

ADJOURNMENT.

On motion by the COLONIAL SECRETARY, the House adjourned at two minutes past five o'clock until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 26th September, 1900.

Petition: Perth Electric Tramways Lighting and Power Bill (private)—Question: Noxious Weeds in Victoria District—Slander of Women Bill, first reading—Compensation for Accidents Bill, 1r.—Federal House of Representatives (W.A.) Electorates Bill, third reading—Customs Duties (Meat) Repeal Bill, third reading—Kalgoorlie Municipal Loans Reappropriation Bill, first reading—Criminal Law Amendment Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Motion: North Perth Board of Health, to Create (adjourned)—Motion: Federation, Free Railway Passes for Life (negative)—Motion: Midland Railway, to examine and value (negative)—Motion: Sweeps and Consultations, to Abolish (withdrawn)—Privilege: Cattle Restrictions Inquiry, Soliciting Evidence—Motion: Railway Workshops at Midland Junction, to Construct forthwith, Division on Adjournment—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PETITION—PERTH ELECTRIC TRAMWAYS LIGHTING AND POWER BILL (PRIVATE).

MR. MOORHEAD presented a petition from the Perth Electric Tramways, Limited, praying for the introduction of a private Bill intituled "An Act to grant to the Perth Electric Tramways, Limited, Powers and Provisions for the Manufacture, Distribution and Supply of Electricity."

Petition received and read.

QUESTION—NOXIOUS WEEDS IN VICTORIA DISTRICT.

MR. MITCHELL asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands: Whether in view of the rapid growth and spread of lupin, stinkwort, and other noxious weeds in the Victoria District, more especially in the neighbourhood of Northampton, he

would send an officer to inspect and report upon the best and cheapest means of eradicating these weeds.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied: Instructions will at once be given for an inspection and report upon this question, as requested.

SLANDER OF WOMEN BILL.

On motion by MR. ILLINGWORTH (Bill having been previously received from Legislative Council), read a first time.

COMPENSATION FOR ACCIDENTS BILL.

On motion by MR. ILLINGWORTH (Bill having been previously received from Legislative Council), read a first time.

FEDERAL HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES W.A. ELECTORATES BILL.

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

CUSTOMS DUTIES (MEAT) REPEAL BILL.

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

KALGOORLIE MUNICIPAL LOANS REAPPROPRIATION BILL.

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

CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT (1892) AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

MOTION—NORTH PERTH BOARD OF HEALTH, TO CREATE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison) moved:

That the resolution of August 30, 1899 (see *Hansard*, page 1065), granting the prayer of a petition from the residents of North Perth for the creation of a Board of Health (within six months from that date), be no longer delayed. In August last a decision was arrived at concerning the petition for the creation of a board of health for North Perth; and in order to allow the City Council time to remove the cause of offence, he (MR. ILLINGWORTH) moved that six months be given before it should be compulsory on the Government to grant the prayer of the petition. Twelve months had now gone by, and nothing, so far as he knew,

had been done in the matter. The report of Mr. F. D. Lockwood, the chief inspector, presented to the Central Board of Health, and dated 6th September, 1900, stated:—

The locality, as shown on the accompanying plan, is triangular in shape, the boundaries being as follows:—Vincent Street on the south, Beaufort Street on the east, Walcott Street on the north-east, Leederville on the west. The Perth City Council's sanitary depôt is situated at the south-west corner of Location 884, and the pipes conveying the sewage to the new sanitary site, Location 943, traverse Vincent Street to its juncture with Fitzgerald Street, thence in a northerly direction beyond Walcott Street. At the eastern boundary of the area, viz., Beaufort Street, Highgate Hill, there are four substantial residences and a shop. On the southern boundary, viz., Vincent Street, are ten similar residences, the property of Bishop Gibney. These fifteen dwellings, although outside the Perth Municipality, receive the double pan service from the Perth Local Board of Health, although within the North Perth Roads Board district. The Government School occupies one of the highest positions in the district, at the junction of Albert and Angove Streets, and beyond this point and the Wanneroo Road the inhabitants are most numerous and closely settled. The Forrest Hill district extends eastward of Fitzgerald Street, and the houses are more widely scattered. The total number of houses in the district may be set down approximately at 200, and the number of inhabitants 800 to 900. About one-half of the population pay for the removal of the night-soil, and this is conveyed to an orchard $7\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant; the remainder dispose of it themselves. The man engaged for this purpose attends to the ten sanitary conveniences at the school. Of the 170 tenements inspected, the majority were provided with closets containing kerosene tins and oil drums, and, in a few instances, pans of the orthodox pattern were in use. At the premises of many of those persons not engaging the services of the nightman, and at many of the empty houses the closets were in a disgusting condition, owing to the receptacles being full and overflowing, and, from appearances, had not been emptied for a considerable time. Many of them were in a dilapidated condition, being without proper doors and coverings, the persons using them being insufficiently screened from public view. Faulty construction was in evidence throughout the locality, the pans being placed on the natural surface of the soil, as much as eighteen inches of space intervening between the seat and receptacle. . . . There are upwards of 200 pigs on the premises of Messrs. Coombs and Son abutting on the Smith's Lake, but there are no dwellings in the vicinity. The deposit of refuse in the locality and on the margin of the lake has received a check owing to the vigilance of P.C. Hickey, but there is a considerable amount of discarded

clothing and rubbish from old camping places that requires attention throughout the district. Some of the herds of dairy cattle still continue to drink the water from the lake, owing to fourteen chains of the fence being demolished on the Wanneroo road. The reconstruction is urgently required to prevent cattle having access to the water. There are several stables, the principal one being occupied by the omnibus proprietor, having no less than 23 horses in the stalls. Generally speaking, this community has suffered considerably from the ravages of preventible diseases in the past, and at the present time one-half of the inhabitants are rendering inoperative the efforts of those assisting to carry out sanitary measures.

Here was a large community which was under no control, and there was the same old trouble about the existence of the depôt. This matter was discussed at length last year and a decision arrived at. The Government owed the House an explanation why that decision had not been carried out. It was distinctly understood that the prayer of the petition should be granted, and he wanted to know if the Perth City Council or this House were going to rule the colony. In order to give time to the Perth City Council to remove the cause of the trouble six months was granted.

MR. MOORHEAD: Why did the people not go to the Central Board?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The main point he wanted to get at was why the Government should flout the decision of the House.

THE PREMIER: Now you had it!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The health of the people in this district was suffering. The Commissioner of Railways was well acquainted with this district, and with the want of a board of health. One would like to have some explanation in regard to the matter.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): The residents of North Perth had not much cause for complaint. The Perth City Council had met the members of the North Perth Board several times, and what the North Perth Board really wanted was that the nightsoil should not be carted through North Perth at all. The North Perth people wanted a separate board of health. The Perth City Council would not then be able to cart the nightsoil from the city through North Perth at all. There was a large population in the city of Perth, and that was the reason why nothing had been done. He believed

an amending Bill was to come down in a few days, providing that Perth and North Perth should be under one board of health. If that were done, the residents of North Perth would have no grounds for complaint. He had been to the sanitary depôt on many occasions, and there was nothing objectionable there whatever. The members of the Central Board of Health went to the depôt the other day, and they congratulated the management on the cleanliness of the place. To settle the difficulty once and for all a Bill was to be brought down providing that the North Perth district should be placed under the same health board as the Perth municipality. If that were not done, the Perth municipality would not be able to take the nightsoil outside their own boundaries. The Perth municipality tried to get the North Perth Board to agree to the route by which the nightsoil could be carted away, and it was suggested that it should be carted along Fitzgerald Street, which was made for some distance; but the North Perth Board wanted the nightsoil to be carted along an unmade narrow street. They would not agree to anything. He had tried all he could to induce the Roads Board of North Perth to agree to something practical, and had failed, as the City Council also failed when they tried. Now the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) asked this House to reaffirm a resolution which was passed here last session. He (Mr. A. Forrest) had agreed at that time that if the scheme of pumping, then not sufficiently tried, was found to be unsatisfactory after six months' further trial, the City Council would make some other arrangement for getting rid of the refuse. But the pumping scheme was now a perfect success, and caused no trouble whatever. A few persons in North Perth, with an active secretary, had caused all this bother.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): According to the report which had been read, there was no reason to believe that the previous objectionable condition of the particular locality had been improved since this question was previously before the House. Many serious complaints were made, and the fact of an organisation being kept alive for the ventilation of this grievance showed there was something to complain of. He had

resided in the district within smelling distance of the depôt, and it was then intolerable. Apart from the merits of the case, we had reached a curious stage in the government of the country; for not only did the Executive Government treat resolutions of this House with scorn and contempt, but after the House had passed a resolution, it was found that a decision of this House had to be revised and approved by the City Council before the Government of the country would give effect to that decision. Apparently a mere whisper from the Mayor of Perth or from officials of the City Council was sufficient to induce the Government to set at naught a resolution of this House. If this House was to understand that any resolution passed by it affecting the city of Perth would be of no effect until revised and approved by the City Council, then let this be known distinctly. It appeared now that because the City Council said it was not desirable that a mandate of this House should be carried out, therefore the Government obeyed the City Council by not carrying out the mandate of this House.

THE PREMIER: Some resolutions were passed here without sufficient consideration.

MR. VOSPER: The City Council of course gave the utmost consideration to any resolution passed by that body, and could not make a mistake.

THE PREMIER: Thirty thousand people in the city of Perth should have some consideration as compared with a small number in a suburb.

MR. VOSPER: People in the suburb of North Perth had their rights as well as people in the city of Perth.

THE PREMIER: Those people went to North Perth after that depôt was established.

MR. VOSPER: This was a scandalous invasion of constitutional rights, and he would vote for the motion.

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison): The inhabitants of North Perth were labouring under grievous disadvantages, and the nuisance which existed in their midst ought to be removed. While saying this, he strongly objected to this House being made the vehicle of these complaints. Under the Health Act of 1898, the inhabitants of North Perth had ample means for doing away with

this nuisance; and why this grievance should be trotted out here and the time of the House consumed, when tribunals were provided by statute for remedying grievances of this kind, he did not know. He was satisfied from the Act then before him that the inhabitants of North Perth were empowered, under Section 12, to stop what was undoubtedly a nuisance. The Central Board of Health, on application to the Supreme Court, could compel the local board to discharge its duties.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There was no Board of Health in North Perth.

MR. MOORHEAD: Not only could they do that, but any inhabitant as well could, by proving the existence of a nuisance, get it removed. They had the same right as any ordinary citizen to have a nuisance removed, by taking the necessary action. The inhabitants could go to the proper tribunal for the remedy which undoubtedly existed in this case.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This House received the prayer of the petitioners last session, and granted it.

MR. MOORHEAD: Because this House made a mistake last session he did not see that it should make another.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): This was a serious and very practical question, the disposition of the refuse of a great and growing city; and this House should be careful in what it did in regard to that. Last session we passed a resolution on the subject, and probably he (the Premier) warned hon. members at the time.—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Premier suggested six months.

THE PREMIER: Probably in that discussion he warned hon. members not to pass resolutions without sufficient care. We must remember that the City Council were a statutory body elected by the ratepayers of Perth, and were not overburdened with cash; also that they had spent thousands of pounds in trying to remedy this evil, this nuisance. That dépôt was there long before the people now complaining went to the district to reside. He did not know this was a good argument, but the people came to the nuisance, and not the nuisance to the people.

MR. MOORHEAD: That did not alter the legal aspect of the question.

THE PREMIER: No; but it was worth considering. Even if there was nothing offensive about this dépôt, and supposing the air was as pure there as in any other place, yet we knew that no one would like to have a dépôt of this kind close to his premises, whether there was an offensive odour or not. It was only natural to suppose there would sometimes be something offensive about a place of that kind. The North Perth Roads Board had desired to constitute a health board for the purpose of shutting up or removing this dépôt. If that were done, where could the citizens of Perth put their refuse? Not only was this difficulty felt in Perth, but anyone acquainted with municipal government throughout the colony would know that this difficulty was common to almost every municipal body. In North Fremantle, for instance, the municipal body were at their wits' end to find a place suitable for depositing refuse; and the same difficulty was felt in other municipalities, for not only did people object to the depositing of refuse in their locality, but they objected even to its being carried along a main road through their district. Therefore, the disposal of refuse without creating grievances was a great practical difficulty, and how to get rid of it he did not know. The House should be careful in what it did on this question. The municipal body in East Fremantle would not allow nightsoil carts to pass through their district from North Fremantle; and the people in Fitzgerald Street (West Perth) would not allow nightsoil carts from Perth to go that way. The roads board in North Perth were offered an opportunity to constitute a health board, on condition that this area used by the City Council as a refuse dépôt should be excluded from the jurisdiction of the proposed local board of health; but the roads board would not agree to that. It would be evident, therefore, that an attempt had been made by the Government to carry out the resolution of this House; and the Colonial Secretary, in making that condition as so excluding the dépôt from the area of the proposed board of health, knew that the first thing the new health board would do if constituted would be to stop the use of this dépôt by the city of Perth. Thus the whole matter was at a standstill; and when the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth)

said the Government had "flouted" the wish of this House, that statement was not correct, for the Government had tried to carry out the resolution. Thirty thousand people in Perth ought to be considered as against a few hundreds in North Perth; and as the people in North Perth would not accept a health board unless this objectionable spot was included within the new board's jurisdiction, the difficulty had not been removed. He would be glad if it could be removed. The last proposal submitted to him (the Premier) by the Colonial Secretary was, as was done elsewhere and as the law provided, that the jurisdiction of the health board in Perth should be extended so as to include the area of the North Perth Roads Board District. The effect of that would be to hand over to the City Council and to the Central Board of Health the control of this area. It would be better to go slowly, for this question was very difficult indeed, and he hardly knew what to advise. As the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) had stated, the people in North Perth had their proper remedy under the law; and why should this House rush in at the wish of some persons there, and interfere with the interests and necessities of many thousands of people in Perth? This trouble existed in almost every municipality. There was one such dépôt near Karrakatta, and he had been surprised that no complaints were made about it; but he supposed it was only a question of time as to how soon the population there would increase, and then the same trouble would arise. The North Fremantle Council, not knowing what to do with the nightsoil, had spent several hundred pounds in carrying it out to sea; but this had been prevented by the Central Board. He strongly urged the House not to take any precipitate action in the matter, but to wait till other means of disposing of the nightsoil were found, because the Perth Municipal Council were anxious, and perhaps more anxious than anyone, to abate the nuisance.

MR. HALL (Perth): As this matter affected not only the citizens of Perth but those in the locality named, it was desirable to get all possible information before coming to a decision. He moved that the debate be adjourned for one week.

Motion put and passed, and the debate adjourned till the next Wednesday.

MOTION—FEDERATION, FREE RAILWAY PASSES FOR LIFE.

MR. LOCKE (Sussex) moved:

That, with a view of suitably recognising the Parliament which voted for the Address to Her Majesty, praying that Western Australia shall be admitted as a State of the Commonwealth, every member of the said Parliament shall be entitled to a free pass on the Government railways of the colony for life.

He said: I should like to ask leave to postpone the consideration of this motion for one week.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As this proposal, if passed, will entail expenditure of money by the State, I should like to know whether it is in order?

THE SPEAKER: I have often ruled previously on such points. This is an abstract motion, and it does not necessarily involve an expenditure of money, because it need not be taken any notice of by the Government if they do not choose to give effect to it.

Motion (that the debate be adjourned) put, and negatived.

MR. LOCKE: I beg to move that the proposal in my motion be adopted.

Question put without debate, and negatived.

MOTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY, TO EXAMINE AND VALUE.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie) moved:

1, That, in the opinion of this House, it is very desirable that a thorough examination and detailed valuation of the Midland Railway, and all appurtenances and plant thereunto belonging, be made by the Engineer-in-Chief of this colony. 2, That a complete valuation of the rolling stock be also made by the Railway Department. 3, That these examinations and valuations shall be based upon the actual cash value at present. 4, That a thorough audit of the railway accounts of the Company be made by the Government in connection with any offer to sell the concern to the Government.

He said: In reply to a question of mine last week, the Commissioner of Crown Lands informed the House of something which was not generally known in this country, and certainly not known in the House; namely, that the sort of indefinite hint which the Premier at one time gave the House that there was a

species of arrangement with the Midland Railway Company, whereby their land should not be taxed for ten years or so, was untrue. It is very pleasing to know that the power of taxation is still in our hands, and can be used this session. Following my former questions, I now give notice in the terms stated in this motion, whereby I wish to avoid a repetition of what occurred when we purchased the Great Southern Railway. A standing blame against the Forrest Government and their advisers, and against every member of this House, will always be the fact that we purchased the Great Southern Railway at exactly double its value. As I said before, someone blundered on that occasion. We bought the railway for £1,100,000, while it is certainly to-day not worth more than £500,000.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But we bought the land also.

