for the discovery, or rather for the opening of the coalfield, was due to Mr. Hay, who with some others spent a lot of money and went to a great deal of trouble to develop that field, without making a shilling out of it. Still, the field was opened now, and he hoped it would develop a big industry. If any credit was due to Mr. Perrin, greater credit was due to Mr. Hay and his party for having opened up the field; and if the Committee were disposed to give any reward, they might divide it equally between the two parties.

MR. DOHERTY said he had no idea, until the latest information came before us of the great value of this national asset; and as he understood that tenders for letting the Government coal-mine at the Collie were to close to-day, it seemed desirable that so valuable an asset should be better known. Therefore it would be well and in the interest of the colony to defer the acceptance of any tender, until the facts which had been brought out were made known to the whole world, and tenders invited upon them. The time for accepting tenders should be extended.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Tenders had been called for the leasing of the so-called Government mine at the Collie, as an area of coal land which had been developed to some extent, and to-day was the time for closing of tenders. He did not think that, after calling for tenders and inducing people to make offers to the Gov-

ernment, it would be fair to those persons to extend the time for tendering, unless the tenders received were found to be unsuitable. The tenders at least should be considered. The Government mine at the Collie was not the only coal land which persons might take up on lease, though it was an area which had been partly developed, and for that reason the conditions of tendering would be more severe than for coal land which was not so developed.

MR. DOHERTY : The public had not had an opportunity of judging, until now.

THE MINISTER OF MINES : The member for Wellington (Hon. H. W. Venn), while he was Director of Public Works, had expressed the same views as he had stated to the Committee this evening, and had expressed them in stronger language. At the time hon. members opened their eyes with astonishment at the statements of the hon. member for Wellington. There had been every opportunity of advertising this fuel throughout the world, and perhaps the remarks made by the hon. member at the time spoken of had drawn some attention to the Collie coalfield. The member for Wellington thoroughly believed in this coalfield, and took a great deal of interest in it when Director of Works. It was to be hoped that in a short time the Government would be able to accept tenders for leasing their mine, and that a good output of coal would be obtained.

Item passed.

Item, Royal Commission on Mining, £500 :

MR. KINGSMILL asked the Minister to inform the Committee in what way £4,931 had been spent on this Commission in the twelve months ending June last, and how it was proposed to spend the £500 now on the Estimates?

THE PREMIER said he feared all this money had been spent.

MR. KINGSMILL : Information was also desirable as to when the Commission would cease their labours.

THE MINISTER OF MINES : The Mining Commission ceased their labours some time ago.

MR. MORAN : What was the result?

THE MINISTER OF MINES : The result could be seen in the evidence and the report of the Commission, now lying

on the table. The expenditure was incurred in paying so much a day to the members of the Commission.

THE PREMIER : Pick and shovel men got 30s. a day.

THE MINISTER OF MINES : He did not see why those members of the Commission who got 30s. a day should be called working men, any more than other members who did quite as much work.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Who fixed the 30s. a day?

THE MINISTER OF MINES : The amount was fixed by the late Minister of Mines.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Then why blame the people who took the fees?

THE MINISTER OF MINES : To some members of the Commission 30s. a day was paid, and to others £1 a day. The £500 on the Estimates was to provide for further expenditure, incurred since the close of the financial year.

MR. HUBBLE : This seemed an enormous sum to expend on the Mining Commission. At present there was a Commission inquiring into the penal system, and it was likely to sit for many months ; but he understood the members of this body received no payment.

THE PREMIER : That was the right way.

MR. HUBBLE : Then why should £5,000 have been spent on the Mining Commission?

THE PREMIER : That was a bad start, and the Government were frightened after that.

MR. MORAN said he had bitterly opposed the appointment of this Commission, which he regarded as a farce. There were, no doubt, several good men on the Commission ; but the appointment of a commission was a miserable way for the Government and Parliament to crawl out of the responsibility involved in the revision of the mining laws.

THE PREMIER : It was not expected that the Commission would last more than a month.

MR. MORAN : No doubt the people on the goldfields were clamouring for a change in the mining laws ; but what changes had the Commission recommended? Changes that the House were not prepared to accept. When this Commission was appointed, eleven new members had just been elected for the gold-

fields; and he hoped that never again would an irresponsible Commission—selected, God knew how!—be appointed under the circumstances. Some good had resulted from the labours of the Commission, but certainly not £5,000 worth of good. The selection of gentlemen to serve on the Commission was not, in every case, calculated to inspire confidence in their labours.

THE PREMIER: When he was in London last year, he was asked by telegraph whether he would agree to the appointment of a mining commission. There was some little difference of opinion, even amongst the Ministers, as to whether such a commission was advisable; and his reply to the telegram was that he thought a commission would do no harm. But that reply was given under great misapprehension. It was then about July, and Parliament had to meet in September, and his impression was that the Commission would sit only until Parliament met, and then present their report. His idea was that nothing but good could result from a report from such experienced persons as he understood would be appointed on the Commission, in view of the contemplated mining legislation. He had no doubt the late Minister of Mines also expected that a short report would be presented by the Commission in a month or six weeks. But the Commission sat fourteen or fifteen months, involving an expenditure of £5,000; an expenditure which was very much against the wishes of the House, and certainly against his own wishes. Had he had any idea the Mining Commission would have cost so much, he would not have agreed to its appointment.

MR. MORGANS: As a member of the Royal Commission on Mining, he might be permitted to say a word in reply to the remarks of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) and the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). The Commission had never had many friends in the House. Some members of the Commission had received payment for their services, but he was one who, from beginning to end, had not accepted, and never intended to accept, any remuneration. There was a certain amount of bitterness in the tone of the member for East Coolgardie, and also in the tone of

the member for Central Murchison, who had described the Commission as “a white-washing machine.” Well, he (Mr. Morgans) would admit that the Commission was “a white-washing machine,” because its object was to “whitewash” an act of the two hon. members in establishing in this country a dual title which Parliament felt obliged to wipe out.

MR. OLDHAM: Was it worth £5,000?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The point could have been settled without a whitewashing machine.

MR. MORGANS: The abolition of the dual title would be worth millions to this country. If it had not been for the Commission, it is doubtful whether the Government would have had the necessary information at their disposal, to justify them in bringing in a measure for the abolition of the dual title.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They had that information before the Commission was appointed.

MR. MORGANS: The member for Central Murchison had talked about the labours of the mountain bringing forth “a measly mouse.” But the result had been a very long report, and evidence had been taken from every class of the mining community in this colony, with regard to all-important mining questions.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And it had all been rejected.

MR. MORGANS: No; not all. One very important feature of the investigation was as to this question of dual title, and there was a consensus of opinion that the dual title was not only bad, but impossible. The House had acted on the results of the labours of the Mining Commission, and it was to be doubted whether Parliament would have gone as far as they had, in legislating on this point, had it not been for the investigations of the Commission.

MR. MORAN: Oh, yes.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There would have been legislation, if the Commission had never been appointed.

MR. MORGANS: It might be supposed that his (Mr. Morgans’) opinion was worth something in this matter. He attended a large number of the meetings of the Commission, and one thing that struck him during the whole course of the inquiry was the marvellous con-

census of opinion that it was impossible for the mining industry to succeed while this dual title obtained.

MR. MORAN: Was there unanimity on that point?