MR. MORAN: We did not buy the land. We did not buy an acre of land, because the land is always part of the estate of this colony. The land is still there; it belongs to the people, belongs to this Parliament to tax or do as we like with; and besides, we bought the Great Southern Railway without having it examined; or if it were examined, great blame must rest upon the shoulders of the Engineer-in-Chief and the Railway Department. If they were not asked to make an examination, great blame lies at the door of the Premier and the Commissioner of Railways, and also on the head of every member in this House for not having taken due precautions.

THE PREMIER: We knew very well what we were buying.

MR. MORAN: If you knew very well what you were buying, you must be a very bad hand at a bargain; because no harm would have resulted had the land been left in the hands of the company till now, till the steamers had left Albany, when we could have purchased this line for £600,000 or £700,000.

THE PREMIER: But we have induced a fine lot of settlement since we purchased the line.

MR. MORAN: That is very satisfactory; but you could have compelled the settlement at any time. That power you have always with you.

THE PREMIER: No, no.

MR. MORAN: I now propose that we shall have a careful examination of something it is suggested the country should purchase. I believe the Midland Railway Company are anxious to sell their line. They have broken their bargain so many times that they cannot be said to possess the land at the present moment. This country has come to their assistance so often—possibly there were good reasons for so doing and possibly there were not.

THE PREMIER: When did they break their bargain?

MR. MORAN: They are breaking it every day, so frequently that we cannot be expected to extend to them any great consideration.

THE PREMIER: I do not agree with that at all.

MR. MORAN: They are running the line with rotten rolling-stock. Perhaps the Premier will not agree with that. They are running with rolling-stock which is a danger to the travelling public. There is scarcely a journey on the Midland Railway during which some of the boxes do not take fire. That is the position of affairs. We do not know whether or not all the buildings on that line are white-ant-eaten. I believe they are all wooden buildings. [THE PREMIER: No.] We do not know what they are worth.

MR. PIESSE: There are many buildings of stone.

MR. MORAN: We do not know whether the white ants have eaten the stone.

THE PREMIER: There are stone buildings at Gingin, anyway.

MR. MORAN: Are we to buy a railway line with sleepers something like those on the Great Southern Railway? I do not know whether it was one-half or two-thirds of the sleepers had to be taken up on that line, though when we made the purchase we thought they were all jarrah sleepers.

THE PREMIER: We thought nothing of the sort. We knew what they were.

MR. MORAN: A member of Parliament informed me that on one occasion he went down that line and was able to lift up with his hands sleepers which were absolutely hollowed out by white ants. This motion is to block the Government from negotiating or from accepting any offer until this House shall

have absolute information as to what the line is worth. I am not prepared to trust the Government to do the "deal."

THE PREMIER: The Government cannot do the "deal" without the consent of Parliament.

MR. MORAN: Parliament shall begin and Parliament shall finish, as far as I am concerned. I think the House should watch with great care any negotiations between a strong corporation like this and the Government of this country. I wish to have the instructions issued by the Engineer-in-Chief, so that he may stake his reputation on giving us a valuation of the railway line.

THE PREMIER: We had such a valuation in the case of the Great Southern line.

MR. MORAN: I also want the Engineer-in-Chief's opinion on the rolling-stock. The motion asks the Government to authorise that officer to make a full report on the line and the rolling-stock. Then I ask for a separate valuation by the Railway Department. I think it wise on this occasion to have the opinion of both these authorities. The opinion of the Engineer-in-Chief will be of great value in connection with rolling-stock of all kinds; so also will be the opinion of Mr. Davies and his officers; and the same may be said of the opinion of the new Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Wood). This valuation should be based on the present cash value. We do not buy an article ten years old for what it cost the owner. We owe the Midland Railway no consideration, but a hard bargain. We must drive as hard a bargain as we can, for that is our duty. We want to know what the sleepers on the line are worth, how much of the line will have to be relaid, and, in short, what is the present cash value. Let us know the cash value first, and then add so much for sentiment afterwards.

MR. VOSPER: Do not buy a pig in a poke.

MR. MORAN: As to the value of the land, my idea is that we should purchase the railway, and I do not think we should give a penny for the land. If a gold-mining company came to Western Australia and failed to carry out the conditions of their contract, as the Midland Railway Company have done, their lease would have been forfeited long ago, without

mercy or consideration. The Midland Company have done, and are doing nothing, except blocking settlement of a fine piece of country in order that they may force us to go to them and give them a good big sum of money for their concession. I do not suppose the "deal" will be made during the life of this Parliament; but if I am in the next Parliament, I shall make a very close study of this question, with a view of preventing the Midland Railway from getting anything except what we cannot help giving them, because, as I said before, it may be desirable to buy that railway line, but it would be criminal on the part of this House to pay for it at the same rate as we paid for the Great Southern Railway. Further, I believe the price they are asking is far more than what was paid for the Great Southern line. We should insist on this business being conducted according to their contract. We should see that they have safe rolling-stock, and I believe according to the agreement we could insist on trains being run at certain stated times. I would also put on a stiff land tax to bring the company to their senses. They have broken the bargain with the country.

THE PREMIER: When? You talk without telling us how.

MR. MORAN: I know the sympathies of the Premier are with this company and always have been. The Premier is the special advocate for the Midland Railway Company, and he is not likely to allow anything to interfere with this pet of his. It is for that reason I want a special examination made so that the members of this House can deal with the matter when necessity arises. I know what the Premier does is out of kind-heartedness.

THE PREMIER: I do not. I simply want justice.

MR. MORAN: The Premier is willing to allow the company to go on blocking settlement as long as they like: he will not have a land tax put on them, but he is willing to allow them to run their rolling stock to the point of danger. He will not harass them, but will allow the people of the country to be wronged by this company, who have evaded the spirit if not the letter of the agreement. It is perhaps well that the Midland Company should have an advocate in the House or

we might be too hard on them. We know the company are approaching the Agent General in regard to selling this line, and we want to know what the property is worth; what the buildings are worth; what the line itself is worth; and what everything is worth, as soon as the company have the information themselves. We want this report before the general election, because the Government have a habit of assenting to resolutions and then forgetting all about them. If we pass this motion the work should be done inside a month and we should have it before Parliament before it breaks up. The country will then know what we are buying and what we are paying.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: What power is there to make a valuation?

MR. MORAN: The Minister for Mines asks what power there is to have an examination of the rolling stock and the line made. Will the Minister argue that the Government have not the right to examine the rolling stock of the company.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I said "valuation."

MR. MORAN: Paragraph 4 of the motion does not come into consideration until the examination of the railway line has been made and some undertaking arrived at to purchasing the railway.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Paragraph 4 refers to a detailed valuation.

MR. MORAN: What is the objection?

MR. MOORHEAD: Simply that they will kick you out.

MR. MORAN: This Parliament is asked to buy the railway line.

THE PREMIER: Who has asked us to buy it.

MR. MORAN: I know you have been asked to buy it, and it is plainly seen the Government do not want to have any inquiry. They do not want this motion at all. They raise all sorts of quibbles: the valuation cannot be taken, what power is there to take it and so on.

MR. VOSPER: Pass an act of Parliament.

THE PREMIER: I want to see what power we have.

MR. MORAN: The company are carrying thousands of people monthly. They are carrying the precious lives of Ministers of the Crown weekly, yet I am asked the question, what power we have to go and examine the rolling-stock of

this company; what power we have to see what the rolling-stock is moth-eaten or not.

MR. MOORHEAD: The Minister of Mines simply said there was no power to make a valuation.

THE PREMIER: We have power to examine the rolling-stock.

MR. MORAN: If we have power to examine the rolling-stock, cannot a valuation be made at the same time? If this House passes a resolution I will trust the Engineer-in-Chief to get a very near valuation of the line, and if the Government send Mr. Davies to make the valuation of the rolling stock then he will give a good opinion of what the rolling stock is worth. Paragraphs 3 and 4 say that examinations and valuations be based upon the cash value at present, and that a thorough audit of the railway accounts of the company be made in connection with any offer to sell the concern.

THE PREMIER: There is no agreement to buy yet.

MR. MORAN: But in case we should want to buy, I ask the Government to have an audit of the books made.

THE PREMIER: The motion says that the audit is to be made now.

MR. MORAN: The Premier has not read the motion through to the end. It is in connection with any offer to purchase. He says there has been no offer, therefore we cannot make an audit. If the company want to sell, would not the purchaser want to look into the books to see what is the value? Paragraph 4 says that a thorough audit of the railway accounts of the company should be made by the Government in connection with any offer to sell the line. We want to know what the traffic of the line is; what the revenue and expenditure are. I do not know why there can be any objection to the motion, because I feel certain that the proper course for the House to adopt is to have the opinion of its officers so that the country may know what is being done.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member seems to think that he has done something splendid in moving this motion.

MR. MORAN: Do not get vexed. I do not want to hurt you.

THE PREMIER: You cannot hurt me: there is nothing to hurt. The hon.

member seems to think I have an interest in the Midland Railway Company.

MR. MORAN: I do not.

THE PREMIER: I think the hon. member has more interest than I have. He is likely to have more interest than I have so far as I know him. I only want to do justice to the company and to treat them fairly. I have never had any interest in the company and I never intend to have any. We have some powers, I know, under the contract, but I have not been able to find them. The only powers we have exercised have been to give instructions to have an examination of the machinery made and to see the annual accounts. I think these instructions were issued a few days ago by myself, because some one raised the question—I do not know whether it was raised in this House or not, but it was brought under my notice, I think it must have been by the Legislative Council, probably it was—that the terms of the contract were not being carried out in regard to the examination of the machinery and in regard to the condition of the annual accounts, the receipts and expenditure; and I at once authorised the Railway Department, or rather requested them, to call on the company to submit to this examination, also to produce the accounts according to the contract. It appears this has not been done hitherto through some oversight. It is a portion of the contract that the company have to produce their annual receipts and expenditure. Then again, in regard to the rolling-stock, we went so far as to ask the Law Department who was to pay for the inspection. The Railway Department wanted the information, and do not wish to pay for the inspection; but the Law Department advised us that, as no provision was made in the contract that the Midland Railway Company should pay for the inspection, the Government would have to pay for it. The efficiency of the rolling-stock is so important that the Government must pay for the inspection, rather than not have an inspection. The annual receipts and expenditure of the company are to be produced according to the contract. I believe this is already being done. As to the inspection of the rolling-stock, instructions have been issued to the officials to make an inspec-

tion, and I will lay the papers on the table when they come in. In fact, I will take steps to hurry up the preparation of the report, so as to get the papers as soon as possible. As to a valuation of the company's property, no doubt if we were going to buy, that would be the very first thing we should do, to value the property as we did in connection with the Great Southern Railway line. That valuation was before hon. members for some time and at the time the purchase was concluded. It was a valuation by the engineers. I may say this would be the very first thing we would do if there was an agreement to purchase the line, but we have not arrived at that stage yet.

MR. MORAN: Have you not been asked to buy the line yet?

THE PREMIER: There have only been gentle negotiations as to whether, if one side was willing to sell, the other side would buy.

MR. WILSON: It is not *bona fide*.

THE PREMIER: It is quite *bona fide*, but there is nothing tangible; nothing has been arranged. I do not think there has been a stroke of a pen in regard to the matter. All the negotiations have been *viva voce* statements. When we get to that position when the colony is willing to buy the railway line, and the company is willing to sell at a price agreed on, or to be agreed on, subject to certain conditions, then it will be time for us to value the property. I cannot see any object in valuing other people's property unless we are going to buy.

MR. MORAN: No harm can be done.

THE PREMIER: But what is the use unless we are going to buy, and you cannot buy unless the company are willing; therefore, I think it would be a piece of impertinence on our part to go to other people's property and examine it.

MR. MORAN: They are offering it.

THE PREMIER: Nothing of the kind.

MR. MORAN: But an offer has been made in writing.

THE PREMIER: I believe two or three years ago there was an offer made in writing, but on terms the Government were not likely to accept; but offers are always made without prejudice. The company are not offering now, except in a verbal way. There has been no writing that I have seen. As to an offer, I know

that the company want very much more than the line is worth, in my opinion. Unless we come nearer to purchasing it, there is no use interfering with other people's property. The hon. member has asked for a complete valuation of the rolling-stock to be made. Unless we have the right to do that, it is no business of ours. We have no right to do so, any more than anyone coming into my house has the right to value it.

MR. MORAN: You have the right to inspect their rolling-stock.

THE PREMIER: That is so. Instructions have been issued to inspect it. Then the hon. member wants a complete valuation of the rolling-stock upon the actual cash value at present. I do not think there is any need to move in the matter until we get to close quarters. Then, too, we are to make an audit of the accounts. Unless the contract gives the Government the right to audit the accounts, I do not see that we can do so.

MR. MORAN: That is right: they have made an offer?

THE PREMIER: They have made an offer.

MR. MORAN: Then where would an audit be impertinent?

THE PREMIER: There is nothing in the motion when it comes to be analysed. I thought the hon. member had been looking at the contract and had found that certain things which ought to be done under the contract had not been done; and if that had been so I would have been only too glad to join with the hon. member in having these things done. But it seems to me he has not looked at the contract, and that these are imaginary things he has got out of his own head. If this is the sort of motion we are to pass in this House, of course I do not care, but I say it would be very foolish to pass such motions. Let us take care that the contract we have entered into with the company is complied with, but do not go any further; because if we ask to go any further, we shall be told to mind our own business.

MR. MORAN: We have not minded our business in the past.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member says the company have broken the agreement, and I wish he would tell us where, because I should be very glad to make the company comply.

MR. MORAN: You let them off every time they break the agreement.

THE PREMIER: I never heard of their breaking the agreement.

MR. MORAN: Has the agreement never been altered?

THE PREMIER: The agreement has never been altered by me, except to the advantage of the country. Once the agreement was altered by me, and a very good thing too, because I preserved all the land within two miles of the railway, all the land in the reserves and many other things, which the company gained on appeal to the Privy Council. Unless our resolutions are in the direction of making the company comply with the conditions of the contract, these motions are so much waste paper and will only bring us into contempt. I am surprised the hon. member should bring forward a motion of the sort without having read the contract, because had he done the latter and seen the company had been in default, he could have submitted a motion with the object of making them comply with the agreement, and in that I should have been glad to assist him.

MR. MORAN: I will be my own master in these matters.

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison): I am surprised the Premier has dealt seriously with the question, and I am even more surprised and pained at the language the hon. member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) used in submitting his motion. It is a surprise to me to hear a member of the House reproaching the Government with not endeavouring to "harass" the company and drive them into the position of meeting terms approved by the hon. member. That is a novel proposition, and it struck me that it will hardly tend to create a favourable impression in England of the commercial morality of this country. The words of the hon. member were that the Premier was not "endeavouring to harass" the company.

MR. MORAN: I never said "harass."

MR. MOORHEAD: I took particular note of the word "harass," and we know the meaning of the word, which is to unduly press and render uncomfortable; and in introducing the word in connection with an endeavour to bring about a settlement of these claims, the impression must be created that there are people

in this country who will not stop short of going to extreme lengths to drive this foreign company into negotiations more favourable to the vendee than the vendor. I protest against this House being made the arena for any member to make use of language to that effect, which will undoubtedly damage our reputation for commercial morality in the eyes of Englishmen, and further will not tend to improve our reputation, even in the opinion of the people in this country. Then, again, the hon. member asks why the Premier does not single out this particular company for taxation? Would that not be a most inequitable proceeding?

MR. MORAN: I never said that.

MR. MOORHEAD: "Why," the hon. member asked, "Does not the Premier tax this particular company?"

MR. MORAN: I did not say that.

MR. MOORHEAD: My recollection of the hon. member's language is pretty clear, and I am not surprised he has forgotten it, because, as a rule, it is simply a tornado of words without any connected ideas. So long as he is making a noise and denouncing the Government, in the last couple of months, on a railway question—it does not matter much which railway—the hon. member is satisfied, without being at all concerned as to either the arguments or ideas he wishes to convey.

MR. MORAN: You are "on the rail;" I am on the railway.

MR. MOORHEAD: As a Western Australian, I would be sorry to see the Government of the country tax any particular individual or particular company. We must have taxation spread over the whole: we cannot make fish of one and flesh of another, and if we wish to tax this company we must tax all absentees—a tax I would support. Why single out the Midland Railway Company for taxation? I cannot believe for a moment that when the hon. member comes to consider, he will in his reply support that idea. I am glad to hear him repudiate the suggestion, but I took particular note of his language, and of his asking the Premier why he did not "harass" and tax the company; and as I have already said, I was pained to hear such language in this House from the hon. member. I am no

friend of the Midland Railway Company. Their proceedings during the last twelve months in the colony are deserving of the condemnation of the House, and their method of dealing with pastoral leases at the present moment warrants the strongest censure. Furthermore, their recent action in increasing the rates in connection with one or two industries is inequitable in the highest degree. But I cannot proceed to the length of saying that by reason of their action, we ought to depart from ordinary constitutional precedent. I regret exceedingly, as I say, that the Premier has dealt seriously with the motion, which, when one comes to consider it, simply amounts to an opinion that the Government are a collection of children, and would enter into a contract without having a valuation of the stock; that they would enter into a contract at the price put on by the vendors! What more does the motion mean? Read it, and it means that before a contract is entered into and completed there must be a valuation. And does the hon. member believe for a moment that the Premier and his colleagues would enter into a contract of this description, at a price put on by the vendors; that they would be willing to give that price without some statement before them by which they could arrive at terms they would be willing to give? It is simply waste of time to discuss the motion, and I regret exceedingly, as I have said more than once before, that the Premier should encourage motions of this sort by treating them seriously.

MR. MORAN: Amen! That is one for the Nannine Railway.

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy): I wish to make one or two remarks with regard to the motion, which the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) has suggested should not be taken seriously. The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) seems to be very solicitous for the lives and safety of the people who travel on the Midland Railway line, and I conclude that was the idea with which he submitted the motion. He asked this House to approve of the desirability of making a valuation of the railway property of the Midland Company; but I cannot advise the House to agree to that proposal, because I cannot see that we have any right to

enter on the property and publish such a valuation to the world, though if there had been a proposal made to sell the line, of course the very first thing the Government would do would be to make a valuation. I am, perhaps, quite as solicitous as the member for East Coolgardie with regard to the lives, safety, convenience and comfort of those who travel by the Midland Railway; but under the contract the Government have every power to enter and inspect, and compel the company to remedy any defects in the road or plant. I have always been of opinion that the Government, through the Railway Department, should exercise that right and make periodical examinations; because, from what I have seen, I fear that the plant is not in the order it ought to be. The hon. member complains of the stoppage of the trains, and of the boxes running hot; but for the last five years and, indeed since the line has been working, that has been the case. It is not for me to say what is the reason. [A MEMBER: The same on Government lines.] The same occurs on all railways, but I feel certain it occurs more frequently on this particular line. However, while I trust the Railway Department will exercise the right of inspection, I maintain they have no right to make a valuation of the property and publish that valuation to the world.

MR. MORAN: You are talking nonsense! This is part of the public estate of Western Australia.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I do not know that I am in the habit of imparting nonsense to hon. members of the House.

MR. MORAN: It is "rot," I think.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The hon. member, at any rate, very often speaks a great deal more than there is any necessity for on many matters, and if he confined his speeches to shorter compass he would perhaps save himself a great deal of trouble.

MR. MORAN: Too many "perhappes" altogether.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: If the hon. member had moved that the Government should exercise the rights they have, and give notice of their intention to purchase the line, hon. members might have understood the position.

The Government under an agreement, made when the £500,000 was lent to the company, have a right to enter in and purchase the line on giving twelve months' notice.

THE PREMIER: Not the land.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: No; the railway line. The Government have now power under the Act 56 Vict., No. 19, to purchase the railway and works in connection therewith at any time on giving twelve months' notice of the intention to exercise that right. If the hon. member is anxious the country should get this line, and had moved a proposal to that effect, there might have been something to consider; but he has submitted a motion in terms he had no right to use, because the making of a valuation would be one of the first things done if a purchase were proposed. I know the inconvenience, perhaps to a greater degree than the hon. member, the country suffers on account of this length of country being locked up and exempt from settlement. The railway line is not the trouble to the country and the people: the trouble is so much land being locked up. But the hon. member does not seem to trouble his mind about that: all he wants to do is to try and harass the company as much as possible.

MR. MORAN: Nonsense!

THE MINISTER OF MINES: I have no desire myself to do anything of the sort; still, I maintain that as soon as this concession can be taken over on equitable terms by the country, it would be better to take it over; but until it can be taken over on terms the Government would be justified in laying before the House, I do not see that any offer can be considered. I am surprised the hon. member should have submitted a motion such as this, because I am certain the House cannot follow him; moreover, there would be no use in agreeing to the motion, seeing that the Government have no power to carry it out.

MR. WILSON (Canning): I regret that I cannot support the hon. member in this motion, because I do not think it is opportune at the present time, even though the company might be agreeable to the Government taking a valuation of their property. I am of opinion that if the Government approached the company and asked permission to make a valua-

tion, the company would probably accede to that request, because they would naturally assume that the Government were going to follow it up by some offer or negotiation to purchase. Apart from that, if we had no idea of purchasing the railway and the land from the company, I think it would be most detrimental to have a valuation made as proposed. It would certainly depreciate the assets of the company, because naturally the valuation would not be the figure put upon the property by the company. It would injure the company in the eyes of the commercial world, and it would be of no benefit to us at the present moment. If the hon. member had brought forward proof of necessity for this motion, and of advantages to be gained by it, one might have looked upon it in a different light. So far as I can understand, the object aimed at is to obtain some information by which we can negotiate, if inclined to do so, and, in vulgar parlance, put the screw on to bring the price down to the lowest possible amount. As far as the question of the railway is concerned, I should like to say that, if it were not for the release of the land locked up, I would not be any party to it at all. I believe the railway is all right. Of course it is necessary that the department should make a periodical inspection, which I believe they are doing, to see that the various sections and the rolling-stock are in working order. If that is done, I believe the railway is being conducted in a fair manner, and that fair facilities are given to the travelling public. Even though there may be a few more blocks on the Midland Railway than we have on the Government lines, yet we must not forget that every journey is a long one, of some 300 miles. It is a through journey, whereas the travelling on the Government lines is short, the traffic being suburban traffic, and the distance perhaps half or one-third of that on the Midland line. So far as my experience goes I have not travelled very often on the Midland Railway, but taking everything into consideration, I think the company have granted very fair facilities for the volume of traffic on their line. Of course no one can dispute that if the land were thrown open it would increase the traffic and enable the company to give better facilities. I do not hold for one moment

with their action in keeping that land locked up, and I would point out that when the Land Improvements Bill was before the House it was through the action of the Government on the occasion that this land was exempted. The Midland Railway Company were exempted from the Bill.

THE PREMIER: A period of ten years was mentioned.

MR. WILSON: If we can bring the company under this Bill, or some other Bill by which we may force the company to make improvements on the land, or to sell, or pay taxation on unimproved land, and by that means force the company to open up the land, I think we shall be justified in doing it, within a reasonable limit. Make all alike. I want to point out just for a moment that the hon. member (Mr. Moran) in moving this motion was certainly wrong in advancing the argument that inspection was equivalent to valuation. No man can make a valuation of the railway rolling-stock and workshops by mere inspection. That is a different thing altogether. An inspection is done quickly, and is merely to see that the lines are in fair working order, and that there is no danger to life. A valuation is a thing that must be gone into very closely indeed, and my experience goes to show that it would take considerably longer than a month to give a fair valuation of this property.

MR. MORAN (in reply): I am pleased that I introduced this motion to the Chamber. We got first and foremost for about three minutes a rather heated reply from the Premier, in which he did not fail to throw a sly shaft at me. I take it in the spirit in which it is given. I assure the right hon. gentleman he is not a bad hand at that. He wanted to insinuate that as far as he knew me I was more likely to be bribed by the Midland Railway Company than he was. That was the insinuation, but I do not know what gave rise to it. I did not introduce the Premier's personal character in the least.

THE PREMIER: You did, though.

MR. MORAN: I did not.

THE PREMIER: I took it so.

MR. MORAN: Then you took it wrongly. I said the Premier had been always a stumbling-block against dealing harshly with this company.

THE PREMIER: You said you did not know what the reason was.

MR. MORAN: If I did, I am very sorry. What I did say was this, that it is the old story again, that the Premier has too tender a susceptibility regarding foreign companies of this kind. There is no doubt that he has a leaning towards them. That is what I mean. He has a general idea that we must treat British capitalists with a more gentle hand, that we must allow them to have their own way in this country, and that we, as the representatives of the people, must do nothing to ruffle them or hurt them in any way. So far as the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) is concerned, he had a little railway of his own which he tried to sell some time ago, and he feels rather tenderly for the Midland Railway Company. One of the arguments advanced by the Minister of Mines is worthy of note. The Minister of Mines says we have no power to make a valuation over this company's line; and yet you have the power to go into other men's businesses in this country, by Act of Parliament, and make a man return to you the statistical value of everything he has. The Minister of Mines himself has to give an account for every sheep, whether it has a tail or not, and anything else. He has to round the sheep up and make a statistical return. Every mining company has to give a return of every ounce of gold it produces, and a return has to be given of rolling-stock or anything else. I say that by the Industrial Statistics Act you go into other men's businesses, and get a valuation.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You get the man's valuation, and not your own.

MR. MORAN: Does the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) suggest that we must accept any valuation? He knows it is a sworn valuation, and if I give a declaration and false return of value I am liable for it. What I say is this. Here is a large portion of the estate of Western Australia—because although it is nominally owned by a foreign company it is part of the estate of Western Australia—and there is objection to a valuation of it being taken, in face of the fact that we purchased another concession like it for double the worth.

MR. MOORHEAD: What is the meaning of this?

MR. MORAN: I wish the hon. member would not interject. The hon. member has not been very long in the House, but he cannot forget the fact that at one time of his life he was a college lecturer, or something, and he likes to lecture the House on all sorts of things; about the propriety of this and that.

MR. MOORHEAD: You spoke about alienation of an estate. I want to know what you mean.

MR. MORAN: The hon. member talks about my tornado of words. He has a beautiful silvery stream of words, and it is a pleasure to listen to his speech, but afterwards you find there is very little in it but a delightful ripple. To come to this argument about valuation, I ask for a valuation of this business to be made. The Government object. I knew the Government would object. I knew the Premier would oppose the motion, and I desired to bring it before the notice of the country. I expected them to oppose, and I expect they will defeat the motion. I am desirous that the country shall know that in my opinion we should go into the matter carefully, and the Government should conduct these negotiations secretly, through their Agent General or someone else with a secret direction of some sort or another, up to a certain point.

THE PREMIER: You said you wanted it in the House in a month.

MR. MORAN: To show that the Premier protects this company, and to indicate what a special leaning he has towards it, I may say that I last session was the first to introduce the idea that we should tax this company in common with all other owners of unimproved estates in this colony; but the Premier made a vigorous effort, and ultimately won, by which he excluded this company from the operation of the proposed unimproved land tax, and he allowed the House to think there was some sort of understanding between this Government and that company that they should not be taxed for a number of years. I looked up *Hansard* to find out what the Premier said on the question at the time. I shall quote his own speech when I have the pleasure, as I hope, of introducing a Bill to tax this company in common with other people. The Government say they will not approach the Midland Railway Company

with a view of buying this concession. They will do nothing. They will not value the property. They will not have a valuation taken, and they will not tell the House what is going on. They will not ascertain the value of the property for fear the company should think they were purchasing it. Here is a separation between the northern portion of the colony and the southern portion. The colony is divided into two parts, and the position of affairs cannot go on any longer. Under these circumstances if the mountain will not come to Mahomet, perhaps Mahomet will go to the mountain.

THE PREMIER: You said you would oppose the purchase of this railway.

MR. MORAN: At the present time.

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. MORAN: I say I am opposed to purchasing it at the price asked. I want to go to work to purchase it, but I desire to bring the property down to its fair value. I would not buy it for the next 12 months.

THE PREMIER: You said you would not buy it.

MR. MORAN: I would not buy it at all in the present condition of the finances.

THE PREMIER: Then what are you talking about?

MR. MORAN: About getting them to make a reasonable offer, and bringing the value down. The Government will not do what the Government of New Zealand or any other Government would do. They will not study the country first, but the tender susceptibilities of the company must be studied first. I expected that. As I say, it is the over sensitiveness on the part of the Premier on behalf of foreign capital that is the only reason for his opposition to this motion. This is more important to me a great deal at the present moment than many Bills before the House, and the question should be tackled earnestly, this company being given to understand that if they will not allow a concession and mention a reasonable price, or do something of what was expected of them—and it was expected that they would bring thousands of people and settle them on the land—we will insist upon disputing the point by any means in our power. The company have no right to expect any concession of us. They were supposed to settle that land, but they are blocking settlement in

every way, and they are aided by the present Government. They will do nothing. There is a case in point.

THE PREMIER: What did you do?

MR. MORAN: The member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) had a little railway of his own which he tried to sell.

MR. WILSON: I did not.

THE PREMIER: Hit them all round!

MR. MORAN (to Mr. Wilson): Did you not offer a railway to the Government?

MR. WILSON: No; never.

MR. MORAN: I had an idea that the Canning people did offer their railway to the Government, and therefore I say the hon. member has a little kindly feeling towards companies of this sort. However, that is neither here nor there, whether they did or not. A mistake has been made. This railway company have been approached somehow or other in a secret way by the Agent General. But in case the Government will not purchase the company's property, it has been suggested the company be asked to buy the rest of Western Australia, and to make of it one concession. If the Government will not buy the company, perhaps the company will buy the Government and run the whole country as a private concern. At present the colony is cut in half by that line, and this motion suggests the proper way to go to work to bring about its acquisition by the colony. What has been the result of this resolution? Why, the Premier has told the House, and that for the first time, that the rolling-stock shall be examined and returns from the company obtained.

THE PREMIER: That was the result of a motion in the other House.

MR. MORAN: I am satisfied with that at the present moment, but I will not withdraw this motion. I know that it will be a question at the next general election of what we are going to do with that great land concession—what we are going to do with this great company who have broken the spirit of their agreement with the Government, if not the very letter of it; and what we are going to do with the Premier who will not take ordinary means to bring this company to their senses? That is the reason for this motion; and having moved it, I feel I have done my duty; but if I be in Parliament during the next session, I shall

have great pleasure in introducing a measure to force that company to pay a tax.

THE PREMIER: I asked you whether you were in favour of our purchasing the line.

MR. MORAN: I repeat that, in view of our financial position, the Premier knows perfectly well I am opposed to public expenditure at the present moment. I do not believe the country could at present afford to buy that railway if it could be purchased for half-a-million pounds. But it will take one or two years to complete the negotiations for the purchase, and this is the time to start. I want to pass this motion in order that the company may be given to understand that the next Parliament will deal with them severely; and I am sure if that Parliament does its duty to the country it will carry out this suggestion.

MR. EWING (Swan): I do not think anyone will charge me or my electors with being friendly to the Midland Railway Company, and I quite agree with the last speaker that the sooner we see that this company does its duty to the country the better. But does the hon. member realise the import of the motion he introduces? His motion asks that the Minister of Railways or one of his officials should go on to private property, inspect that property, find out how much the company owns, and then make public the condition of the company and its assets. I think we have very seldom heard of such a proposition. Surely the hon. member is not serious when he points to the fact that persons are compelled to make returns under the Stock Act. Surely he realises that Parliament has there provided machinery, which machinery is the outcome of an Act of Parliament. And if we were to pass this motion, what would be the result? Would it legalise the entry of the Commissioner of Railways upon this property? Would it legalise the action he would have to take to carry the resolution into effect? I say the motion is absolutely beyond the province of this House, for it would immediately make the Director of Public Works or his officers trespassers; because the Minister would have no right whatever to do any of the things which this motion contemplates. I quite agree with several previous speakers that the sooner this

House faces fairly and squarely the position the Midland Railway Company occupies in this community, the better; but I fail to see that it would be either wise or proper for this House to pass a motion which, in effect, would provide for prying into the private affairs of a company when we have no legal or moral right to do anything of the kind.

Motion put, and negatived on the voices.

MOTION—SWEEPS AND CONSULTATIONS, TO ABOLISH.

MR. CONNOR (East Kimberley) rose to move:

That, in the opinion of this House, legislation should be immediately introduced to abolish sweeps and "consultations" on horse races.

He said: The great majority of the business people on the goldfields are somewhat frightened as to what will be the result of continuing the sweeps at present carried on, and what effect they will have on their business and on the trade of the country generally. I see, however, that since this motion has been tabled, an amendment of the Police Act is being brought before the House by the Attorney General; and as I think all that I could wish to see is embodied in that Bill, I presume it will be better for me to ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

At 6:22, the **SPEAKER** left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

PRIVILEGE—CATTLE RESTRICTIONS INQUIRY, SOLICITING EVIDENCE.