MR. MORGANS: Yes; and even representatives of the Workers' Association regarded the dual title as impossible. There were many other points of importance dealt with during the investigations of the Commission, including the question of the responsibility of mine owners. It was true the House had not acted on the advice of the Commission in this matter, because the point did not come within the scope of the Bill which was introduced. But when complete mining legislation came to be undertaken, the labours of the Commission would be found of the greatest possible value. In having a Mining Commission Western Australia was simply following the example of Queensland. In that colony a commission was appointed, which cost a great deal more than the one under discussion, and it obtained more information, with the result that the Government of Queensland were able to pass a mining law which they dared not have introduced except with the advice of the commission. The result of the Queensland Mining Commission had been to completely change the principles upon which the mining laws of that colony were based. One striking instance of this was that the area of leases had been altered from six or twelve acres to 50 acres, and the labour conditions altered from one man to one acre, to five acres for one man. These alterations were carried out under the advice of the Royal Commission; and, having regard to the bitterness in the remarks of the member for East Coolgardie, it was right there should be some defence of the Commission in this colony. It was his conviction—and he was certain that it was the conviction of all men who looked at this matter with an unprejudiced eye—that notwithstanding the fact that this Commission had cost Western Australia a little over £5,000 the money had been very well spent. The evidence taken on the alluvial question was of the greatest possible value to this country, and not only guided us in our legislation on this question when the amending Mining Bill was before us, but it had been the means

of shaping the opinions of a vast number of people. It was not to be supposed that any one would wade through the whole of the evidence which had been taken by the Commission, but hundreds of men since that evidence had been printed had been able to get information on questions which they could not obtain before. The evidence taken by the Commission on the question of the dual title and the alluvial question, the definition of leases, and other matters, was well worth the sum paid for it. No party of goldfields members in the House, unless they had been appointed a Commission, could have obtained the evidence which was collected by the Royal Commission. We had no power to call mine managers and investigate into their thoughts to find out what were their opinions on mining questions. Therefore the only practical way possible to get this information was by means of a Royal Commission. If other members of the Commission chose to give their services gratis he would not have minded, but he gave his services gratis with great pleasure. It was not convenient to everybody to give their services gratis, and it was not every one who was in a position to afford it. He (Mr. Morgans) could ill afford it himself, but he did give his services gratis, and he believed some other members of the Commission did so also. It could not be expected that those members of the Commission representing workers' associations, alluvial associations, and other bodies could give their services gratis to the country. He hoped this Commission, which had done really good work, would have no further remarks made in regard to it of a depreciatory kind.

MR. MORAN: So far as he was concerned, he would never speak in bitterness or anger again of the Commission. It was as dead as Julius Caesar. *Requiescat in pace.*

Item passed.

Item, Superintendent of Public Batteries, £400:

MR. LEAKE: The Minister estimated to received £10,000 as the gross income from public batteries. According to the estimate of expenditure an amount of £10,600 was set down to be spent, so that there would be a loss of £600, and of

course the interest on the £30,000 voted last year.

THE PREMIER : The Government did not spend the £30,000 last year—only £1,997.

MR. LEAKE : It was evident the public batteries were not going to be the paying concerns it was thought.

THE PREMIER : That was not known yet.

MR. LEAKE : Perhaps the Minister of Mines could give the Committee a little information about how many public batteries were going to be erected, what was the amount of labour employed, and whether the batteries were erected in mining centres where other batteries were at work, or whether they were erected in districts which were free from batteries.

THE MINISTER OF MINES : Hon. members would notice that £10,000 was set down for the expenditure on public batteries for this year, and £10,000 was set down as the revenue. These batteries had not been tried yet, and this amount was purely an approximate estimate. He hoped the batteries would more than pay for the amount of labour expended on them, and pay the interest on the money. The Government did not desire to make money out of the batteries, but it was desired that the batteries should pay the expenses and the interest on the cost of construction. The Government did not desire to derive any direct benefit. If the batteries would pay working expenses and a fair interest on the cost of construction, so as to allow for wear and tear, the colony would have derived a great benefit. The Government had only one battery working at the present time, that was at Norseman. The battery was purchased on the spot, and consequently there was no time lost in the erection of that battery and in the calling for tenders for it and for its erection. This battery was in working order, and he was informed working successfully. The Government charged for crushing at this battery 15s. a ton, and there were only four men employed. He hoped that as time went on the Government might be able to get the leaseholders, the claimholders and others to bring ore to be crushed and feed the batteries, so that there would not be any outlay in labour

for that work. It might suit the owners of the ore to do this. The Government proposed to meet the public in every possible way. The price of crushing in many instances would depend on the cost of the work. In some districts water was more difficult to obtain, and consequently was more expensive, while in other districts firewood was more difficult to get, and in these districts the expense would be greater. The Yalgoo battery the Government expected to have erected and ready for working, almost immediately. There were prospects in the districts where batteries were being erected which were most encouraging. More attention was being paid to working leases and taking up leases, where batteries were being erected and arranged for, than hitherto. In every instance a most careful examination was made and every information was obtained before the erection of a battery was decided upon. The object had been not to interfere with private enterprise more than was possible. These batteries were now in an experimental stage, but he hoped in 12 months time to be able to give a good account of them. Every attention would be given to see that batteries were conducted economically, and in the interest of the public. The superintendent of batteries had taken a warm interest in this matter, and he (the Minister of Mines) intended to keep in touch with everything going on. At the end of the year it was expected that eight batteries would be in full working order. At present we had only one battery working, but the Yalgoo battery, which was only a 5-head battery—but it was a Unit battery which did more work than a 10-head battery—was expected to be ready for work almost immediately. The Bulong battery would shortly be at work, and batteries were being erected at Yerilla, Tuckanarra and other places. At Tuckanarra the lessees and claimholders were getting all the ore ready so as to supply the battery when it was in working order. Every month now fresh batteries would be in full working order. He hoped to show no loss on the working of the batteries.

MR. KINGSMILL : While joining heartily in the good wishes of the Minister in regard to public batteries he hoped the hon. gentleman would turn his attention in some slight degree in the direction of

bonuses for the erection of batteries. Bonuses had actually had a better effect than the erection of public batteries. Some few months ago, after the public batteries which were now in course of erection had been decided on, a bonus was given for a battery on the Pilbarra field, and although the plant for private individuals—not for the Government—took an abnormally long time to erect, this battery was now crushing stone, yet none of the public batteries decided upon by the Government were in that position. The public battery scheme was a desirable one, yet he could not congratulate the Government on the expedition which they had shown in getting the batteries into working order.

THE PREMIER: Where was the hon. member's battery? Was it yet in operation?

MR. KINGSMILL: It was working very satisfactorily, and illustrated the difference between private enterprise and Government work. The Minister should turn his attention to the advisableness of granting bonuses, in some instances, for the erection of public batteries by private individuals.

MR. WILSON: The easy-going methods on which the Estimates were drawn up were remarkable. There was an estimated revenue from public batteries of £10,000; and on the other side it was proposed to expend, for temporary labour in respect of such batteries, a sum of £10,000. Thus all the revenue was to be expended in temporary labour.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Nonsense.

MR. WILSON: When the question of public batteries was discussed in the House, there was a unanimous expression of opinion to the effect that such batteries would pay handsomely. But, at the outset, it appeared that a loss of £600 per annum was to be made, to say nothing of interest on capital.

MR. MORAN: That was only for the first year.

MR. WILSON: To compile this estimate properly, a fair margin for depreciation and for interest on capital should be allowed, and, if desired, a margin for profit. But apparently the batteries were to be worked for the honour and glory of

the thing, and the revenue would only pay for the labour.

THE PREMIER: The start of the enterprise would be expensive. It was estimated that the inception of the scheme would not prove so prosperous as its future developments might be expected to do.

MR. WILSON: The Estimates, if drawn up on that principle, were unreliable. He did not believe in public batteries as Government concerns. Probably they would be "to let" shortly, as the Government condensers were some time ago. The estimate was false, and calculated to mislead the Committee.

MR. KENNY said he had never listened to anything more unreasonable than the speech just delivered by the member for the Canning. Here was an undertaking started with the express consent and at the wish of the Assembly, originating with the goldfields members, and supported in every way by the Government. Though only one battery had been erected, the hon member wanted to know where all the profits were coming from. The hon. member should recollect the old proverb, "Let the cobbler stick to his last;" for, though the hon. member doubtless knew much about the timber industry, he was all at sea in speaking of mining matters. The Government had never expended public money in a more laudable or more reasonable enterprise than this, or one which had a greater prospect of success.

THE PREMIER: And it would give the poor man a chance.

MR. KENNY: Undoubtedly. Throughout this colony there were men who had been working their claims for the last four or five years, with no possible chance of reaping a reward unless an opportunity were afforded them of crushing their stone. It had been conclusively proved that, on the majority of the fields, it was not gold that was wanting, but the power of crushing the stone. If the Government of Queensland could spend £150,000, as they did last year, in bonuses, and in erecting machinery for crushing sugar cane, surely this Government was justified in spending £30,000 or £40,000 to assist the prospectors of

the colony to crush their valuable stone. His (Mr. Kenny's) district was an excellent object lesson. The Government had made arrangements for the erection of a public battery. No sooner was the contract let than the population doubled; the output of stone had more than doubled, and, on the Government surveying a townsite of some 80 lots, 60 out of the 80 had been taken up. If such an impetus could be given to one centre by the expenditure of £4,000 or £5,000 on a public battery, the Government was warranted in carrying out the scheme. The Minister was to be congratulated on the appointment of Mr. White to superintend the erection of public batteries. This officer, who came from Victoria, was a practical, hard-working, and thorough-going man, who, while he continued to be supported by the Minister as he was at present, would ensure the carrying out of this work in such a manner that it could at no time involve a loss to the country.

MR. MORAN: The Minister should take care, before starting any battery, to secure a good water supply. It was not clear that this question was receiving sufficient attention. To start a battery with insufficient water would do a district more harm than good, by exciting false hopes.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The first step to be taken was to get water. If sufficient water was not available, no battery would be erected.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and vote put and passed.

Geological Survey, £5,001:

Item, Incidental expenses, £600:

MR. LEAKE: There was a similar item in the mines votes for £4,000, and further on in the same vote an item: "equipment, conveyance and repairs, £2,000." These items totalled some £6,600.

MR. MORAN: The Government geologist had to do a considerable amount of travelling.

MR. LEAKE: But this was not for travelling expenses, which were distinctly provided for apart from these items. Could the Minister give some information on the subject?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Two of the items mentioned by the hon. member were in the vote already passed. The item in the present vote included sundries in the equipment of the Government geologist and other necessary expenses.

MR. LEAKE: Why separate them? Why make three separate items?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The accounts of the geological survey department had to be kept separately.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote passed.

Mines Department votes were thus completed.

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
(Minister, Hon. R. W. Pennefather).

Vote, Crown Law Officers, £3,090:

Item, Law and Parliamentary draughtsman (two months), £100.

MR. LEAKE: It was evidently proposed to abolish this office.

THE PREMIER: It had been abolished.

MR. LEAKE: That accounted for the bad drafting of Bills, and for the work of the session being prolonged, and for many other things. Nothing would tend to economy more than good Parliamentary drafting. Unless this work was properly done and Bills were carefully prepared, the Parliamentary session must necessarily be prolonged.

THE PREMIER: Certainly there had been plenty of work to do this year.

MR. LEAKE: And nobody could compliment the Government upon their Parliamentary drafting, this session.

THE PREMIER: What Bill did the hon. member refer to?

MR. LEAKE: To no particular Bill.

THE PREMIER: The Bills had hardly been touched by the House, which showed that the drafting was satisfactory.

MR. LEAKE: The Premier did not understand the subject. What could the hon. gentleman know about Parliamentary drafting? It was work for a specialist.

THE PREMIER: What Bill had been badly drafted?

MR. LEAKE: Ever since the member for the Ashburton (Hon. S. Burt) ceased to be Attorney General, the Bill drafting had not been good.

THE PREMIER: The Parliamentary draftsman had done it up to the end of August.

MR. LEAKE: It was desirable to get the best man possible; and if £1,200 a year was paid to the occupant of the office, the money would not be wasted. It was necessary to have a man who was not only a sound lawyer, but who was able to wield his pen. The drafting of a Bill was one of the most difficult things a man could tackle. If we had our work properly prepared, it would be better understood, and we could get through it more quickly.

HON. H. W. VENN: In past years, the drafting of Bills troubled members very much; and it would have troubled them a very great deal more but for the services of the member for the Ashburton (Hon. S. Burt), whose assistance had been doubtless of immense value to the country and to the House. But it was impossible for us at all times now to command the services of that gentleman, though no doubt he had rendered valuable service to the Government even during this session. At any rate, whether this was so or not, the importance of such an appointment as that of Parliamentary draftsman could not be too highly estimated. Such an appointment was, he believed, in existence in nearly all the other colonies.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. MORAN: The Premier of South Australia was his own draftsman.

THE PREMIER: In South Australia, they had not a Parliamentary draftsman.

MR. LEAKE: The work was distributed, in South Australia, amongst the barristers.

HON. H. W. VENN: A specialist was required for drafting Bills. It was not every lawyer by any means who was good at Bill drafting. Without making any remarks as to the Bills that had been placed before members this session, he thought the House should express a very strong opinion that it was absolutely inexpedient for the office to be abolished.

MR. MORAN: Was the present man any good?

HON. H. W. VENN: There was no man now, apparently. The House should say in the most decided manner they were anxious and willing to place a sum on the

Estimates for a competent man to occupy this position.

THE PREMIER: It was very difficult for the Government to please some people. During the last few years we had had a Parliamentary draftsman, who was a very competent lawyer, and was once in office in South Australia. Many members were continually complaining, during the years we had a Parliamentary draftsman, of the way in which Bills were drafted. It had been a source of annoyance to the Government that so many complaints had been made, especially by lawyers in the House. Both in the Upper House and in this Assembly there had been many complaints. He knew Dr. Smith, the Parliamentary draftsman, to be thoroughly competent; but of course he (Dr. Smith) could not tell what we wanted unless we told him; and apparently the Parliamentary draftsman had to find out for himself a good deal that was required, for he could not always have at his elbow someone to state exactly what was wanted. That gentleman was acting as Commissioner of Titles at a salary of, he thought, £375, and as draftsman at £600 a year. He was sure the complaints that were made gave Dr. Smith a good deal of annoyance, and he (the Premier) thought it an opportunity for retrenching a little. Of course he (the Premier) knew nothing about it, as the hon. member said: but he might assert that we had never had so little trouble as this year with regard to our Bills. We had passed them with greater ease than ever.

MR. LEAKE: The Government had not passed any Bills of value, except in regard to financial matters.

THE PREMIER: There was the Health Bill. He believed we had in the Government service at the present time gentlemen quite competent to draft Bills. In his opinion, the Secretary of the Law Department was a good draftsman.

MR. LEAKE: He had not the time.

THE PREMIER: Yes, he had the time. The Gold Mines Bill placed on the table of the House, was drafted by the Secretary of the Law Department. That was a well-drafted measure. No one ever complained of that drafting, although people found fault with the substance.

A MEMBER: And the drafting too.

THE PREMIER : No one expressed himself as dissatisfied with the drafting. As he had said, he believed the Secretary of the Law Department thoroughly competent to draft Bills. By and by some other arrangement might be made. There was no reason why we should not have some Bills drafted by barristers here—those who had perhaps special knowledge—the same as was done in South Australia. At any rate it was very difficult to get one man to please everybody. But, for his own part, he thought there had been less complaint in regard to the drafting than for a long time past.

HON. H. W. VENN : It was satisfactory to know the Government would have the services of the present Secretary of the Law Department.

THE PREMIER : That gentleman had drafted all the Bills this session.

HON. H. W. VENN : The present appointment of the Secretary of the Law Department was a wise one, and it had the approval of the House and the colony. At the same time he would be also invaluable for this other position ; and the question was whether he would be able to occupy both posts with credit to himself and satisfaction to the House.