MR. MONGER (York): Before the Orders of the Day are read, I wish to bring under your notice, Mr. Speaker, a question of privilege in connection with an inquiry by a select committee, and I desire to ask your ruling on this question. If a member of a select committee, on his own authority, sends or causes to be sent important telegrams to the leaders or persons in touch with the leaders of Governments in other colonies, which cause replies to the telegrams to be sent to the interested departments of this colony, should not the original telegram or telegrams be produced? I may mention, in connection with the inquiry to

which I refer, that from the evidence produced, it seems that a member of the select committee has taken upon himself to send or cause to be sent a telegram or telegrams to the heads of the Governments in the other colonies, and these telegrams caused communications between the Premiers of those colonies and the Premier of Western Australia. What I desire to find out is whether a member of that select committee is privileged to send telegrams in connection with the business of that inquiry on his own responsibility, or should not the inquiry be made through the chairman of that committee? I also wish to know whether the telegrams that caused the communications between the Premiers should not be produced. I desire to ask your ruling on the question.

MR. HARPER (Beverley): May I be permitted, as I presume this question is asked in regard to the select committee of which I am the chairman, to correct one slight error in the statement which the hon. member has made. There is no evidence that any member has sent a telegram.

MR. MONGER: I may mention, Mr. Speaker, that there was no direct denial by the party to whom I refer, as to his having sent, or caused to be sent, the telegram to which I have referred.

THE SPEAKER: Of course I cannot say, as this is not a case in which I can give a ruling. All I can do is to express an opinion. I think a member of a select committee requiring more information should seek that information through the chairman of the committee.

MR. MONGER: That is exactly the reply I expected; and I would like to mention that I hope, when it is decided to appoint a select committee, the members chosen should be versed in the procedure that should be adopted in circumstances similar to that to which I have referred.

MOTION—RAILWAY WORKSHOPS AT MIDLAND JUNCTION, TO CONSTRUCT FORTHWITH.

Debate resumed from 12th September, on motion by Mr. EWING that the erection of the workshops at Midland Junction should be proceeded with forthwith.

MR. HIGHAM (Fremantle): I regret this question should have arisen at this stage, when there is no possibility of the

work being carried out. We all know the Government have not sufficient funds in hand at the present time to carry out the work; and as no practical work will be done until after the next Parliament meets, I think this question could well be left until then. I know, as a Fremantle man representing a constituency that has enjoyed a certain amount of benefit from the workshops, that any remarks I may make on the question may be considered "parochial"; but I hope to disabuse the minds of hon. members and others that in the action which I, in common with the people of Fremantle, am now taking, or have taken year by year since the inception of the movement for the removal of railway workshops from Fremantle, is based on higher grounds than parochialism. But, even from a parochial point of view, the Fremantle people have good grounds to go upon. We have in Fremantle workshops at the present time employing some 750 men, amongst whom the sum of £160,000 per annum is distributed in wages. We have amongst these men 250 who, years ago, bought their homes at Fremantle and had settled down there. These men own very valuable property; in fact, the rental value of the properties is £58,000 at the present time. On these grounds alone the Fremantle people have very good reason for objecting to the removal of the workshops; but we could, as our representatives did in 1895, object on national grounds, because to have the buildings at Midland Junction would lead to a very considerable increase in the cost of working. We tried to show in 1895, or earlier, that more suitable sites could be had; but we can now prove that other sites are available much nearer Fremantle which have the advantages I have indicated, and which, while not depriving the men of their vested interests, would tend to the welfare of the colony. We listened with considerable interest to the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) when he introduced the motion the other night, but, after all, I do not think he said very much to convince us of the soundness of his views.

MR. EWING: "Convince a man against his will," you know.

MR. HIGHAM: The hon. member said very little to convince us the work-

shops should be constructed at Midland Junction and on no other site, and he never attempted to dispute the fact that other and more suitable sites are available much nearer the coast. We have all had distributed to us the manifesto of the Midland Junction Progress Association, and having read it attentively, I see little in it beyond a condemnation of the present site at Fremantle. But I do not think anyone would be found, even in Fremantle, to maintain that the railway workshops should remain in the present position; because the site is too cramped, and the demands created by the harbour improvements and railway service in connection therewith are so large that a removal must be made at an early date. But we have maintained year by year, whenever the question has cropped up, is that there are near Fremantle, either on the south side or between Fremantle and Perth, sites much more capable of economical working than that at Midland Junction, and sites where a better foundation can be obtained for the heavy machinery likely to be erected, and which will create far less loss not only to the community generally, but especially to those employed in the workshops. The pamphlet emphasises the argument that the railway workshops should be placed at Midland Junction because that is the centre of the railway system, and the railway of the Canning Timber Company converges on the main trunk line; and it is further held that the heavy engines employed on the Eastern line could be located at Midland Junction and the other work done by lighter engines. But these arguments do not affect the question at all; because although there can be a "stable" for the engines at Midland Junction, that is no reason why the railway workshops should also be there. The pamphlet goes on to say that the Government have bought 500 acres of land at Midland Junction. I do not know on what authority that statement is made, but so far as information placed before Parliament goes, the Government bought 260 acres there for £2,000, and have, as stated I believe in reply to a question, spent some £26,000 in improving that land. But should it be decided not to construct the workshops there, the 260 acres would remain, with a fair proportion of the £26,000 in the interlocking

gear, the residences, shops, and other improvements, all of which would be useful if a running shed were built for the purpose of housing the heavy engines used on the Eastern line. What I maintain is that it would be impossible to have the workshops there and carry them on as economically as on a site which could be procured within five or six miles of the coast; because an immense amount of haulage of material, stores, coal, and other things required in the shops and on the lines, would total a very considerable sum annually, and, more than that, would be found to still further congest traffic in the Perth yards. It has been said that the Midland Junction site was approved by the Engineer-in-Chief, and also by Mr. Allison Smith in 1895.

MR. SOLOMON: It was approved by Mr. Allison Smith in 1892.

MR. HIGHAM: It is admitted those gentlemen did approve of the Midland Junction site at that time, but since then there have been considerable development and change in every respect. The works at that time were small and carried on under considerable difficulties. There were not half the appliances that have since been provided; and although, as Mr. Allison Smith said, the running expenses were then 33 per cent., and far higher than those of any of the other colonies, no credit was given for the exceptional circumstances. In the first place, there were not the proper appliances in the shops, and again, it was overlooked that both engines and rolling-stock were made to do twice and treble the amount of work rolling-stock and engines are expected to do in properly equipped works; and if that excessive expenditure on rolling-stock had been thoroughly gone into at the time, it would not have been debited to railway works, but to the exceptional circumstances. I do not wish to say anything of any particular site, but there are in and around Fremantle, and between Fremantle and Perth, many sites which could be made available with great advantage in economical working. Attention has been drawn to the fact that plans have been prepared for the Midland Junction site and considerable expense incurred thereon; but if it were thought advisable to select another site, that expense would

not be wasted, because the same plans could be utilised, all that is required being a plain surface of land of fair area. I am not going to say much, even about the Midland Junction site, though while I do not profess to be an expert, I regard it as unsuitable in many respects. Not only is it 23 miles from the coast, but the foundation is not so secure as it ought to be for the work. I now move, as an amendment, that all the words after "House" be struck out and the following words inserted in lieu thereof :

A Royal Commission shall be appointed to consider and report as to whether, in the best interests of the colony, a more suitable site for the railway workshops cannot be found, and as to the advisability of this House rescinding the resolution in connection with those workshops, passed in 1895.

I hope the amendment will commend itself to the House. In 1892, when Mr. Allison Smith made his report, and in 1895 on the motion of the then Minister of Railways (Hon. H. W. Venn), it was decided that the workshops should be removed to Midland Junction; and although at that time Midland Junction seemed to be the best, circumstances have altered considerably, and, owing to the construction of the Owen's Anchorage line, three good sites are now available which might be submitted to the Royal Commission. I will not say anything about the Rocky Bay site, although, in my opinion, it would for years to come afford facilities. There is also a site at Claremont, which was passed over in 1895.

MR. EWING: Does that belong to the Government?

MR. HIGHAM: I believe it is under the municipality, but it virtually belongs to the Government.

MR. EWING: There is a difference between land belonging to a municipality and land belonging to the Government.

MR. HIGHAM: The land is absolutely useless to the municipality, and I do not think there would be any trouble on that score.

MR. EWING: It cannot be much good if the municipality give it up.

MR. HIGHAM: It is, I believe, no good for municipal purposes. In view of the altered circumstances and of the increased facilities for reaching better sites, and in view of the fact that it will be impossible to go on with the work of

constructing the workshops for six or nine months, it is much better that during the recess the question should be considered fully by a Royal Commission, with power to call in experts, and place before hon. members on our return to Parliament next session a concise report, recommending the site most suitable in the interests of the colony. I hope the amendment will be carried, because while it affects Fremantle to a considerable extent, it affects the colony still more.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): I second the motion.

MR. RASON (South Murchison): With all respect to the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing), I think his motion is somewhat ill-advised and inopportune. Still, I can sympathise with him and I can sympathise still more with his constituents in the great delay which has occurred in the removal, this long promised removal, of the workshops to the Midland Junction. It is hard for me, with some slight practical knowledge of the question, to find any sufficient excuse. I can well understand that to the ordinary layman it is impossible to find any excuse for the great and, to my mind, unreasonable delay that has already occurred. I did think the question of the removal had been settled once and for all, years ago. Every possible inquiry has been made into the matter. We have had the opinion of every available expert in the colony, and we have had the opinion of disinterested persons, and of past and present Commissioners. In fact everyone who is qualified to give an opinion has given it, and that opinion has been definitely expressed in favour of the removal of the shops from Fremantle to Midland Junction. This is not a matter of to-day. The question of the removal of the shops dates back for fully ten years. So far back as 1892 we had the very Royal Commission for which the member for Fremantle is now asking. Before that Royal Commission every available evidence was tendered, and everything went to show, as it would go to show to-day, that if, as admittedly is the case, the shops must be removed from Fremantle, the ideal site of the workshops is at Midland Junction. But the member for Fremantle has told us that circumstances have changed since 1892, that the requirements of the colony and of the railway system are greater,

and the facilities need to be greater. That only goes to show the necessity for the immediate removal of the shops to the site selected for them. We have a theory set forth that there is something wrong with the foundations at Midland Junction; that the foundations are not all they might be. But that is an absurd theory to set up, because we have the opinion of every expert in the colony, and out of it too, that the foundations at the Midland Junction are all that can be desired. The member for Fremantle has also said that since 1892 some place in the neighbourhood of Fremantle has been discovered which is an excellent site for the workshops. I hardly think the member for Fremantle has anything to gain by the theory that the neighbourhood of Fremantle has for many years been unexplored, and that only during the last few years have they been able to discover in that unexplored region a site suitable for railways.

MR. HIGHAM: We have had the Owen's Anchorage since.

MR. RASON: We have been told—and much has been made of the fact both inside and outside this House—that it is inadvisable to remove the workshops to Midland Junction, Midland Junction being so far inland, and that it is necessary or advisable to have the workshops situated on the seaboard. At a meeting at Fremantle a gentleman who may be supposed to be an authority on railway matters—I refer to Mr. Cartwright—said that the custom in England was for all workshops to be on the seaboard. That statement was either made deliberately with mal-intent, or else it was made out of sheer ignorance; because of the large railway companies in England there is not one that has its workshops on the seaboard. If I may be allowed, I will quote six of the leading railway companies in England—the Great Northern, whose workshops are at Doncaster; the Great Eastern, whose workshops are at Nine Elms; the Great Western, at Swindon; the Midland, at Derby; the London and North-Western, at Crewe for locomotives, at Earlstown for wagons, and at Wolverton for coaching-stock; the North Eastern, whose works are at Darlington, York, and Gateshead. Those are the six leading railway companies of England.

None of those shops are at the seaboard, but every one of them some miles farther inland than Midland Junction. Most of them are in the very heart of England, hundreds of miles from the seaboard. This is the case with the railway companies who have had to pay a dividend to their shareholders. The question of haulage of material does not enter in, and over and above private railway companies we must look at these manufacturing companies. There are companies for manufacturing coaching-stock, over and above the railways themselves. Of these private manufacturers I can call to mind a dozen who have their works miles inland, and I cannot at the moment call to mind one who has his works on the seaboard. [A MEMBER: Quote Australia.] An interjection comes to me for me to quote Australia. Australia has a very great deal to learn both in the management of her railways and the manufacturing of her stock. I asked a question yesterday, and hoped to have a reply to-day, as to the time occupied in the erection of engines and of wagons at the Fremantle shops. Unfortunately that reply is not available to-day, but it may come as a surprise to some members of this community to learn that the shops I have quoted, miles in the interior, are so much up to date that in one case (that of the Great Eastern) they turn out a locomotive with engine and tender, weighing 53 tons, under steam and ready for hauling and painted, in ten hours from commencement of the erection. As to wagons, at the Crewe shops they can turn out an ordinary low-sided waggon every half-hour, evidently very far in the interior. They build it and turn it out of the shed, everything having been manufactured in the shops.

A MEMBER: Wheels and all?

MR. RASON: Wheels and all. If there is an authority in this House who is prepared to contradict that statement, I am quite prepared to give him chapter and verse for it.

A MEMBER: Common sense.

MR. RASON: I am afraid common sense is a missing quantity. I wish, if I can, to further drive home the argument I have adduced, that haulage of material does not enter in, from this fact, that a great number of these companies whose

names I have cited actually control, if they do not own, a great many shipping ports. Take the case of the North-Eastern, a company with which I am well acquainted. That company practically owns the port of Hull (which is not an insignificant shipping port), and East and West Hartlepool, either of which ports may, with all respect to Fremantle, bear comparison with that port, at all events. The North-Eastern Railway Company actually own, I say, the ports of East and West Hartlepool. The North-Eastern Railway Company owns the warehouses, docks, and everything connected with that port, yet it has not its shops at any of the ports it owns or which are under its complete control. What is the history of this removal of the shops from Fremantle? We had a Royal Commission in 1892, and I may be allowed to quote some of the evidence of Mr. Allison Smith, who, at all events, is an authority on the erection of workshops. He gave this evidence:

I have selected a site at Midland Junction for the following reasons:—Because the area is large, consisting of 260 acres, at £10 per acre. Because it is necessary that a large area shall be available for siding and future extension. Because to keep down the first cost the land must be naturally level. Because it is at the junction of the Midland system and the Canning Timber line with the Government main lines. Because it is at the foot of the steep grades of the Eastern Railway, which necessitates a very large engine depôt, which can be maintained better with workshops than as a separate system.

The Engineer-in-Chief gave as reasons for the removal of the workshops:

That the present inefficient workshops are contributing largely to the excessive cost of the Locomotive Branch. That the site at Midland is the best obtainable (proved by actual survey). It is an extensive and level area requiring but little expense to adapt it to the purpose required. That it is at the foot of the steep grades, also at the junction of the Midland Railway and the Canning Timber line. He considers that such a site will prove of ultimate advantage to the employees.

With these expressions the majority of the members of the Royal Commission were wholly in accord, and the result of that Royal Commission was that the commission recommended the removal of the workshops from Fremantle to Midland Junction at as early a date as could be arranged. I would ask what has occurred

since to alter the site which has been chosen, or to alter the requirements of the service. The requirements of the service have increased, and the annual loss to this colony by reason of the inefficient workshops at Fremantle has also increased, but nothing has occurred to the detriment of the site at Midland Junction. Everything goes to show that if there was a necessity to remove these workshops in 1892, there is a still greater necessity to remove them to-day. It is proved that the direct loss to this colony is something about £20,000 a year owing to the inefficient state of the workshops at Fremantle; and anyone with the slightest practical knowledge of the subject will know that the indirect loss is at least five times that amount. I have no hesitation in saying that the loss to this colony owing to its inefficient workshops is at least £100,000 a year. Coming to the site which has been chosen at Midland Junction, I claim, and I think hon. members who have given any thought to the subject will admit, that Midland Junction is an ideal site for the workshops. It is at the foot of the very steep grades; it is at the junction of the Midland Railway, which, I think it will be admitted, the sooner the Government acquire the better; and it is on the junction of the Darling Range railway. Undoubtedly there, at the foot of those steep hills, is the site where all the marshalling of trains should be done; and undoubtedly a different type of engine altogether is required to work over the hills from that required to work at the foot of the hills. Over and above that, from Midland Junction to Northam, where there are also locomotive workshops, is a fair day's run for an ordinary engine-driver or guard. Everything—nature, the circumstances of the case, the requirements of the colony—everything shows that Midland Junction is the site for this colony's railway workshops. If I thought the appointment of a Commission would bring forward any evidence at all which would show it was to the interests of this colony that the shops should be erected somewhere else, I for one would lend my voice to the appointment of a Royal Commission with that object; but I can see no such object to be gained, and I can see nothing to be gained but delay. Well, there has already been more than

sufficient delay. The colony is losing thousands of pounds, I might almost say daily, by the delay that has already occurred. It is admitted even by the friends of Fremantle that the workshops must be removed from their present site. That is admitted by everyone. Now we have a site chosen by the best experts available, and that site is at Midland Junction.