MR. LEAKE : As to the professional attainments of the gentleman who occupied the position of Secretary of the Law Department, he had the profoundest respect for him. He could not speak too highly of him as a professional man, and the Government were fortunate in having secured his services. He (Mr. Leake) knew him privately and professionally, and a more conscientious worker it was impossible to find. That gentleman was a thoroughly sound lawyer. But that was not the point. He had departmental duties to attend to, and he could not perform the duties of specialist in Bill drafting in addition. The same remarks applied to Dr. Smith, who was Acting Commissioner of Titles. The first duty of a man, to draft a Bill thoroughly well, was to master the details of the law upon the subjects under review. Then he had to sit down and thoroughly think out his subject, put the Bill into skeleton form, and subsequently build it up by degrees.

THE PREMIER : Copy it from some other country.

MR. LEAKE : That was one of the advantages we possessed, the opportunity of copying, and that was where the Australians had a great deal to thank the mother country for, because our laws were assimilated as nearly as possible to the laws of the United Kingdom, and consequently we had the benefit of the drafting in the Imperial Parliament. No member would deny that in the mother country they had an enormous staff of highly paid and highly qualified men, and if it were not for the assistance we were able to obtain from the Imperial Drafting Department, we should hardly ever see a Bill produced fit to read. Fortunately there was a lot of what we might call the scissors and paste business. In all cases Bills had to be adapted to suit local requirements, and local law. A knowledge of the local law was the first essential ; ability to express one's self being another. He did not wish to say anything unkind against the officers in the Crown Law Department. He knew them, and was aware they were men of ability. He said, give these officers fair play. Let them confine themselves to the work that was required of them, and let us have a Parliamentary draftsman who could devote his whole time to the duties. If we had a Bill badly drafted, the lawyers, if they felt inclined, would get it and hack it to pieces, amending it time after time, the result being that the printing office would be kept going for days and days. Expense was incurred by indirect cost to the country in relation to the printing office, the waste of time of clerks, and so forth. But if a Bill was properly drafted, there was no necessity to hack it to pieces. He was speaking of a subject he knew something about, although he did not profess to be a Parliamentary draftsman. He would not undertake to draft a Bill even if he got a hundred guinea fee, simply because such work was not in his particular line. If a man were appointed who could devote the whole of his time to drafting, good and satisfactory work would result. He felt himself capable, to a certain extent, of criticising such work when he saw it, but it was another thing to be able to do the work himself. It was the work of a specialist to draft a Bill properly, and if a man were engaged, as he had said, to devote the whole of his time to it, Bills would be well

drawn, and, what was still more important, Bills would be on the table early in the session.

Item passed.

Item, Law books for law officers and magistrates, £200:

MR. PHILLIPS: Newly appointed magistrates had complained that they were unable to get law books. What steps did the Government propose to take to supply the wants of those magistrates?

THE PREMIER: If every honorary magistrate appointed required law books it would be a great charge on the Government.

MR. PHILLIPS: Magistrates in outlying districts were alluded to.

THE PREMIER: If gentlemen accepted the position of honorary magistrates, they might provide their own books.

Item passed.

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

Supreme Court, £11,355 13s. 4d.—agreed to.

Official Receiver in Bankruptcy and Curator of Intestate Estates, £2,795—agreed to.

Stipendiary Magistracy, £28,606:

Item, Witnesses and jurors, payment of, £4,500:

MR. LEAKE: This item, he took it, referred to witnesses and jurors and courts of quarter sessions. Had the Government formulated any scheme whereby circuit courts were to be established in the goldfields and other districts, so as to avoid the necessity for local magistrates discharging the higher functions of judges? Estimable as magistrates were, their training did not qualify them to administer the criminal law in its higher branches, nor could they be expected to conduct a trial with a jury. In many instances, although there were some exceptions, magistrates did not know much more than the jury whom they charged. If justice were administered by duly qualified judges, at any rate in the chief centres of population on the goldfields and elsewhere, the public would derive much benefit, and satisfaction would be expressed. Whenever he travelled he heard on all sides questions as to when circuit courts were to be established, but

not being a Minister he could give no satisfactory answer.

MR. MORAN: The remarks of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) could be cordially endorsed. For many years people had been asking for district courts such as were established in all the other colonies, where law and justice were taken to the people. In this respect the goldfields suffered great hardship. Witnesses were dragged down to Perth at a cost which frequently came to twice the amounts in dispute. No doubt the establishment of circuit courts would necessitate the appointment of another judge, because there were certainly not enough judges to do the work at present. It was really a bad thing for cases to be held over so long, because uncertainty killed business of all kinds.

MR. KENNY: For years past outlying districts had been calling aloud for a circuit judge. At the present time, there were 50 or 60 cases waiting trial, chiefly from the country, and this meant great expense in keeping witnesses in town. Very often these witnesses were kept waiting days, only to find it was impossible for a case to come on. There appeared to be some grave misunderstanding in regard to this matter, inasmuch as the Government seemed to think that the judges had not enough work, while the judges themselves declared they were worked to death. When a third judge was appointed, it was understood Geraldton would be visited, and Mr. Justice Stone did go on one occasion, and the Chief Justice on another, but these were the only two visits paid to that centre. This was a serious matter, which deserved the attention of the Government.

THE PREMIER: The judges no doubt had a good deal of work to do, but, after all, this pressure was not going to continue for ever. There was a block in the railway traffic at Fremantle, but that had disappeared.

MR. LEAKE: This block in the law had been going on for a couple of years.

THE PREMIER: No; there was not a block, but he quite realised the difficulty of the people from the country in the absence of circuit courts. The Government would see what could be done, but it appeared that more judges were wanted. The three judges said they had more

work than they could do, but he did not know whether the country was prepared to employ more judges.

MR. MORAN: Was there any hope of getting another judge before next session?

THE PREMIER: The Government did not propose at the present to appoint another judge.

MR. MORAN: Then it was not proposed to have quarter sessions this year or next year?

THE PREMIER: The judges had power to try cases at any place, and judges had travelled on some occasions. That would be done oftener but for the fact that there was so much work in Perth and the judges had not time. Judges had sometimes gone to Albany and Geraldton, and he did not see why they should not go to Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie on occasions when it would save expense. He believed that members of the bar were opposed to the idea of circuit courts, because they liked all the business in Perth.

MR. LEAKE: No.

MR. MORAN: The bar were not the people; at any rate, a leader of the bar (Mr. Leake) was in favour of circuit courts.

THE PREMIER: The matter would be brought under the notice of the Attorney-General, but there was a difficulty at the present time in arranging for circuit courts.

MR. MORGANS: The September cases in the court at Perth had not yet been dealt with, and there were 50 cases on the October list not yet touched, and it was probable the November list would be due before the September cases were finished. If this plethora of work was allowed to continue the administration of justice would shortly become a scandal.

THE PREMIER: Like the railway block at Fremantle.

MR. MORGANS: This block in the courts meant most serious inconvenience to litigants. One case he knew of, in which a poor man was interested, had been pending for a whole year, and the probable result would be that this man, who had a splendid case, would simply have to abandon his suit.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps that would be the cheapest thing the man could do.

MR. MORGANS: Perhaps so; but at the same time a man should have the

right to approach the court of justice if he so desired.

THE PREMIER: "The law's delays," as Shakespeare had it.

MR. MORGANS: The whole of the pressure could be relieved by the appointment of one or more judges; who could sit in Perth when not on circuit. The expense of bringing witnesses from the goldfields to Perth was something terrible. At present a mining company was being sued in court for damages for injuries received by an employee in a mine. That case had been pending for a considerable time, and the company had had a whole lot of witnesses in Perth for several days waiting for the trial to come on. The trial had now commenced, but the result would be almost disastrous to the company even if they won, owing to the enormous costs. It would surely be possible to get a better jury on the goldfields than in Perth, to try such a case.

THE PREMIER: One more judge could not do all the work mentioned.