MR. GEORGE: Who is the expert?

MR. RASON: Not the member for the Murray (Mr. George).

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear. I wanted to know who he was? I have not received the information.

MR. RASON: There have been experts other than the member for the Murray—[MR. GEORGE: He was not asked]—who have been unanimous in the opinion that the Midland Junction was preeminently the best site available; and I claim that it is in the interests of the colony that there should be no further delay. The plans for the erection of the shops at the Junction are, I believe, available, and if they are not, they should be within a very few days; and the work can be proceeded with, I take it, almost at once.

MR. HOLMES: Is the money available?

MR. RASON: It would be to the best interests of the colony and an immense saving if the workshops were put in hand at once. I shall refer for one moment to a circumstance that occurred at Fremantle. I have quoted what was said by a Mr. Cartwright, who spoke at that meeting, and it is with very great regret that I have to refer to the remarks of another speaker who moved a motion to the effect that the members for Fremantle, unless the Government agreed to the appointment of a Royal Commission, should be instructed to cross over from their seats on the Government benches and to sit on the Opposition side of the House. I cannot imagine any more improper motion being moved at a public meeting. I cannot imagine or attempt to imagine the feelings of my chief, the Premier, who, I think it will be admitted, has been a very great friend to Fremantle in the past. Yet the people of Fremantle appreciate his actions in the past so fully that they issue instructions to their members sitting on the Government side of the

House that unless Fremantle can have its own way even in the most trivial matters its members are deliberately to cross over from this side of the House. [MR. GEORGE: It is only tit for tat.] They are to throw aside all party considerations even though they wreck the Ministry.

MR. VOSPER: Shocking! Shocking!

MR. RASON: I cannot imagine that the members for Fremantle will allow themselves to be dictated to in that fashion.

MR. GEORGE: Is not the Premier dictated to by his party now?

MR. RASON: I do not boast of any great amount of courage; but certainly, if I were dictated to in that manner, if anything would induce me to take an opposite course to that required, such dictation would have that effect.

MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear. I agree with you there.

MR. RASON: I cannot imagine that the members for Fremantle who are Government supporters will allow themselves to be dictated to in that manner. It is not necessary for them to give any proof of their devotion to their constituents. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.] I think the House will bear me out when I say they have invariably shown an overwhelming desire to obtain in the interests of Fremantle everything that was possible, and they have to a very large extent been supported by the Premier; and if there be an opportunity when they should rise superior to mere parochial interests and study what is best for the interests of the country, then this is their opportunity, and I trust an opportunity of which hon. members who sit on this (Government) side of the House, at all events, will avail themselves.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): This question, although it may seem of very long standing, is one in which I think everybody in this colony should take an interest. I say this is purely a national question—as much a national question as the great harbour works which we have very lately inaugurated at Fremantle. The member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) said he was sorry this motion had been brought forward, as it was inopportune. I quite agree with him, and for this reason: I notice that a pamphlet which has been sent out by

some Helena Vale association says, alluding to the foundation plans of the shops:

Since that time, various replies to correspondence have been received by the Public Works Department regarding this question, and we will quote extracts from these to prove that the department is almost ready to commence the erection of the workshops. First, on the 14th July, 1900, a communication was received to the effect that advices from England state that foundation plans will be sent out in six weeks' time. Second, on the 23rd July, 1900, a letter was received stating that every effort is being made to push on with the work.

Now, in the face of that I can scarcely imagine why the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) should be so anxious to urge this motion upon the House for the immediate construction of the workshops, because it is scarcely possible for these plans to be before the Government. If on the 14th July last the Works Department were advised that six weeks afterwards the plans would be sent out here, I suppose at the present time these plans are scarcely in the hands of the Government.

MR. EWING: That is nearly three months ago.

MR. SOLOMON: Secondly, it appears to me that the hon. member has been rash in bringing this matter forward at the present time. The problem involves various questions, and these questions principally are: Granted that the removal from the present site is necessary, is the removal to a site 23 miles distant advisable provided a suitable site can be found at or near Fremantle? Should not the question of haulage be a great consideration? Would not the removal to Midland Junction require a line of deviation owing to the constant traffic on the existing line from Fremantle to Midland Junction passing through Perth? Is there likely to be any great objection to the shops being on the sea coast, where railway material can be at once placed in them on its being received from the ships? Is it in the best interests of the colony that the railway workshops should be removed to so great a distance from the sea border as Midland Junction? These, to my mind, are the questions that would be dealt with by the Royal Commission. We must recollect that in 1892 the population of this colony was some-

thing like 50,000. It has since increased to 180,000; consequently the traffic on the railways has been great. There has been a great increase in the quantity of railway material manufactured and repaired. I notice a statement here in the pamphlet I have just alluded to, that in 1892 the work done cost £49,113, and in 1899 £297,499. Now, who can say from what cause that difference arises, or whether there is any loss? In 1892 there was a loss which was stated by Mr. Allison Smith at £15,000 per annum. Who is to say there is a loss at the present time, when the railways are paying? At that time, in 1892, the railways were losing; and that was the reason why the question of the removal of the shops was brought before the public.

MR. EWING: Do you think the present site suitable?

MR. SOLOMON: No, I do not; and I think every man in Fremantle will agree with me. But we say that we have, within a reasonable distance of Fremantle, sites which would be suitable; we say this is a question of haulage; and that the deviation line which would be required will involve an enormous cost to this country. Is it to be thought for one moment that the two lines we have now, when the traffic is almost always in a congested state, with trains running day and night, will be sufficient to take from the port shipments of raw material as it is received, right through Perth to works 23 miles distant?

MR. PIESSE: That will not affect the problem.

MR. SOLOMON: These are questions which we consider should at the present juncture be placed before a Royal Commission, and we want no self-constituted expert such as my friend the member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) to answer them.

MR. PIESSE: He is a very good expert, too.

MR. SOLOMON: But we want some authorities; we want men who can give us statements on which we can depend. It must be remembered, also, that there was adverse criticism from good men in the other colonies at the time this question was brought forward in 1895. We had the opinion of Mr. Wood, a member of Parliament, who is looked on as a great authority. We had also the opinion

of a gentleman named Young, who stated we had suitable sites in Fremantle.

MR. PRIESE: Who is he?

MR. SOLOMON: An engineer of some note, anyway; and he stated at the time that there were sites in Fremantle.

MR. EWING: Where are they?

MR. SOLOMON: Very close to Fremantle.

MR. EWING: Where are they?

MR. SOLOMON: They are within two or three miles.

MR. EWING: Well, where are they?

MR. SOLOMON: I will take one. There is a site on the commonage, where we have something like 3,000 acres of land belonging to the town of Fremantle, and no doubt the people of Fremantle would be glad to give up 300 or 400 acres of this land for a purpose of this kind. This is particularly flat country. Again, there is Owen's Anchorage with deep water right alongside.

MR. GEORGE: We do not want works on the water.

MR. SOLOMON: No doubt if the workshops could be erected at a place where the material could be landed from the ship right into the sheds, there would be a great saving to the colony.

MR. EWING: Were not these places there when the Commission reported?

MR. SOLOMON: They were there, but they were not thought of.

MR. EWING: Why did you not think of them?

MR. SOLOMON: Because everything was being rushed at the time, and I do not think Mr. Allison Smith looked into the question of sites.

MR. EWING: Mr. Congdon and Mr. Samson did.

MR. SOLOMON: I did not think they did. There were five gentlemen on the Commission, all laymen, and no experts. I would like to say a few words as to vested interests, and I should not have alluded to this point only every member has referred to it. One hon. member says that Midland Junction would be annihilated if the workshops are not erected there. I would like to tell the hon. member what Fremantle has done. The municipality has borrowed £82,000 to improve the town, including those parts where some of the men who have their little holdings, and who work at the Government workshops, reside. The

rental of these residences alone amount to £58,000. This large sum of money has been expended in improving the streets and the value of the properties. This is a consideration, and providing all other things are equal, Fremantle has as much right in view of vested interests as Midland Junction has. If you go to Midland Junction, you will not find many labourers about, only those that work at Hosking's foundry, and no doubt they have their little holdings. Very few other workmen are there, compared to the number residing at Fremantle. I do not think it is necessary to labour the question. I feel sure hon. members will take into consideration the difference between 1892, when the Commission sat, and the present time. The contingencies which have arisen are so great, that before we can decide such a question, involving, as it will, an outlay of some £200,000, we should have the matter thoroughly thrashed out. It has been said with regard to the workshops being near the sea, that the material and iron-work is injured by the salt air. How is it that in regard to large vessels which are constantly on the sea, the machinery of these vessels is not injured; still, we know they are taken care of. The Government themselves have ignored that consideration by erecting on the sea coast, between the river and the sea, large sheds for the storage of material. The Government cannot think there is any danger in regard to salt air affecting material, and where engines are in use every day the danger would be less. I do not intend to say more: I leave the matter to the good sense of the House, and I believe members will take into their consideration the difference in the position of the colony now and when the Commission reported.

MR. HOLMES (East Fremantle): It is my intention to support the amendment moved by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham), because I consider it is necessary at this stage of the colony's history at all events that we should be very careful before we embark on an expenditure of something like £200,000 or £300,000 in the construction of railway workshops at a site which may or may not be in the interests of the working of the railways. It was mentioned at one time that the workshops were to

cost £20,000, then again they were to cost £50,000, now it is suggested that they will cost something like £200,000 or £300,000.

MR. EWING: That is a Fremantle estimate.

MR. HOLMES: It is on information supplied by the Commissioner of Railways.

MR. EWING: Eighty thousand pounds?

MR. HOLMES: Apart from the cost is the question of haulage, which is a very big item. We must consider whether it is desirable in the best interests of the country as a whole to have the material and the machinery for the workshops, not only the machinery and material for to-day, but for all time, carried to Midland Junction, and if the workshops are erected at Midland Junction it will necessitate a haulage of 25 miles; that will be a never ceasing expenditure. It must be borne in mind that the whole of the material for the railways, or the bulk of it, is landed at the port of Fremantle. The member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) referred to the sites in England where workshops were erected, and he pointed out that railway workshops were erected some distance from the ports. The reason for this is that the railway companies get as near to the raw material as they possibly can. The iron, the timber, the coal, and such like materials are situated not on the coast, but some miles inland, therefore English railway companies construct their works near the material in order to save haulage. My contention is that in Western Australia, nearly the whole of the material required is brought from over sea. Therefore it is necessary, in the interests of the colony, that the workshops should be at the port where the material and machinery are landed. This is the case throughout Australia. The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) and the member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) referred to the Royal Commission, and they look upon it that because the Royal Commission decided, seven years ago, that the workshops should be erected at Midland Junction that no further inquiry is necessary. I think I am correct in saying that the Commission was composed of five independent gentlemen, two opposed to the Midland Junction site,

and three in favour of it. I think also I am correct in saying that one of the gentlemen who was in favour of the Midland Junction site, owing to the altered circumstances, has changed his opinion, and no doubt we shall hear during the debate the reason for the change in that opinion. The way in which the Government have dealt with this subject does not lead one to believe that they are in earnest, or that they are wedded altogether to the site at Midland Junction. The Government for the last seven years have been pretending to proceed with the construction and erection of the works at Midland Junction.

MR. GEORGE: Wasting money, you mean.

MR. HOLMES: Why they have hesitated I am at a loss to understand. It appears to me that the question of haulage and the removal of the material to Midland Junction during the last two or three years have been two of the reasons why the Government have not proceeded with the works. During the last three years the line between Fremantle and Midland Junction has carried as much traffic as any railway in Australia.

MR. PRESSE: No.

MR. HOLMES: It is shown that, after all, there is something in the question of haulage which demands the consideration of members of this House. I am not going to discuss this question from a Fremantle standpoint, or a Midland Junction standpoint; I want to see the railway works constructed at the best possible site in the interests of the working of the railways in Western Australia, and I think a Royal Commission of independent men, experts, who know something about the matter, are the proper body to decide the question at the present time. The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) referred to the Fremantle members, and to what Fremantle gets. He said, when moving the motion, that Fremantle was never satisfied; It was always after something; it was always getting something, and that Fremantle never seemed to be satisfied. I do not think Fremantle has had what it is entitled to, much less any more than was necessary. All we have had in the way of the expenditure of public money to any extent, has been the harbour works at Fremantle, and those works have been

not in the interests of Fremantle but of the whole colony of Western Australia. I well remember, before the river was opened up for traffic, vessels arriving at Fremantle and lying in the roadstead for three or four weeks, sometimes a month at a time, before they could land a package. They had to lie there unable to get rid of their cargo, and the freights to Fremantle in consequence were fully twenty-five per cent. more than they are to-day, which, with the lighterage charges, made a direct impost on the whole of the people of Western Australia. The opening up of the river, and the construction of the harbour works, have done away with this charge, and the whole of the people of the colony, Fremantle included, have been benefited owing to the opening up of the river, and the construction of the harbour works, to the extent of something like £1 a ton on their goods. That shows that the harbour works are a national undertaking, and were constructed at Fremantle because there was no other place suitable; otherwise Fremantle would have been done out of the harbour works, as it is now proposed to rob Fremantle of the workshops. Apart from the workshops, we have not a decent public building at Fremantle; not one of those "architectural freaks" which mark the progress of the Forrest Government, and stand as a monument to the Public Works Department of Western Australia. Such buildings are found in other townships large and small; buildings suitable to all requirements, and in some cases 50 and 100 years in advance of the necessities of the particular places. There is nothing of the kind at Fremantle, where we have not even a decent police station or post office. True, we have a gaol and a lunatic asylum, but those have been handed down to us by former generations, and not by the Forrest Government. Returning to the question of the workshops, the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) argues that the fact that principal officers of the Railway Department have in their reports recommended Parliament to construct the works at Midland Junction, is sufficient to justify the motion.

MR. EWING: I say it is an element.

MR. HOLMES: It is an element I do not like, and it is an element that would alter my opinion if I ever was in favour

of Midland Junction as a site for the workshops. We know that Maylands railway station was constructed on the recommendation of principal officers of the Railway Department.

MR. PIESSE: It was not.

MR. HOLMES: We know an extravagant expenditure has gone on there in providing an elaborate railway station with overhead bridges and sundry other buildings; indeed, it is an up-to-date station fit for an ordinary sized township. We find from an answer to a question in the Legislative Council, that land in the immediate vicinity of Maylands station is owned by the syndicate known as the Gold Estates of Australia, Limited, and that the directors are three principal officers of the Railway Department.

MR. PIESSE: No.

MR. HOLMES: The officers I mean are Messrs. Davies, Short, and Patterson.

MR. PIESSE: You are wrong.

MR. HOLMES: Of course, if the late Minister of, Railways denies the statement —

MR. PIESSE: Well, I do deny it.

MR. HOLMES: That information was given in reply to a question put to the Colonial Secretary.

MR. PIESSE: The Colonial Secretary simply said these officers owned land within that area. The hon. member is mistaken.

MR. HOLMES: I am referring to the Maylands Estate, and have seen the number of the blocks; and I think I am correct in saying that some 3,000 or 4,000 of these blocks are owned by the syndicate referred to. The House will admit that when I make a statement I am usually pretty near the mark; in fact, nothing I have said has been satisfactorily contradicted yet; and I think I am in a position to say that the same syndicate owns the land in the immediate vicinity of Midland Junction. Is it in the interest of the syndicate that these officers are advocating the removal of the workshops, or is it in the interests of the better working of the railways?

MR. GEORGE: Is it a crime in a railway officer to own land?

MR. HOLMES: No; it is not a crime. I quite agree that each and every individual in the Railway Department, and every other department, can own land; but I object to three or four principal

officers of the Railway Department combining and speculating in land, and then recommending the House to spend money on the construction of railway workshops in the immediate vicinity.

MR. EWING: Do you insinuate that the Government cannot erect those shops because the officers own land there?

MR. HOLMES: It is about time we stated in distinct and emphatic terms that we will no longer tolerate prominent officers combining and speculating in land, and then recommending the Government to spend money in the immediate vicinity of that land.

THE PREMIER: They may not have done that.

MR. HOLMES: We have evidence that the land has been purchased, we have evidence the land is held, and we have evidence the expenditure has taken place.

THE PREMIER: To what extent?

MR. PIESSE: About £2,300 altogether was spent on the station.

THE PREMIER: But how much land have these officers got?