MR. MORGANS: Then the Government should appoint two judges if one was not sufficient. Let the Government appoint one permanent judge and one temporary judge until the strain of work was over. Something must be done, because, so far as the goldfields were concerned, it was almost impossible to go to law; and men who desired to have recourse to the law courts ought to have facilities for so doing, within a reasonable time and at a reasonable cost.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The cost of a judge for the whole year was perhaps less than £2,000. When we considered that in two or three cases the costs would amount to that sum, the Government should recognise that if we involved a considerable number of the general public in loss it was a loss to the whole country. One judge could travel about the country at the same cost as a simple jurymen; he was speaking approximately. In having the cases tried in Perth, witnesses had to be brought from all parts of the country, which involved great cost and delay. In consequence of the difficulties in coming from the various districts in the country, cases took a longer time to come to Perth. If a judge went on circuit he could deal with the cases, say in the Coolgardie dis-

trict, in one fortnight, and in another district in another fortnight. At the present time these cases were compelled to come to Perth. There would be a saving of time, in judges visiting the principal centres of the colony. He hoped the Government would take this matter into their serious consideration, and remove a great annoyance to the general public.

MR. CONNOR: While sympathising with what had been said about the appointment of another judge, he was surprised that hon. members who had spoken had confined their remarks to Perth, Coolgardie, and Cue. We had had a spectacle in this colony of an irresponsible man appointed by commission to try a man for his life. That was not the right thing,

THE PREMIER: It was a tribal murder case, he supposed, and the sentence was not enforced.

MR. CONNOR: No doubt; but the power was placed in the hands of an unqualified, irresponsible man to take life away.

THE PREMIER: No; he could not take life away, he only sentenced.

MR. CONNOR: At any rate he condemned the man to death.

MR. LEAKE: The law did that. There was no option but to sentence a murderer to death.

MR. CONNOR: The fact remained that a man, who was not qualified, was given the power to sentence a prisoner under the direction of the jury, to death. Either a person accused of murder or some other capital offence should be tried in Perth, or a special judge should be appointed to go round to the principal ports or the principal towns or centres in the North and try these capital cases. He supported the suggestion of the member for Albany that an additional judge should be appointed to visit the different centres of the colony.

Item passed.

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

Land Titles, £8,345:

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The reductions made in this department were really to the disadvantage of the public, as this was a department which the people had to pay for, and it was a department in which retrenchment ought not to take place. If this department was paid for out of gene-

ral taxation it would be a different thing, but everybody who took a title to this department paid the cost of that title.

THE PREMIER: Nothing would be done to interfere with the efficiency of the department.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It had been done already.

THE PREMIER: No; The registrar was quite satisfied.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A paying concern should not be economised.

Vote put and passed.

Attorney General's Department votes were thus completed.

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

Vote, *Office of Colonial Secretary*, £4,736:

MR. WOOD: The office of the Electoral Registrar in Perth was situated in a room at the top of a building, and the public could not find the office. He (Mr. Wood) had placed his own office at the disposal of the public for the registration of electors for two or three months past, on one night a week, and 600 people had registered their names during that period. If the Electoral Registrar had an office which people could get at there would be no reason to give these special facilities in the city for the registration of electors. The Electoral Registrar's office should be situated in a street office, in a convenient part of the town. There was another point to which he wished to refer; the cost of rolls was a large item during an election. During the last election he had to pay £20 for the purchase of rolls, which was too much altogether. A nominal charge of 2s. 6d. or 5s. should be made for an electoral roll. In the other colonies this was done and proved a great convenience. He hoped the Government would take into consideration the placing of the Electoral Registrar in some convenient position in the city of Perth.

THE PREMIER said he would look into this matter. He did not know where the Electoral Registrar's office was situated now.

MR. WOOD: Nobody else did.

Vote put and passed.

Medical, £86,906 15s.:

MR. LEAKE asked whether any fresh arrangement was proposed in regard to the management of district hospitals. He

had received a communication from Albany in which he was told there were rumours abroad that the Government assistance to the hospital there was to be curtailed.

THE PREMIER: It was a Government hospital down there.

MR. LEAKE: Government hospitals were, he understood, to have the assistance withdrawn, and the inhabitants of the particular localities had to take charge of the institutions.

THE PREMIER: That was not so. Perhaps some little economy was required, that was all. The public could take over district hospitals if they liked.

MR. LEAKE: At Albany seamen and foreigners had to be accommodated at the hospital.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps the medical department were trying to do something in the way of reducing expenditure, and to obtain contributions from the public. He did not know whether this was due to a request made by the Minister in charge of the department, as should be done in case where hospitals were under boards or in cases of large hospitals, such as in Perth, or in places where assistance was rendered by clubs or societies, as in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. There was an effort being made in Bunbury to get contributions to the hospital. Two balls were to be given there, to which he had been invited to contribute and to attend. In other places there seemed to be no desire to take interest in such local institutions. The medical officer was trying to curtail expenditure wherever possible, and to put the hospital staffs on a footing sufficient for the requirements of the institutions, but not in excess of requirements.

MR. MORAN: Would the Premier bring under the notice of the Minister in charge of the department the fact that this colony was paying from 50 to 150 per cent. above ordinary trade prices for medical stores and instruments?

MR. ILLINOWORTH: Hear, hear. The Government were being properly "fleeced."

MR. MORAN said his information was derived partly from a man who had been selling instruments to the Government.

THE PREMIER: Was the hon. member referring to local supplies?

MR. MORAN: The Government dealt largely with a firm in the other colonies.

THE PREMIER: Were not the supplies imported from London?

MR. MORAN: A considerable quantity was indented through a colonial firm.

THE PREMIER: That was probably at the time the expenditure at the Coolgardie hospital was so large.

MR. MORAN: An inspection of the trade circulars would show that the colony was paying far too dearly for its medical sundries; and, owing to the pressure of more important matters, this leakage was in danger of being overlooked, as was done with regard to the Official Receiver's office. A few weeks ago it would not have been believed that such a state of affairs as had since been revealed had continued for four years undetected by the Attorney General's Department. Some inquiry should therefore be made into this matter.

THE PREMIER: Undoubtedly. He would take care to make a note of it.

MR. LEAKE: What arrangement was made at the Perth Public Hospital to secure from patients payment for services rendered?

THE PREMIER: The patients were all supposed to be paupers.

MR. LEAKE: It often happened that well-to-do men entered the hospital.

THE PREMIER: Such a man was not admitted unless it was a case of accident.

MR. LEAKE: They were not found out until too late. If a man were a pauper, let him be treated at the public expense; but he had it on the authority of medical men in Perth that some of the patients were well able to pay. Frequently, a man who fell sick was kept by a doctor in a private hospital till his funds were exhausted, and was then sent to a public institution. All patients in a position to pay should be under an obligation to do so.

THE PREMIER: The Perth Hospital was started as an institution for destitute persons, and wealthy men, except in cases of accident, were supposed to go to private hospitals. The result was that the whole of the expense of the institution fell upon the Government. Though the Perth hospital was well and economically managed, there had been no effort on the part of the committee to obtain funds; and that state of affairs was most unsatisfactory. He believed it was now proposed to do something in this

direction, and he would do his best to urge on the scheme; for, if this vote was exceeded, he certainly would not give more money if he could help it this year. That would put the committee on its mettle. The Perth hospital committee should take some steps to induce charitable effort. When the institution was handed over to a board, it was never intended that the State should provide all the funds; the public were expected to contribute a certain proportion, so that eventually the board should be elected by subscribers, and that the institution should become self-supporting. That was the intention, but it had not been the result. The public at Fremantle had contributed something towards their hospital, but the Perth people contributed nothing. Several thousand pounds had recently been obtained from the public for a children's hospital; but though he was pleased to note that fact, he did not think the proposed building was necessary, for there was a children's ward in the Perth Hospital, which was nearly empty; and that money might well have been contributed for the improvement of the present institution rather than for building a new one. Throughout the colony there was a disposition to saddle the State with the maintenance of hospitals, and that system could not continue. The people must do something to support their hospitals if they wanted them. Patients who had money would not pay on their recovery, and frequently used subterfuges for evading payment. It was not right that the taxpayers of the colony should have to provide hospital accommodation for people well able to pay, and some means must be devised to alter the system. In the boom times, everything was done for everyone; and since that period it was hard to get anyone to contribute to hospitals. The people in the older and more settled districts were even worse offenders than those on the goldfields, which was saying a good deal; for they had been so long accustomed to hospitals being found for them free of charge, that they could not be induced to pay. The Coolgardie hospital cost £15,000 a year; and the Kalgoorlie hospital nearly as much; and the public contributions were very small. The medical officers had their private prac-

tices as well as their public duties, and that was not a good system, because their interests were divided. The matter was surrounded with difficulty; but, when affairs became more settled something might be done to eliminate existing evils. Apparently, however, the hospitals, for some time to come, would be an immense charge upon the State.