MR. HOLMES: I would like to correct the statement I made just now in connection with the Maylands Estate. I find that the answer of the Colonial Secretary to the question I referred to was as follows:—

The Maylands Estate consists of portion of Swan Location Y, which is subdivided and sold in small allotments by the "Gold Estates of Australia, Limited," to numerous purchasers, among whom are John Davies, John Treggerthen Short, and Thomas Patterson, all of Perth.

MR. PIESSE: That is quite correct.

THE PREMIER: What! Are they directors?

MR. PIESSE: No; landowners.

MR. HOLMES: The officers were purchasers of land.

THE PREMIER: But you said they were directors.

MR. HOLMES: But I corrected myself.

THE PREMIER: How much land have they got?

MR. HOLMES: I think the syndicate own 3,000 or 4,000 blocks.

MR. EWING: Why, there are not so many blocks there!

MR. HOLMES: I can get the correct number of blocks from the Titles Office.

THE PREMIER: I wonder how much land these men have got.

MR. HOLMES: I am not going to be led off the mark. The fact remains that Maylands railway station has been erected, that there is no settlement in the immediate vicinity, and that the bulk of the land is held by the syndicate referred to.

THE PREMIER: But are these men members of the syndicate?

MR. HOLMES: There is the same position at Midland Junction, and when the shops are erected there we will find the syndicate coming to the front.

THE PREMIER: I am told the officers bought about five blocks at £40 a-piece.

MR. HOLMES: The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) referred to the vested interests at Midland Junction; but he could not have been serious, because those interests are purely speculative. Land in the immediate vicinity is held by speculators, myself amongst the number, because we want to be on the safe side in the event of the removal of the workshops to that site. But surely that is no reason or argument why the railway workshops should be removed, and so play into the hands of speculators. If we weigh the matter fairly and squarely the odds should be in favour of the vested interests at Fremantle, which will be found somewhat startling when I come to consider the figures. The member for the Swan argued that the railway employees at Fremantle had had sufficient notice of the proposed removal of the workshops. It is about five years since it was decided to remove the workshops, and about that time, or a year or so after, there was a great influx of people to this colony, amongst those people being a considerable number of men who were given employment at the Fremantle workshops. At that time, as hon. members know, there were no houses of any description available at Fremantle; every room was occupied, and the men employed at the workshops saw that the only way to secure a home was to buy a small block of land, build first one room, and then add until they had a house to call their own. We must bear in mind, too, that the Government insisted that those men should bring their wives and families over or not to be employed, and those were the means the men had to adopt to find homes for their families whom they had been compelled to bring to, the

colony. In that way, during the last three or four years, townships almost have been built in the immediate vicinity of Fremantle. It is only three or four years ago that the municipality of East Fremantle came into existence, and it is astonishing to find that in East Fremantle alone—and East Fremantle to Fremantle is what Leederville is to Perth—in East Fremantle alone the railway employees own property rated at £14,600, and rent and occupy property rated at £5,500, or £20,100 in all.

THE PREMIER: Are they all workshop employees?

MR. HOLMES: They are railway employees, and property to that ratable value is owned or rented by them in East Fremantle, which is only a small section of Fremantle proper.

THE PREMIER: All these men would not be removed with the workshops.

MR. HOLMES: The bulk of them are engaged in Fremantle, and the names of the men, with the value of the property owned by each, has been prepared by the Town Clerk of East Fremantle, showing that in the municipality, which has come into existence since it was decided to remove the shops, railway employees own and occupy property of the ratable value of £20,100. If it comes to a question of vested interests, I certainly think, all things being equal, that at or near Fremantle is the correct place to erect the railway workshops. It would be unjust to break up the homes of those employees, if it can be shown that in the interests of the railways, as well as in the interests of the employees, at or near Fremantle is the proper site. The member for the Swan also referred to what he called the absurdity of erecting the workshops on a spur line, and said that if we went south of Fremantle that would have to be done; but I would like to point out for his information, that the Victorian railway workshops, which are the most complete in Australia, are built on a spur line. These workshops, I would like to say, were not designed by Mr. Allison Smith, as the House has been led to believe.

MR. GEORGE: He mis-designed them.

MR. HOLMES: Mr. Allison Smith had the erection of the workshops in hand.

MR. GEORGE: And spoiled them.

MR. HOLMES: I understand that Mr. Allison Smith did not, at all events,

make a good job of them. But those workshops are constructed on a spur-line of railway, off the main line of traffic altogether and on a narrow neck of land only three miles across. That land has Port Phillip, with salt water, on one side of the ocean, also salt water on the other; and yet we are told that salt air will affect the Western Australian workshops at Fremantle. It is only reasonable to suggest, seeing that all the material and machinery necessary is landed at Fremantle, that a site being available, the engines, trucks, and carriages should be put together at the port of landing, loaded there where freight is available, and despatched to their destinations throughout the railway service. But if the suggestion and intention be carried out to construct those workshops 25 miles inland, then the material and machinery will first have to be hauled 25 miles, then reloaded and hauled back, making 50 miles in all; whereas, if the workshops are erected at Fremantle, that haulage will be avoided.

A MEMBER: Why land the material at Fremantle?

MR. HOLMES: Because at Fremantle nearly all the loading takes place. Nearly all the material that goes to the Eastern goldfields over the Eastern line—and that is the only line which pays—is first landed at Fremantle. And yet the hon. member asks why land the material at Fremantle? It has been argued that as so much has been spent at Midland Junction the House should certainly spend more. I do not think that because we have been extravagant in the past we should be extravagant in the future. Surely members will not agree that because we have wasted money, as the member for the Murray (Mr. George) says, at Midland Junction, we should go on and waste more.

MR. GEORGE: You might spend it fairly.

MR. HOLMES: We have been told that the land at Midland Junction cost £2,000, and the latest statistics I have been able to get hold of show that there has been about an additional £30,000 spent at Midland Junction. What I want to know is this (and I think some members opposite should tell us), how that £30,000 has been spent. One of the reasons given for removing the workshops to Midland Junction was that the

land had been purchased for a mere song of £2,000, that the site was level, and the construction could be proceeded with forthwith. I was at Midland Junction only a few days since, and I cannot see where anything like £2,000 has been expended on public buildings there; but I want to know what has become of the other £26,000.

MR. GEORGE: Whose pocket has it gone into?

MR. HOLMES: £26,000 has been spent in levelling the site originally supposed to be level; either that or they have been building the land up to make it somewhat above high-water mark in the winter time, which it was not before the expenditure took place. The objection to the site at Fremantle, as is shown by *Hansard*, was that the cost of levelling that site would be £10,000.

THE PREMIER: £50,000.

MR. PIESSE: £50,000.

MR. HOLMES: I have my figures from as correct a source, I think, as most people get theirs from. It was, I say, argued that it would cost £10,000 to level land at Fremantle for a site, and that because Midland Junction land was level the House should agree to the Midland Junction site; yet since that date some £26,000 has been spent in levelling the site, which the House was originally led to believe was level.

THE PREMIER: Very old history, this.

MR. HOLMES: It shows that the House was misled when told five years ago that the land was level; seeing that after five years' experience we find that it has taken some £26,000 to level it, and bring it above high-water mark. We must admit that there was something underlying the scheme to remove the workshops from Fremantle to Midland Junction. The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) did not make out as good a case as he generally does, for the simple reason that he had not the evidence and the facts to support his arguments. Occupying the professional position he does, we are all prepared to admit that, given a fair amount of evidence, he could convince a jury, and convince this House probably, that black is white and white is black.

MR. DOHERTY: Give him a good refresher.

MR. HOLMES: In this case he failed to prove that Midland Junction was the site necessary. He descended to abuse, because he had no argument. It is somewhat amusing to read the debates of 1895, and the arguments which were used by that Parliament, which certainly was not as intelligent as this Parliament, but, nevertheless, it was the Parliament of the day. We were told that the salt air was to affect the machinery at Fremantle, and yet we find the machinery down there (not only that in the workshops, but other machinery) in perfect order. The whole of the machinery in all ships, including the mail steamers, that call at Fremantle, is subject to salt air of every description, but we find that it is kept right. Yet one of the best arguments that people could adduce five years ago for removing the workshops from Fremantle was that the salt air was likely to affect the machinery. Another scheme, which the member for Wellington (Mr. Venn, who was then Commissioner of Railways) had in view, was to remove the workmen from the evil influences of public-houses.

MR. GEORGE: Looking after their morals.

MR. HOLMES: What do we find? Five or six years have passed, and hotels of every description have been constructed at Midland Junction, awaiting the arrival of the men, and the men are still thirsting at Fremantle. Another argument used was that the work could not be carried on at Fremantle a day longer; yet years have passed, and the work is being carried out on the site which the Government said was not at all suitable, and which, I am prepared to admit, was not suitable. It has been carried out on that site, notwithstanding that the House was told years ago that the work could not be carried on at Fremantle a day longer.

MR. GEORGE: What has become of the money?

MR. HOLMES: I would like to point out that during those five years we have had a railway boom as well as sundry other booms. We have had one of the busiest times in the railway that we have ever had or are ever likely to have. We were travelling at such a rate that there was not even time to dismiss the Commissioner of Railways in the day

time. We had to seize on the small hours of the morning to do it, and yet the workshops have been able to contend with the strain put upon them. Another argument was that the water was too near the surface, and I think that was an interjection by the Premier. I do not know how near the water is to the surface at Fremantle, but I do know that ten days ago it was on the surface at Midland Junction.

MR. PIESSE : The ground was so hard it could not soak in.

MR. HOLMES : We find a box drain about three feet from the surface, travelling north by south.

MR. PIESSE : The drain or the water ?

MR. HOLMES : A box drain about three feet from the surface taking this water right through the site and emptying it into the river in the immediate vicinity.

THE PREMIER : That is drainage. The site of the turn-table at Fremantle was all under water.

MR. HOLMES : The water is on the surface at Midland Junction, whereas on the sandy soil in the vicinity of Fremantle it would be impossible to keep water on the surface more than about ten minutes.

MR. JAMES : It is a pity they cannot get rid of water in some of their dirty back-yards down there.

MR. HOLMES : We can understand the railway authorities being desirous of providing for all the haulage they can. I should say the railway officials have a dual object in view at the present time, the first being to bring some commercial value to bear upon the land purchased, and the next to provide freight for the railways they control. What do we find in connection with the construction of the Coolgardie Water Scheme? For every ton of material—and I think there are some thousands and thousands of tons—used in the construction of the Coolgardie Water Scheme, the Railway Department make a charge of 10s. 8d. for haulage from Fremantle to Midland Junction. It is as a debit to the Coolgardie Water Scheme of 10s. 8d. a ton, and a credit to the revenue of the railways. I think that if I or any other individual want a ton of material hauled from Fremantle to Midland Junction, I can get it carried at about half that rate; at about 5s. 4d. a ton.

THE PREMIER : There is wharfage.

MR. HOLMES : Yet the haulage for the Coolgardie Water Scheme is put at 10s. 8d. per ton in order to increase the revenue of the railways. These shrewd officers of the Railway Department, who always have an eye to business, seeing that the Coolgardie Water Scheme cannot last for all time, but that it will be finished sooner or later, probably later, are, in order to make the railways pay, charging for haulage from Fremantle to Midland Junction 100 per cent. more than is charged to a private individual.

THE PREMIER : What has this to do with the case?

MR. HOLMES : I am replying to the arguments of the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing). The principal officers of the Railway Department were in favour of the removal.

THE PREMIER : They would have to carry the pipes, if the pipes were made at Fremantle.

MR. HOLMES : I am not talking about that. I am talking about the officers of the railways desiring to haul material 25 miles inland in order to make the railways pay.

THE PREMIER : There is an agreement with the Railway Department as to the carriage, and they cannot charge just as they like.

MR. HOLMES : I do not know what they can do, but I know what they are doing. I know they are charging 10s. 8d. a ton.

THE PREMIER : I suppose it is worth that.

MR. HOLMES : It may be worth that, but how is it that the department carry for a private individual at so much lower a rate?

THE PREMIER : It is not the same service. There are the wharfage and handling.

MR. PIESSE : Wharfage and shunting.

MR. HOLMES : Wharfage and shunting are a mere cipher in comparison with the difference in the charge for freight. If the hon. member wants to reply, he shall have an opportunity later on, but at the present time I am prepared to make a statement.

THE PREMIER : Prepared to do anything.

MR. HOLMES : I have the courage of my convictions, at any rate. I assert that the Railway Department are charg-

ing to the Coolgardie Water Scheme 100 per cent. more freight than they charge any private individual, and they are doing that in order to make the railways pay.

MR. GEORGE: They have a good paymaster, you know.

MR. HOLMES: The member for the Swan quoted what was done in England, and neglected to quote what was done in connection with the railway workshops in the Eastern colonies. I think in every instance the railway workshops are either at or near the port at which the material is landed. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham), and those who have given this matter any attention, ask for a Royal Commission; and surely at this stage of the country's history, when the finances are at a very low ebb indeed, it is not too much to ask for a Royal Commission to see that from £200,000 to £300,000 shall be spent at the right place, and in the best interests of the railways. In New South Wales, I understand that the workshops were originally erected some 30 miles from Sydney. But the authorities had to contend with difficulties such as I anticipate here, and they removed the workshops back to within a few miles of Sydney.

MR. EWING: Where were they erected?

MR. HOLMES: They were removed to a place called Eveleigh.

MR. EWING: I know; but where were they originally?

MR. HOLMES: In order to get the new site, the New South Wales Government purchased the land for £100,000, and spent I think altogether a million of money in removing the shops some distance inward to a site at or near the terminus. No doubt if a suitable site can be found near Fremantle, then, other things equal, Fremantle is entitled to have the advantages derivable from the workshops. There is any quantity of land on the Fremantle commonage which is available to the Government free of charge. The commonage is vested in the municipality of Fremantle; but I am given to understand by the authorities that any portion of that area suitable for the workshops can be used by the Government for all time. Surely if there be a site at or near Fremantle, the least the House can do is to grant a Royal Commission or a commission of experts to decide whether at or near Fremantle or at or

near Midland Junction is the right place for the workshops. The land at Midland Junction cost some £2,000 only, and would be useful for no other purpose than that of a marshalling yard, wherein the Railway Department could muster stray trucks, stray engines, stray sidings, etcetera, and retain them there until they were claimed by the proper authorities, and by this means save a vast amount of expense, instead of hauling them all round the country looking for the lawful owners as they do at the present time. We do not ask for anything unreasonable: we simply ask for a Royal Commission; and I, as a member for Fremantle, am prepared to say that Fremantle is loyally willing to stand or fall by the report of that commission. All we want is the workshops at the right place. The member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) referred to a public meeting at Fremantle and to a resolution passed there. He put an altogether wrong construction upon that resolution. What the people of Fremantle contended, and justly contended, was that a Government which would expend from £200,000 to £300,000 on workshops at a site which might or might not be in the best interests of the railway service and of the colony, and which would insist upon that expenditure and refuse a Royal Commission, was no longer worthy of the support of the members for Fremantle.

MR. RASON: I do not think I misquoted what was said.

MR. HOLMES: You misconstrued it. I think this House will do its duty if it consider this matter carefully by deciding, not what is best for Fremantle or for Midland Junction, but what is best in the colony's interests: and I think in the circumstances, the best interests of Fremantle and the property of those workshop employees whose homes are there should command the consideration of hon. members on both sides of the House. My duty is quite clear: I will support the amendment for a Royal Commission. Hon. members may differ from me on many things, but I think they will give me credit for trying to do my duty with a view to what I consider the greatest good for the greatest number; consequently I am now found supporting an amendment having for its object the appointment of a Royal Commission

which will decide once and for all the best site for the construction of these workshops.

MR. F. H. PIESSÉ (Williams) : I have listened with interest to the remarks of the various members who represent the district and town of Fremantle, but I have failed to gather from any of those gentlemen any evidence in support of the amendment tabled to-night by the member for Fremantle (Mr. Higham). The same old story has been trotted out which has been trotted out so frequently before, but no new arguments have been adduced.

MR. GEORGE : "There is nothing new under the sun."

MR. PIESSÉ : We have had the same statements, the same parochial ideas, the same arguments which have been used before in regard to the claims of Fremantle, and the same expressions with regard to the unsuitableness of the Midland site. With all these before the House, I am sure hon. members who have listened to the remarks of the Fremantle representatives will agree with me that there is nothing adduced to-night to change the opinion which the House has previously formed that the site selected at Midland Junction is the most suitable for the purpose intended.

MR. HIGHAM : That is not correct.