HON. H. W. VENN: The question was not difficult to settle. Some years ago, he moved in the House in this direction, by advice of several medical men, at whose instance some excellent suggestions were made, which, if adopted now, would be of great value for the framing of regulations. All that was required was to have by-laws framed by the hospital boards, and to have them rigidly carried out.

THE PREMIER: The boards wanted to have the management, and wanted the Government to find the money.

HON. H. W. VENN: The hospitals should be open to every man, whether rich or poor; but all patients should be subject to the rules and regulations of the hospital, and should pay according to those rules.

THE PREMIER: A man who had no money could not pay.

HON. H. W. VENN: Men who had nothing at all were rare.

MR. A. FORREST: No; there were thousands of them.

HON. H. W. VENN: A large number of individuals in hospitals were able to contribute something.

THE PREMIER: They would not do so.

HON. H. W. VENN: If the boards did their duty, there would be no difficulty.

THE PREMIER: They would not do it.

HON. H. W. VENN: A little firmness was all that was required. When a patient was in the hospital, it was not difficult to find out all about him and his circumstances.

THE PREMIER: But as soon as he got well he was off.

HON. H. W. VENN: Then go for him by a process of law. It was absurd for hospital authorities to allow a patient to go free because he was not anxious to pay. Let them follow him up and insist on the regulations being carried out. If that were done, hospitals would not be such a burden on the State as they now

were. He felt sure that, if the House would put its foot down and say that necessary by-laws and regulations should be made, the amount granted by the Government would be soon supplemented by subscriptions, and there would be no difficulty. We were rather overdone with hospitals. The difficulty was not so great that it could not be overcome.

MR. HIGHAM: The public hospital system of this colony was framed for the benefit of poor persons, and not for the benefit of those who could pay. It was only enacted that persons should pay a maintenance fee of 3s. per diem. As to the hospital with which he was connected, a guinea a week was obtained whenever possible. The great mistake seemed to be that no provision was made that persons who were in a position to pay an adequate amount, not only for maintenance, but for medical attendance and nursing, should do so. We had in Perth, Fremantle and other places hospitals that were a credit to the colony, where the best nursing and medical attendance could be obtained. Many persons in a position to pay even five guineas or six guineas a week would prefer to go there rather than obtain attendance and nursing in some private institution or place. Only a few weeks ago he heard that one of the leading professional men in Perth desired to go to the Perth Hospital, but because he was in a position to pay, he was denied admittance. The Act dealing with public hospitals required amendment, so that people might be admitted whether they were in a position to pay or not. He was aware that a certain amount of opposition would be raised by those interested in private hospitals.

MR. DOHERTY: If the Premier would take a firm stand, he could reduce this vote. Why did he not wipe out the hospitals at Dongarra, £150; Greenough, £150; Mingenew, £150; Victoria Plains, £150; Newcastle, £236; Northam, £496; Beverley, £288; Katanning, £315. In the case of Katanning, why could not patients be sent to York?

THE PREMIER: It was a long way.

MR. DOHERTY: A Government doctor, so far as his experience went, attended to Government officials, and Government officials only. Why did the Government say they wanted to cut this vote

down, and then not grapple with the question? In regard to hospitals surrounding Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, why should not Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie be made the principal places, and the hospitals surrounding those towns be wiped out? It was necessary to have an Act of Parliament whereby a district board would be formed, having control of the hospital in the district; and a subsidy of 15s. or a pound could be given for every pound collected in the district. The Government was not supposed to spoon-feed everybody. The Premier said this vote was going to ruin the country, and, if that were so, the sooner the question was grappled with the better. If a doctor would not go to a place without Government aid, let the people pay for one.

THE PREMIER: They would not, or they could not, do so.

MR. DOHERTY: A Bill should be brought in to have the thing put upon a proper basis. At present no one seemed to have actual control of the thing. The Government shovelled out the money, and then it was shovelled out by those in office without any great benefit being derived by the people.

MR. A. FORREST: If the Government subsidy to medical officers in country places were done away with, districts in the northern part of the colony would have no doctor at all, and the same argument would apply to places in the inland districts. He would suggest that the Government should give information relative to the scandal in the Coolgardie hospital, where thousands of pounds had been spent irregularly. The whole staff of the Coolgardie hospital was practically fed by the State. That was where retrenchment was necessary. Perhaps the same thing occurred in other districts as well. If we wanted retrenchment, let us go to those districts where the expenditure was £15,000 a year, and not take away a hundred a year subsidy from a country doctor.

MR. DOHERTY: The places he had spoken of were those surrounding large hospitals. He did not mention settlements far out in the country.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member said Katanning, Northam, and Beverley. Those places were a long way apart. It was the wish of the country that the sick

and distressed should be cared for; and the House ought to agree to the vote. If it was proposed to reduce the vote, then there ought to be an inquiry made into the management of big hospitals, in connection with which it was alleged there had been illegal expenditure.

MR. MORAN: No one would contend that where there was a regular train service, involving only a journey of two or three hours, expensive hospitals should be erected, which were perhaps used only once or twice a year when a surgical operation was required. The Government would live for ever in the gratitude of every sensible man for what they had done in the way of providing hospital accommodation on the goldfields. In this respect the Premier had done more than any other Premier or public man; but at the same time hospitals had been somewhat overdone. It would have been far better to spend the money in helping the agricultural interests in some other way than erecting expensive buildings in every small town. Much might be done to reform the present state of things in the hospitals at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, and other goldfields towns, and much more could be done by stopping extravagant public expenditure in towns where such expenditure was not required.

MR. WOOD: The small subsidies of £150 a year, or thereabouts, paid to medical officers in the country districts were of great help indeed, especially in places like Beverley where the population was sparse. Some remark had been made about paying patients, and no doubt the Act contemplated pauper patients; but the by-laws of hospitals provided for strict investigation before any person was allowed to enter: and in one or two cases, people had been made to pay for the attention they had received. As to the allegations that hospitals had to pay exorbitantly for supplies, the fact was that usually these supplies were tendered for at the lowest prices possible.

MR. WALTER JAMES: Would the Premier give some explanation as to the Coolgardie Hospital?

THE PREMIER: What about?

MR. JAMES: The scandals.

THE PREMIER: What were they?

MR. JAMES: The Premier ought to know, because the hospitals were within his department. The right hon. gentleman ought not to ask members to teach him his business.

THE PREMIER: Then the hon. member had woke up.

MR. JAMES: The desire was to wake up the Premier. There were rumours abroad that the management of the Coolgardie hospital was a growing scandal.

THE PREMIER: The matter was *sub judice*.

MR. JAMES: *Sub judice*! Was it to be understood, when complaints against public officers were made in the House, questions were to be burked with answers like that?

THE PREMIER: Let the hon. member ask a question and he (the Premier) would answer it.

MR. JAMES: The question was as to the statements, or complaints, made in reference to the Coolgardie hospital.

THE PREMIER: Something more definite must be asked.

MR. JAMES: The Premier wanted to burk inquiry.

THE PREMIER: Not at all.