MR. PIESSÉ : The hon. member interjecting said he considered the Government were not at present prepared to go on with this work for the reason that they had no funds. But if the funds were available, I certainly think the hon. member would be quite agreeable to go on with the work of constructing those shops at Fremantle; and even if funds were not available, he would support any proposal for finding the funds if the House concurred in his amendment. It is, after all, a question of self-interest; and I shall not find any fault with the people of Fremantle for their desire to retain those shops in their town, because it is only natural. Their interests, no doubt, will suffer considerably from the removal, and they are quite within their rights in making every endeavour to retain those shops where they wish to see them; that is, at the port of the colony. But the time has gone by for arguing this question, which has already been fully dealt with in the interests of the country; and I exceedingly regret to find

it has been re-opened. It was decided in 1892 that the shops should be built at Midland Junction, and we have also frequently heard since that there is no better site than that selected. This question having once been settled, the people of Fremantle should be satisfied that the site selected is certainly the best; and so much money having been spent on it, and the site being now ready for occupation, it is not fair to ask the House to rescind the resolution passed so long ago as 1892. I say it is most dangerous to open up such questions as this. Upon the recommendation of a commission which sat for some time in 1892, and which obtained evidence in support of its recommendation, which was placed before the House, this Assembly found that recommendation so convincing that they immediately agreed to the site to which it is now proposed to remove the workshops, namely, at Midland Junction. When a resolution of that kind has been carried in the House, the question should not be re-opened except for the strongest reasons; because, if such questions are to be again opened up after being once decided by the House, I take it that nothing is safe; for there are many questions which involve a considerable expenditure of money and affect the interests of the country which may thus be opened up from time to time by members of this House. A statement has been made that the removal of the workshops will affect a very large number of the employees. I regret it will affect them, and the figures which have been given to us this evening, if correct—and I have no reason to doubt that they are—show that men to the number of 225 will be affected by this removal, and probably many of them will suffer in consequence. But after all, the men knew that the change was about to be made, and I believe that purchases of land have been effected at Midland Junction by many of these men, and preparations made for the erection of houses in that locality in anticipation of the removal of the shops to the new site. So that, after all, the men themselves anticipated the removal; and had it not been for the revival of this agitation by the people of Fremantle, I doubt whether the employees would have moved in the matter at all. It is really a question of self-interest on the part of

the people at the port. As I said just now, they are, of course, quite within their rights, and have good reasons for bringing the matter forward; but it is for this House to decide whether we will agree to the request. And after all, of course the opinion of this House has yet to be obtained, and I think the hon. members who have spoken have not given the House sufficient reasons for altering the resolution previously passed. Of course, for the men's sake I regret this change. No doubt some of them will suffer; but they have had notice of the intended removal, they knew what they had to expect, and they must put up with the consequences. In regard to the question of the shops generally, it has been stated there has been some delay. No doubt there has been, and I cannot defend in the way I should like, the department which I controlled between 1896 and the date of relinquishing my office. Of course there have been many causes why the shops were not commenced. In 1896 a Commission was appointed to deal with the question of the designs. They were sitting at the time I came into office, and subsequently the report was sent in to the Government dealing with those designs; and I understood at the time that the designs had received the approval of the Engineer-in-Chief. In 1897 instructions were given to commence the erection of the shops, and the work, which has been carried out at a cost of something like £12,000, was begun in the latter part of 1896 or early in 1897: I am speaking from memory, consequently I cannot give the exact dates. It will be remembered that the Engineer-in-Chief, who had visited England in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme, also made inquiries when there in regard to designs for shops. Certain designs were submitted to him, modifications of which he intended to introduce here for the erection of shops at the Junction. On his return from England he brought with him plans which had been prepared by Mr. Aspinall on behalf of the Government, but on his arrival here he found that the work had been commenced according to the designs prepared by the commission in 1896, and that he had not given his official concurrence to those designs; and, having the new plans with him, it was decided that the work, which

had not made great progress with the exception of the extra levelling at the site and certain underground drains which were necessary, should be discontinued. The Engineer-in-Chief recommended to the Government that the work should cease until the new plans could be considered. When they were considered there was some difference of opinion with regard to the designs, which difference arose between the Engineer-in-Chief and the Locomotive Engineer and other officers of the department, with the result that a further delay took place, and we found the Engineer-in-Chief was so fully engaged with the Coolgardie Water Scheme that it was late in the year 1898 before he could give any further attention to this matter. I regret to find that during this time there was a delay which can hardly be accounted for, but no one regrets it more than I do. It was not until last year that the matter was taken up actively, with the result that an officer of the Public Works Department was sent to England with all the particulars as to the machinery and the requirements of the department, and with instructions to see the Consulting Engineer at home. I mention this because a deputation waited on me from Midland Junction in regard to the workshops, and a reply was given that I hoped to receive the ground plans for the building, so as to commence the erection of the shops, at an early date. I expected that the plans would be in hand prior to my leaving office. A cablegram was despatched to England in regard to them, and a reply received that it was hoped the plans would be forwarded in six weeks. Whether the plans have arrived since, I do not know. That is the stage this matter had arrived at when I ceased to administer the department. We cannot very well defend our action. No doubt there was a great deal of delay. We must not forget that when the work should have been put in hand in the early part of 1896 or 1897, there was a great deal of work at Fremantle, and there was a great deal of difficulty in dealing with the traffic. It was not then thought desirable to try and move a portion of the works which we know might have been done. There have been a great many causes why the work has not been put in hand. The

Government having decided that the shops are to go to Midland Junction—the site is so suitable notwithstanding the assertions as to the foundations—having given a promise, in fact a resolution of the House having been passed, and the Government having adhered to it, and having carried out part of the contract in regard to the selection of a site, I cannot see what good reason there is now to alter that determination. This House is bound to keep faith with the country in regard to this matter. A number of people have invested, their all in many instances, in the neighbourhood of the locality where the shops are to be erected, for the purpose of carrying on businesses, making provision in anticipation of this great work being carried out.

MR. HOLMES: Speculation.

MR. PIESSE: These people have gone to expense, and the Government have made a direct promise which must be ratified. When this matter was brought forward, the Government should have said that it was intended to carry out the resolution of the House. By allowing the matter to be raised, as has been done, and the discussion to take place, unrest has been created in the minds of two sections of the community. The people of Fremantle are living in hopes of being able to change the site, and the people of Midland Junction no doubt have been seriously interfered with by the discussion and the tabling of the motion. Great anxiety is being caused amongst these people. The course that should have been taken was to have at once given a decisive answer in regard to the matter, to have told the deputation which waited on the Premier that the question had been settled. The Premier, so far, did convince the deputation which first waited on him that no change could be made, and I thought that would have been followed up by an answer that no change would be agreed to by the Government. If that had been done the House would have been spared the debate which has taken place, and which will continue to take place, because I suppose this discussion will go on for some time. This is a matter which has received a great deal of attention, and is of great moment to the people of Midland Junction. The people of Fremantle well knew that it was determined to remove the shops, and

other considerations were given to them, therefore, under the circumstances they should agree to the change which had previously been decided on. In regard to the questions brought before the House by various speakers, I think the principal one is the haulage over the different lines connecting Fremantle with Midland Junction. It has been pointed out by the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) that if the traffic necessitated by the removal of the shops is carried over the lines of railway between Perth and Fremantle, it will be necessary to duplicate the railway between the two points.

MR. HOLMES: I did not say that.

MR. PIESSE: The hon member said the traffic would be very much increased, and that a very large tonnage would have to be carried between the two points which would very seriously inconvenience the traffic of the department.

MR. HOLMES: I said the object was to make the railways pay.

MR. PIESSE: The hon. member dealt with the heavy traffic on the line, and another member for Fremantle spoke about the same thing. He said the question of haulage would largely increase the traffic, and that it would mean the congestion of the traffic between Fremantle and Midland Junction. Anyone who knows anything about the carriage of goods over the railway must admit that we might increase the number of trains fourfold or fivefold between Fremantle and Midland Junction without congesting the traffic or causing inconvenience between the two points.

MR. HOLMES: How did you expend the £20,000 or £30,000?

MR. PIESSE: I will leave that matter for the moment.

MR. HOLMES: Was it in levelling, or in draining?

MR. PIESSE: So much has been said as to the unsuitability of the site, and that a large sum of money will have to be expended to make the land suitable for the purpose of sustaining the heavy machinery which it will be necessary to place there. I have only to say that the site is most admirable. It is an ideal site; it is level, well drained, and most suitable, and the machinery which is now being used in one of the large shops engaged in making the pipes for the Coolgardie Water Scheme proves that the

site is quite suitable for the purpose of sustaining heavy machinery. I think we should scout the idea as to the site being unsuitable in regard to the foundations. Anyone who knows the nature of the country must agree that the suggestion of unsuitability is out of the question, and we have the opinion of the Engineer, who is emphatic on that point. He is convinced on the question of the foundations that the site is all that is required. We cannot say the same in regard to some of the sites that have been mentioned at Fremantle, especially the site where the shops are now; but I am not going into that question, because hon. members agree that the shops must be removed from the present site to another place: that is admitted. After all, it is really unfair and a misstatement to say that the foundations are unsafe, because it is proved that they are quite safe. This is one of those things which causes anxiety in the minds of people who do not know the locality. As to the drain mentioned by the hon. member, it has only been made for the purpose of taking off the flood waters, and that will be necessary in regard to any site. If we have to make the place suitable we must have drains constructed to take off the storm waters. With buildings which have large roof space, the water must be conveyed into pipes and carried into the river or elsewhere, and so with regard to the flood waters which naturally come on to such a large area of land. These drains are not unusual: they are necessary in all instances.

MR. GEORGE: This will be a drain on the finances of the country.

MR. PIESSE: Then again I think it is admitted that the position is a most suitable one. It is at the foot of the grades; it is at the junction of the Midland railway line which eventually must become part of the railway system of the country. At present a large traffic comes over that line, also a large traffic from the Eastern section of the railways. In time to come, notwithstanding we may have another route for the transcontinental railway, and although we may alter our gauge from 3ft. 6in. to 4ft. 8in., after all this site will be the commencement of any lines extending to the East. Therefore we should make use of this site which is most suitable in every way, and will add

to the economical working of the traffic, in dealing with the wagons and locomotives that come in for repair. Then, in regard to the question of the haulage of coal and timber, it has been said that the Government will construct a line of railway from some point on the South-Western line to Fremantle, and on that railway the Government will be able to erect the shops and over this line convey timber and coal required, thus saving a great deal of traffic passing over that portion of the South-Western line from Armadale to Perth, and on to Fremantle line. That would be satisfactory if it had been one of the first proposals and the Midland Junction site had not been decided on. If the workshops are situated at Midland Junction, the coal from Collie can be taken to the junction at East Perth and then on to Midland Junction. The same can be done in regard to the timber that may come along the South-Western line. It will be seen there will be a saving—it will be no greater distance—by taking the extra nine or ten miles to Midland Junction, from whence a great portion of the coal would be conveyed to the Eastern railways, and thus on to any railway extending towards the east. So that there is no disadvantage in placing the shops in the position proposed, so far as concerns the coal and timber required. As to railway workshops in the Eastern colonies, they have been placed in position near the sea coast simply because in early times the towns were there established. In New South Wales that is not the case, the shops there having been changed to near the central station at Eveleigh. This change from the original site was made, not for reasons connected with economical working, but in consequence of political influence and interference similar to that which is being attempted and will cause trouble here. It is right for every constituency to return members in its interests, but we are coming to a stage when there is too much interference with matters which have been settled by the House on a basis considered to be satisfactory in the interests of the country. Changes of the kind proposed cause unrest in the minds of the people, who do not know when anything is settled; and we ought to give the public an idea that when we pass a resolution it will not be altered without

great and good cause. Having settled this important matter in the way we have, better reasons should be given for the change than have been laid before us to-night.

MR. WILSON: Why was the work of erecting the workshops not commenced?

MR. PIESSE: I have already endeavoured to explain some of the reasons for delay, and I say again that it is perhaps one of the most unfortunate things the work was not commenced. It is a matter in which I as administrator must take a good deal of blame, because though there was good reason at one time for delay, there was not such good reason subsequently.

MR. CONNOR: That is against your own policy.

A MEMBER: It was want of money.

MR. PIESSE: There was plenty of money, so that was not the cause of the delay. I have little more to add, because this is a subject which we all know something about, having heard it talked of on several occasions since the resolution was passed.

MR. HIGHAM: Do not forget the altered circumstances.

MR. PIESSE: I take it that the altered circumstances are more convincing than ever that the site should be Midland Junction. I have proved, I think, that the great change which has taken place in our traffic necessitates a site more suitable than any we can find at Fremantle. The question of the effect of sea water on machinery has been talked of so often that it is of little use referring to the subject further. We know that the sea air has a detrimental effect on machinery, and great precautions have to be taken to protect shipping machinery from its influence. Such machinery is not there from choice, but because the work necessitates the being on the sea; and given selection, no man who knows anything about material of the character would select a site near the sea. That, however, is not the important point. What we have to regard is the previous promise and the determination of the Government to adhere to that promise; and when we come to look at this question from an economical point of view, the Midland Junction is the most suitable and best site. Having gone so far, it would be most unwise to alter the

decision; and I hope the House, when it has fully considered this matter, will confirm the previous resolution and not agree to the appointment of a Royal Commission. The matter has already been dealt with by a Royal Commission, who made a recommendation which this House approved; and why the House should deem it necessary to appoint another such body, is hard for me to understand. No good can be gained by such a course, which would only cause delay, and the Government should at once take the matter in hand, and prevent further discussion. No matter how much we may talk, there can be only one opinion, namely that having once decided to move these shops to Midland Junction, that site being the most suitable, in all honour and fairness to the people concerned, and in the interests of the country, we should abide by that decision.

MR. DOHERTY (North Fremantle): The fact that I represent one of the Fremantle constituencies is sufficient excuse for my adding a few words to this already lengthy debate. I can assure the House that when the motion was brought forward by the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing), and he used such expressions towards myself and to other Fremantle representatives, I thought there was a cyclone such as visits Northern towns. No surprise could have been greater than mine when the hon. member found in me one who represented the national view, while the balance of the Fremantle representatives were deemed parochial; when, speaking of other hon. members sitting on the Government side of the House, he used the terms "jarrah," "hardwood," "ringing the bell," "Where is Jack?" and so on, while lauding me to the sky. He referred to my speech made some time ago, and took advantage of that to urge that as my definite view with regard to the workshops. But I want to tell the House—

MR. EWING: That it is indefinite.

MR. DOHERTY: I want to tell the House that when I made the speech, I had no knowledge that there were other sites available near Fremantle. Were there no sites other than that at present occupied by the shops, I would be the very first to vote for their removal; but as I was not a member when this question

was originally debated, I did not know other sites were available. I always understood that the trend of opinion was to keep the workshops where they are; but I should have voted for their removal, because I know full well that on the present site there is not sufficient room for the work, and the handling of the stuff from one part to the other causes great loss. But now that we find there is a better site than can be obtained at Midland Junction, I am of opinion the workshops should not leave Fremantle. We must consider, in the first place, the vested interests of those labourers, mechanics, carpenters, painters, and others who have invested their money in Fremantle, on the strength of the railway workshops being there, remembering that the interests at Midland Junction are merely speculative, created not in the ordinary course of business but by people, in the hope that land will rise in value in prospect of the change now under discussion. Supposing the shops are not taken to Midland Junction the Government could easily make that a very nice suburb, because at certain times in the winter regattas might easily be held, and the place rendered one of the most enjoyable round Perth. Experts tell us that Midland Junction would make a capital "marshalling" yard, where trains could be collected and distributed, and experts have further said that there is not sufficient foundation to carry machinery. It was currently reported, when one of the officers went to inspect the site and look for a foundation, that he wired to the late Commissioner and said that if he had to go any further, a diving bell would have to be sent. If there is a doubt, which we hold there is, it is the duty of the Government to make it certain there is a site at Midland Junction, and that the foundations there are sufficient to carry the machinery necessary. We have been told that the English railway shops are all inland, and while we quite admit that, we urge that our circumstances are different. In England, workshops are erected as near as possible to the particular spot where the material is; whereas, all our material is imported over sea, and necessarily we want the workshops near the port. The objections as to the sea air are exploded, seeing that in large steamers, which are day by day following the sea,

the machinery does not deteriorate; and this is a most absurd argument, especially in regard to machinery in constant working. The late Commissioner blames us for the constant attention we Fremantle members take up in the House in looking after the interests of our constituents; but does the late Commissioner of Railways not do the best he can for his own district? Why blame us for fighting for our district?

MR. PIESSE: I did not say anything about fighting.

MR. DOHERTY: We will call it "working," if the hon. member wishes. We have as much right as other members to look after the interests of the town we represent; and no member, whoever he may be, shall stop me from expressing my views and doing all I can for my constituents. The late Commissioner has told us that we have adduced no arguments in favour of the Fremantle sites. We admit we are not railway experts like him, and that we do not know anything about the straining point of a 45lb. rail, or about running miles, steam valves, or friction; but we try to deal with matters in an ordinary common-sense way, and not only for the good of the constituency, but also for the good of the whole country.