MR. JAMES: What was *sub judice* in connection with the Coolgardie hospital? Would the Premier answer that?

THE PREMIER: Oh, no.

MR. MONGER: The question was unfair.

MR. JAMES: A protest must be entered against this charge of unfairness by a blind Government supporter.

THE PREMIER: The question of the hon. member for East Perth (Mr. James) would be answered.

MR. JAMES: Thank you.

THE PREMIER: Some statements had been made which were not at all creditable; but to tell the House what these statements were might be casting unjust reflections on persons, and he had no desire to cast reflections before he was positive. Information had been supplied by only one person, and it had not yet been verified, though the Crown Law Department were making investigations. It would not be desirable to make statements affecting persons in a way which might not be justified when the full facts were known.

MR. MONGER: It was unfair for any hon. member to get up, and without evi-

dence attempt to cast aspersions on any person. He (Mr. Monger) did not know, nor did he care who the gentleman was to whom the statements referred, but it was unfair for a member, in discussing the Estimates, to vent his spleen on any person who might be interested in a particular vote. The member for East Perth (Mr. James) had, in his usual grand style, asked for an explanation which, under the circumstances, to say the least, was unnecessary.

MR. JAMES: Protest must once more be made against the remarks of the member for York (Mr. Monger), who, as a mouth-piece and a blind and unquestioning adherent of the Government, desired to burk inquiry. Such hon. members had led the Government into the gross and extravagant follies for which they were responsible. These members sat behind the Government, and gave it a blind and unquestioned support, and they were the men responsible for the position in which the colony found itself to-day. They burked inquiry into a public scandal; but a great deal of light might be thrown, for instance, on the amount of public money spent in a place called York. On the subject before the House, he (Mr. James) had asked a question, and the answer given him by the Premier was quite satisfactory; and the member for York (Mr. Monger) was not justified in making rash statements about any hon. member "venting his spleen." He (Mr. James) did not know the medical officer, nor any of the nurses or officials at the Coolgardie hospital; but there had been rumours, about which some statement should be made in the House. That statement he had asked for, and the satisfactory reply had been given that inquiries were being made.

MR. KENNY: The time had come when it was the duty of the Government to reorganise and rearrange this vote. The position taken up by the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) could be quite understood, because the positions of the various townships ought to be taken into consideration. Where townships were within easy communication by rail, it did seem like extravagance to supply each town with a resident medical officer and staff; and the Government ought to see where they could curtail expenditure

without inflicting undue hardship. Peak Hill was 120 miles from any town, the nearest being Nannine. A medical officer was sent to Peak Hill a short time ago, and when he left Perth he was under the impression he would get a small subsidy of £100 a year, but there seemed to be no provision in the Estimates for that subsidy.

THE PREMIER: That subsidy was provided for under the head of "Grants to hospitals on goldfields towards salary of medical officer—£1,400."

MR. KENNY: At Nannine the Government had been good enough to erect a small hospital, and appoint a medical officer. Unfortunately that medical officer died, and his place had not been filled, nor any provision made for filling it. A subsidy to a medical officer in such places was really essential; but in large centres, the Government might consider the advisability of cutting down expenses.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Government were making a mistake in endeavouring to reduce, to a considerable extent, the amount in regard to hospitals. In one particular case the Government were striking out £100 a year, which was keeping a medical officer in a district. At Day Dawn there were 120 men at work in the mine itself there. Day Dawn was a centre, and the train service was of no use for communication with Cue in case of an accident happening at night time. There was one train in the early morning and another one late at night. The people of Day Dawn had put their hands in their pockets to maintain the hospital there, and the Government had kindly consented to give a subsidy of £100 to the end of the present year. It was false economy to take away this £100 when it was the means of keeping a medical man in a district where there were 120 men working at one mine, and a large number of people residing in the district. Only the other day the Day Dawn hospital was the means of saving a man's life. If this man had been taken to the Cue hospital his life, in all probability, would have been lost. When a district was prepared to help to maintain a medical officer in that district, it was only right that the Government should give a small subsidy. If there had been questionable practices

in some parts of the colony, this should not induce the Government to economise in a small item like this.

Item, Dispenser and clerk, Cue hospital, £100:

MR. DOHERTY: This was an unnecessary item, and he suggested that if he struck out. Could not the medical officer at the hospital do the work which this officer performed?

THE PREMIER: These hospitals must have some one to look after the stores and keep the accounts, and the resident medical officer could not do the work. At all the big hospitals there must be some one to look after the expenditure and the accounts.

MR. JAMES: There was no dispenser and clerk at this hospital last year, apparently.

THE PREMIER: The money was provided and not spent.

MR. JAMES: Then it was not required.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps it would not be wanted this year.

Item passed.

Item, Superintending medical officer, Lunatic Asylum, Fremantle, £500:

MR. HIGHAM: What provision had been made to fill this position? At the present time the office was filled by the resident medical officer at Fremantle. A man was wanted who would give the whole of his time and attention to the lunatic asylum, the proper classification of the inmates, and to re-organise a better system in the asylum for the alleviation of the unfortunates there. It was time that something was done. This asylum was overcrowded, and it must be manifest to everyone that the inmates were not receiving the treatment which they should receive. Many inmates might be cured, but through the wretched condition of the asylum, they were condemned to a life of lunacy.

THE PREMIER: Negotiations were opened through the Agent General for the purpose of securing an officer to fill this position; but it was found that in order to obtain a gentleman with the qualifications the Government desired, a sum of £750 or £800 a year would have to be paid. The Government had an opportunity of securing a good officer, and the gentleman who was now head of the asylums in New South Wales offered to

select an officer when in England. Everything was in readiness; but not having a sufficient vote for the purpose, and seeing that the Government were not able to go on with the lunatic asylum which it was intended to erect at Whitby, it was thought wise to defer the matter, and the negotiation fell through. A good many men who were not so very much insane were removed to Whitby, and were employed there in farming and gardening, and with considerable success. These men were more comfortable at Whitby. By this means the number of patients was reduced at Fremantle, and the existing arrangements at the place would be carried on for a little while longer. Certainly it was intended to ask Parliament for permission to engage a really good man and a specialist so soon as the asylum was removed to Whitby. Seeing that it was not possible this year to do this, the Government had not provided for this officer. He (The Premier) was sorry the arrangements now in force at Fremantle did not meet with the hon. member's (Mr. Higham's) approval. No doubt there were some sad cases there, but he understood the arrangements at Fremantle were fairly satisfactory at the present time. As the position of the asylum could not be changed just now, it was not advisable to import a specialist.

HON. H. W. VENN: The Government had been prompted to take steps in connection with the removal of the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum, by the action of Parliament on different occasions. If hon. members were not able at the present time to realise the necessity for prompt and immediate action in the matter of the lunatic asylum, he advised them to take a trip to Fremantle and go through the lunatic asylum there. It was several years since he (Mr. Venn) visited the Fremantle Lunatic Asylum, but when he had visited the place he was satisfied that some new arrangements should be made for the patients. This was one of the most important subjects which could occupy the attention of the Committee. He had been informed that the condition of the patients and the asylum was not much altered from what it was when he paid a visit to the institution; but certain patients had been removed to Whitby where permanent buildings were to be

erected. It was false economy on the part of the Government to delay the appointment of the best officer that could be obtained in the Australian colonies, or elsewhere, for the position of superintendent of the lunatic asylum at Fremantle. There should be proper supervision and proper administration of the asylum. The Premier recognised this. It was a year or two since a servant of the Crown was in charge of the lunatic asylum at Fremantle. That officer had since died, and there was a good opportunity now for the Government to take time by the forelock and appoint the best man obtainable. There should be no economy in connection with this appointment. The Government should hasten as fast as possible with the erection of the lunatic asylum at Whitby on the site already provided for the purpose.

MR. CONNOR: It seemed rather out of place for the hon. member to lecture the Government on a subject which he did not know much about. The hon. member for Wellington (Mr. Venn) admitted that he knew nothing about what he was saying, yet he lectured the Government because they had not done certain things. He would prefer to see some more definite statements made than those which had fallen from the hon. member.

MR. HIGHAM: It was the Premier's duty to have put a medical officer in charge of the Fremantle asylum. The medical officer at Fremantle had to attend, not only to the Asylum, but to the prison, to the shipping, and to Rottnest, and could not possibly devote that attention to the asylum patients which was necessary.

THE PREMIER: He was a very active man.

MR. HIGHAM: Undoubtedly he was; but too many duties were thrust upon him. It was absurd, for the sake of £300 a year, to deprive the patients of their chance of cure. An expert should have been appointed immediately after the death of the late medical officer at the asylum. Such an officer would be of great assistance to the Government in planning the new buildings contemplated.

Item passed.

Item, Purchase of s.s. Waratah from Public Works Department, £750:

MR. CONNOR: How was the value of this steamer arrived at?

THE PREMIER: Apparently the value was fixed at the price paid for it.

MR. LEAKE: How did this steamer come under the heading of "Medical"?

THE PREMIER: It was for the use of medical officers visiting the shipping.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and vote put and passed.

Gaols, £30,506 12s. 6d.—agreed to.

Rottnest Establishment, £3,062 10s.:

Item, Superintendent, £400:

MR. CONNOR: What was the actual salary paid to the superintendent, or what would be the actual salary?

THE PREMIER: £400.

MR. CONNOR: Was that the total amount?

THE PREMIER: There was a table allowance of £50.

Item passed.

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

Printing, £25,267 19s. 6d.:

MR. LEAKE: Was there no chance of reducing this vote? It seemed an enormous sum, and did not represent the total cost of Government printing. It was known that £10,000 was spent for Government advertising.

THE PREMIER: That had nothing to do with printing.

MR. LEAKE: It had, indirectly. There was also a lot of printing done by contract, outside the Government office. How much did such contracts amount to apart from this vote?

THE PREMIER: A great deal, unfortunately.

MR. LEAKE: No one could deny the excellence of the work done in the Government printing office; but the cost was out of proportion to the advantages resulting.

MR. MORGAN: The amount of printing done was enormous.

MR. LEAKE: But the work was almost too good to look at. Better have something useful instead of ornamental. There were innumerable contracts let to private printing offices and charged to miscellaneous votes, and the actual cost of the Government printing was unknown. There seemed to be an increase in the vote this year.

MR. MORGAN: The vote was higher last year.

THE PREMIER: Unfortunately, he was unable to give the hon. member much information, and could only agree with him that the printing was a very big item. No doubt some saving would be effected by the improved labour-saving machinery now under order. He had tried to reduce the department, and was assured that the retrenchment effected was very severe. He hoped to make some investigation so as to effect a further saving. This was now a large department, and the amount of printing done, even for Parliament alone, was enormous. He did not believe there was any great extravagance, for neither the Government Printer nor the Acting Government Printer was an extravagant officer. At the same time, the cost was very much larger than he would like it to be.

Vote put and passed.

Registry, £4785—agreed to.

Friendly Societies, £880—agreed to.

Charitable Institutions, £18,954 11s.—agreed to.

Government Gardens and Government House Domain, £1,300—agreed to.

Central Board of Health, £569—agreed to.

Educational, £56,495—agreed to.

Postal and Telegraph, £274,864 8s.:

MR. LEAKE: Was it proposed to continue the district post offices in Perth? They were scattered, he believed, here and there in nearly every ward of the city.

THE PREMIER: There were not very many.

MR. LEAKE: Could the Minister tell us whether they paid? Of course they could not be actually remunerative.

THE PREMIER: The one at East Perth was not remunerative, but the others were all right.

MR. LEAKE: Perhaps it might be an advantage to shut up some of the post offices, or to let them as private residences. They were all boom buildings.

Vote put and passed.

Audit, £5,496:

MR. LEAKE: We were under a great disadvantage, and it was this, that we had not the Auditor General's report at the present moment. The report was too cumbrous, being over-burdened with returns and formality. If the Audit Act

was to be of any use to Parliament we should have the report during the session. What had the Auditor General told us up to date? Nothing. We did have his report last session, but that was because the House sat into December.

THE PREMIER: Every item of expenditure was given.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; but we did not know till during the recess whether the Auditor General had been able to put his finger upon any blots; and the Audit Act, so far as Parliamentary procedure was concerned, was hardly worth the paper it was printed on.

THE PREMIER: It was too near the end of the financial year.

MR. LEAKE: The present Government would not, he supposed, carry out alterations.

THE PREMIER: The Government would not mind.

MR. LEAKE: The Auditor General was an excellent officer, no doubt, but Parliament ought to hear more of him during the session. He knew the Auditor General prided himself upon the fact that he was a servant of Parliament and not a mere civil servant. He hoped an endeavour would be made to arrange matters so that we might have the benefit of this officer's experience.

MR. KENNY: No doubt the Auditor General was a most estimable officer, and deserved well of the country, but he (Mr. Kenny) thought he was one of the few in the service who were overworked. There was no denying the fact that if this report was to be of any benefit to us at all it ought to be delivered while Parliament was sitting. For that to be done it would be necessary to afford the Auditor General a little assistance. If the Government would take the matter into their consideration during the recess and could do anything to get the report laid on the table of the House in future while Parliament was sitting, they would, he was sure, do so.

THE PREMIER: The only way he could see to do it was to change the financial year. If the financial year ended on the 31st March it could be done easily.

Vote put and passed.

Observatory, £3,009 4s.—agreed to.

The Annual Estimates having been completed, the resolutions passed in Committee of Supply were reported.

OFFICIAL RECEIVER IN BANKRUPTCY.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S RESOLUTION.

Message from the Legislative Council, requesting concurrence in the following resolution, was considered:—

Resolved, that the report of the Select Committee of both Houses of Parliament appointed to inquire into the administration of the Bankruptcy Act, 1892, by the Senior Official Receiver (Mr. H. Wainscot), and the administration of the affairs of companies whereof he has acted as liquidator, be adopted; and that a copy of the report and evidence be sent on to the Crown Law Department, with instructions to take such steps in the matter before the Bankruptcy Court, or Criminal Court, or before the Barristers' Board, as may be considered expedient or necessary.

IN COMMITTEE.

The PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved that the Council's resolution be agreed to.

Question put and passed, without debate.

Resolution reported, report adopted, and a message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

GOLDFIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of four amendments made by the Legislative Council was considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

The MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) moved that the Council's amendments be agreed to.

Question put and passed.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

The PREMIER moved that the House at its rising do adjourn until the next Tuesday (a public holiday intervening).

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 11.30 p.m. until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 25th October, 1898.

Papers presented—Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill, clerical error—Motion: Federal Convention Delegates, Mode of Election (negative)—Motion: Municipal Rating on Land Value (negative)—Metropolitan Waterworks Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Police Act Amendment Bill, Legislative Assembly's Amendment—Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading—Coolgardie Mining Exhibition Bill, Recommendation, reported—Metropolitan Waterworks Act Amendment Bill (No. 2), all stages—Land Bill, Legislative Council's Amendments—Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Mining on Private Property Bill, Legislative Council's Amendment—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Eastern Goldfields Wage-earners, Return as ordered. Agricultural Railways, light narrow gauge in Belgium, Report by the Engineer-in-Chief.

Ordered to lie on the table.

BANKRUPTCY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

CLERICAL ERROR.

THE PRESIDENT said he had been informed by the Clerk that in the Bankruptcy Act Amendment Bill there was apparently a clerical error, clause 55 having been struck out, whereas, according to the Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, the intention was to strike out clause 51.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that a message be sent to the Legislative Assembly, informing them of the discovery of what appeared to be a clerical error, and desiring the assurance of the Assembly that their intention was in accordance with the record of their Votes and Proceedings.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.