MR. EWING: That is what you said last time, but you have come to a different conclusion.

MR. DOHERTY: I shall always be pleased to do that which is a national work. I said then, as I say now, the Government have always neglected one thing, they have always neglected industries.

MR. GEORGE: Have they?

THE PREMIER: What about coal?

MR. DOHERTY: The Government, I say, have always neglected industries. One Minister prominently shines out in promoting the agricultural interest, but we have never had a Minister in the life of this Government to do anything to promote other industries in the colony. I quite understand it. None of the Ministers of the Crown has ever had experience or intimate knowledge of manufactories, or the towns in which goods are manufactured, and does not know the advantages of men being paid week by week or fortnight by fortnight. If you call the employment of twenty

men in a mill an industry, I am satisfied, but I am talking about thousands of men employed. Why did not the late Commissioner of Railways put his shoulder to the wheel in order to establish manufacturing industries? We have sent millions of money to manufacturers in England. Why did not the Commissioner say: "I will build workshops here, and turn these places into manufacturing establishments. I will keep the work here?" But no; contract after contract went to England. If the late Commissioner had built these workshops, we should have kept thousands and thousands of pounds in this country, and have given employment to a large number of people. But the practice adopted was this: "No; advertise all your contracts in England, and let John Bull have every penny. Never mind people here." That is the position which the late Commissioner of Railways took up. I know sufficient about commerce and trade to tell him that he has neglected his duty on every occasion in not building up industries in this colony, and I hope the new Commissioner of Railways will take note of this. (General laughter). I do not know why members should treat the matter in such a manner.

A MEMBER: He has been asleep.

MR. GEORGE: The "sleeping beauty"!

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: George, be quiet!

MR. DOHERTY: If the railway works are to be completed, why let this last contract for £750,000 go out of the colony? Every assistance was given to Martin, of Gawler, to build good engines. Cannot we build good engines, and get the power and employ labour?

MR. PIESSE: You cannot do it in a week.

MR. DOHERTY: I admit you cannot do it in a week, but the Forrest Government have had ten years in which to do it.

MR. EWING: You want a still longer delay.

MR. DOHERTY: I quite understand the position of the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing), who wants the workshops at Midland Junction, whether suitable or not. I do not mind the workshops going to Midland Junction, if that is a suitable site. If it is the best possible site, I say let them go there, but we say that knowledge on that point should be obtained.

I do not want an expert lawyer to go to the site, nor the late Commissioner of Railways, with all his technical knowledge; nor do I want a member of this House to go; but I say send men who are experts and who are well known. Put them on the Royal Commission, and if they say the site at Fremantle is not good, and that absolutely the best site is at Midland Junction, the members for Fremantle will be prepared to say that is all right. We say that the site at Midland Junction is going to cost the country thousands and thousands of pounds unnecessarily, and is going to interfere with the people of Fremantle, the people of North Fremantle, and the people of East Fremantle.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL: How about the colony?

MR. DOHERTY: If we can only make the Government sensible to the fact that an injustice may be done, firstly to the people of Fremantle, and secondly (which is a greater consideration) to the people of the colony; if we can only show there is an injustice likely to be done, this House has a right, if there is justice in the House, to say, "We as a House will not allow this injustice to be done: we as a House shall give you what you require, which is a Royal Commission, because it cannot do any harm." If the commission say that the site at Midland Junction is the proper site, it will end discussion once and for all; but until that is done, the members for Fremantle, and many members who have joined with us in this House, will not be satisfied; and there are many people in this colony, also, who will be dissatisfied if such steps are not taken as we now ask for. We do not want to absolutely say that the site shall not be at Midland Junction, or that it shall be kept at Fremantle. All we say is, "Give us the opportunity we wish, that being an opportunity to prove that we have better sites at Fremantle"; and if we have not better sites at Fremantle, then the members for Fremantle will bow with all deference, and agree to the decision of the royal commission. I ask members to carefully consider this. Do not be rash. Let not their self-interests interfere with them when they have to give a small modicum of justice. We ask for the appointment of a royal commission.

MR. EWING: Which you already have had.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I think the House has heard so many experts on this question that it will be quite refreshing to have a man who does not profess to be an expert in regard to it. This question was debated at some considerable length in this Chamber in 1895. Those of us in this present Parliament who were in that Parliament will remember the debate, and remember particularly an able speech made by the late Mr. Marnion in connection with the matter; a speech which traversed the question as far as it was possible to do; a speech which was delivered with great calmness, and was well argued out. The Fremantle members—and I voted with them on that occasion—were beaten on the debate, and the question has slumbered. I am going to ask the House to bear with me a few moments while I review what seems to me the question at issue. What is the position now? The position is summed up in this: It is not the question of the workshops themselves, because the workshops are merely a peg on which to hang arguments, but it is merely a question of the vested interests in Fremantle on the one hand, and the vested interests at Midland Junction on the other. That is really the question which has to be debated this evening. It is a simple, plain issue put before us. We may disguise it as much as we please, but that is the point that has to be decided, and is the point upon which the voting will be taken, whether the vested interests of Fremantle which existed when the debate in 1895 took place, and which have increased since, are worthy of more consideration than they were in 1895, and whether the vested interests which have accrued at Midland Junction since that date are of more importance than the interests of Fremantle. It is no use blinding ourselves to the fact. That, in my opinion, is the thing we have to decide, and I ask members to consider the position. Although it is an unpleasant position, they have the right to apportion blame—and to lay it on pretty thick, if necessary—to those who have brought this position upon members of the House. The present Government of the colony are practically the same Government as that which was in power in 1895. There have

been changes, we know, except in the position of Premier. There has been no change there, and there will be no change there; and when I speak about the Government I am speaking about the Premier. I say it is the Premier of this colony who has placed the House in the degrading position of having to study, not the general interests of the colony, but the question of vested interests of one portion of the colony as against the vested interests of another. When it was decided so long ago as 1892, again in 1893, again in 1894, and finally decided by this House in 1895 that the expansion of the railway system of this colony required that at any rate workshop accommodation should be provided, provision was made for the money to build these workshops, and land has been bought and money spent upon it. I say that there is no question whatever that the blame for this dilatoriness must rest upon the head of the Government and the head of the Government only. What has been the position? The question was supposed to be settled in 1895, and people naturally went and purchased land where they thought it would suit them. Not capitalists, but working men, who bought small holdings. They went there, and I have seen them there; and I have seen the land itself. Land has been cut up into small allotments, and the principal possessors of that land at Midland Junction are the men who have these small allotments. I blame the Government for this, because I consider that it is part of the policy with which they have bamboozled this colony during the last few years; and they carried out exactly the same principle with regard to Esperance. In the Estimates which they brought before the House they placed for Esperance all manner of improvements, costing thousands and thousands of pounds, and the people of this colony, and people from other colonies, were led to believe that Esperance was going to be made into a port; then, all of a sudden, the Government veered round, exactly as their treatment with regard to the Midland Junction workshops has veered round. What has been the reason of it? We are unable to tell; we can only dimly guess. It must be one of two things; either it has been that the Premier during his career of the last few years has been doubtful of what

support the Government would get, and has delayed the question, or else since Midland Junction was decided upon as the site for the workshops a portion of the money has been dealt with for other works.

MR. PIESSE: I do not think that is due to the Premier.

MR. GEORGE: I shall not take any notice of my worthy and respected friend, the late Commissioner of Railways, who has had a dressing-to-night which, in my opinion, he did not deserve. I am not going to give him a dressing on a matter of this sort, because, as I have said before, and I say it with all due respect, I am going to strike at the cock-bird in this little bit of business, and I am not going to take any notice of the small birds of the farmyard. I want to put it that this House is itself to blame in this matter. We have had since 1895 to consider it. We knew what was being done. We knew that land at Midland Junction was being purchased by small men for the purpose of erecting their homes. There may have been speculators there, and I will admit there are bound to be speculators of that class everywhere, but the great bulk of the men who have taken land at Midland Junction are, if I have been correctly informed, little men who have obtained it for the purpose of making their homes there. The Premier has been dealing with these men and making out that he was their friend; but he has kept them on the tenterhooks for five years, and has embraced the opportunity of going back on the expectations which he has caused these men to have. Practically the same argument applies with regard to Fremantle. The people at Fremantle have felt all the while that the Government were not sincere in their desire, and in their intention, to take away the shops from Fremantle. The consequence has been that which has been detailed by my friend, and a great number of men employed in the workshops at Fremantle have done exactly the same as they would have done at Midland Junction, if they had been aware that the workshops would be removed to Midland Junction. The working men of Fremantle have purchased their little homes, as working men at Midland Junction have done, and they hang between the devil and the deep sea. The Premier has tried to bamboozle

them and the labour party at the same time. We were told that this delay has been caused through plans not being ready. The late Commissioner of Railways, with an amount of generosity far greater than I could ever blame myself for, has tried to take the blame upon his own shoulders. If I were permitted by this House to ask him, and he were permitted to reply to the question, I would ask him if he ever felt during the whole of that time that it was the desire of the right hon. gentleman, the chief of the Government, that the plans should be ready? It is said that the Engineer-in-Chief took these plans home and studied them in the old country, and that he has been too busy ever since to settle the question; but I think the question was not for the Engineer-in-Chief to settle. What does he know about workshops? What is he? He is a civil engineer, a technical engineer, and his knowledge of mechanical matters is very limited. The question of getting out plans for workshops can be properly dealt with only by mechanics who have studied the subject, and been familiar with workshop construction all their lives; and it is all balderdash to try to leave the matter in the hands of the Engineer-in-Chief. We employ a gentleman as Engineer-in-Chief of our colony for whom I have a very high respect; but he has duties placed upon him which he should never have been called upon to discharge, and we are actually hanging up the concerns of this colony until he has time to attend to them, while we are all the time giving him work which renders it impossible for him to find that time. With regard to the plans for the workshops, it was the duty of the Government to have put them in hand long ago, and to have erected the shops; and through the delay the Government have lost far more money than would be necessary either to build or properly equip the workshops. As to the dilatoriness in connection with this matter, we have absolutely no guarantee that the Government mean, if the motion be carried, to carry out the work. We have no guarantee that when the new Parliament meet this question will not again be brought up. How can we have such a guarantee? Have the Government the money to build the workshops? Has not that money

already been allocated to other works? Have the Government the plans? No. If the plans were to arrive during the next week or so, it would take the Government three or four months, and possibly six months, to make up their minds regarding them; because these plans, if they are to be of any use, must be submitted to and reported upon by the new Chief Mechanical Engineer they have at Fremantle; and a man with the reputation he has brought with him is not likely to approve at once of these plans until he has had proper time to look into them. Therefore, what is the best way of dealing with this matter in the interests of the country? Is it better for the House to pass this motion of the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing), or to approve of the Royal Commission? If there is not to be any dispute when the Royal Commission bring forward their report, if that report will be loyally accepted by all members of this House, and if the Government will do their duty by building these workshops, then I say the only course of any real benefit to this country is to have a Royal Commission with sufficient power to settle this matter finally. I have no faith whatever in the promises of the Government. I do not believe they have the money, I do not believe they have the plans, I do not believe they have the slightest intention of carrying out this work until they have raised another loan. Another reason, and a good reason, for the appointment of this Royal Commission, is that hon. members, myself included, get a little tired of the constant accusations bandied about from one bench to another about political interference. The members for Fremantle constituencies, it is said, are practically tied by the legs, and the strings are in the hands of the local labour organisations, and these hon. members are nothing more than slaves. I do not believe that to be true. I think the Fremantle members are amenable to influences which, perhaps, men with more backbone would ignore. Still, if that statement be in the slightest degree correct, this Royal Commission, if appointed and voted for on the terms I indicate, will relieve those hon. members of the onerous and uncomfortable position they occupy at the present time; and I trust if the House in its wisdom agree to have this Royal Commission, that will be

the basis upon which the agreement is come to, that the decision of the Royal Commission shall be absolutely final and binding upon all members of this House: whether the decision be that the shops be erected at Midland Junction or at Fremantle, the Fremantle members' share of quibbling shall be done with: they will quibble no longer, but will accept the situation.

MR. HIGHAM: They never have quibbled.

MR. GEORGE: Exactly; but I want to have a clear understanding before I vote for the amendment, and I want an understanding that the Government intend to do the work. Then I shall vote for the Royal Commission; and if to-night the vote should go the other way, then I say to the members for Fremantle as well as those who voted with them should let the matter stand, and let Midland Junction get the workshops as quickly as possible. If this question is to come up again in the next Parliament, the proceedings of this House will be too much like those of a parish vestry or a city council to please me or any man who has any common sense.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Commission's report should come before the House.

MR. GEORGE: But it should be accepted loyally. There should be no necessity for any debate; and if the Royal Commission's report were brought down, and there were any questions raised by the Fremantle members, I should be sorry indeed for having voted on the question as I intend to vote to-night. Let those hon. members take the decision of the Commission and have done with the subject.

MR. DOHERTY: That is right.

MR. EWING: You said that before.

MR. DOHERTY: We were not here when the previous Commission reported.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You may not be here next time.

MR. GEORGE: There has been some reference to the effects of sea air on machinery. Personally I do not know anything about machinery, and cannot be expected to know so much as the Premier; but I may as well tell him that the greater number of engineering works in Great Britain are getting as near the sea coast as is possible; and from the testimony of men who know a great deal

more about the business than I do, I can say that any mechanic who allows his tools to be injured by the sea air is not worthy of being called a mechanic. If I found a man in my shop with rust on his tools, I am afraid he would have to take his abilities to another place. There is a point which may be worthy of consideration by the Government, and I submit it to the new Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Wood), whether it would not be possible to settle this question in a way that would be good for the service? I think the wood-working part of the railway workshops might be removed to another site, and the iron-working shops might very well remain without particular damage at Fremantle, where I think a site of 50 or 60 acres could be found.

MR. DOHERTY: At Rocky Bay.

MR. GEORGE: The Rocky Bay site would be all that is required; and the wagon-building shop, which does require a large amount of ground, could with advantage be put up at Midland Junction.

MR. HOLMES: That will be a question for the Royal Commission.

MR. GEORGE: Let the Commission consider it. I have said in public at Midland Junction that the Government are to blame in this matter, and what I said there I shall not at present deny. An interjector, in the course of a speech I made there, asked me, "What about the workshops?" and I said the workshops ought to have been there years ago; the money was voted by Parliament and should have been spent for that purpose; and I blamed the Government. But now the question has come up here, I can see no way to settle the dispute satisfactorily and without acrimony than to appoint a Royal Commission, which shall consist not of members of Parliament, but, if it is possible to get them, of some good men from the other colonies, not men like Allison Smith but men of known reputation, men who have done something, and not men who talked of doing something. Let us put before these men fair and unbiassed evidence, and do not place them in a similar position to that of Mr. Allison Smith, who was asked to select a site for the workshops, had a plan of the desired locality placed in his hands, and travelled to the spot and selected it at once. Let the Com-

mission, as well as the people of Midland Junction, be dealt with fairly. Whether the vote go for Midland Junction or against it, the people of that place ought to bear in mind that the man who has misled them if they lose their case is the Premier of the colony, who is at the present time playing for the labour vote—a vote he never understood, and which may oust him from office at some time when he least expects ejection.

MR. DOHERTY: There is no labour vote at Bunbury.

MR. GEORGE: He will never go to Bunbury again.

THE PREMIER: I move the adjournment of the debate, as I do not feel equal to proceeding with it to-night.

MR. HIGHAM: We sat till two o'clock considering the subject in 1895.

Motion for adjournment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

| | | | |
|------|-----|-----|----|
| Ayes | ... | ... | 22 |
| Noes | ... | ... | 9 |

Majority for ... 13

| AYES. | NOES. |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Mr. Darlôt | Mr. Connor |
| Mr. Ewing | Mr. George |
| Sir John Forrest | Mr. Gregory |
| Mr. A. Forrest | Mr. J. F. T. Hassell |
| Mr. D. Forrest | Mr. Higham |
| Mr. Hall | Mr. Holmes |
| Mr. Harper | Mr. James |
| Mr. Hubble | Mr. Wallace |
| Mr. Illingworth | Mr. Kingsmill (Teller). |
| Mr. Lefroy | |
| Mr. Locke | |
| Mr. Mitchell | |
| Mr. Monger | |
| Mr. Pennefather | |
| Mr. Piessé | |
| Mr. Rason | |
| Mr. Sholl | |
| Mr. Solomon | |
| Mr. Throssell | |
| Mr. Wilson | |
| Mr. Wood | |
| Mr. Doherty (Teller). | |

Motion for adjournment thus passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:31 o'clock until the next day.