

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 15th November, 1900.

Question: Patriotic Verses, Dedication—Question: Commonwealth Inauguration, a Contingent—Question: Railway Station, West Perth—Papers presented—Noxious Weeds Bill, Council's Amendments—Brown Hill Loop Railway Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading—Land Drainage Bill, second reading—Annual Estimates, Committee of Supply, Mines votes and Attorney General's Department votes passed; Colonial Secretary's Department votes (progress)—Despatches from Secretary of State—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—PATRIOTIC VERSES, DEDICATION.

MR. QUINLAN asked the Premier: 1, Whether the Government was aware that Lords Wolseley and Roberts had sanctioned the dedication of a patriotic poem by Mr. F. Lyon Weiss. 2, What steps the Government proposed to take to recognise the courtesy of Lords Wolseley and Roberts.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, All the Government know in regard to this matter is contained in the papers which will be placed on the table of the House. The letters received by Mr. F. Lyon Weiss, which were forwarded to the Government, were returned to him on 18th August. 2, The Government have had no communication from Lord Wolseley or Lord Roberts on this subject, and do not propose taking any action in the matter.

QUESTION—COMMONWEALTH INAUGURATION, A CONTINGENT.

MR. QUINLAN asked the Premier: Whether it was the intention of the Government to send a contingent of volunteers to take part in the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia.

THE PREMIER replied: The matter has not been considered by the Government, nor has any representation been made to the Government in regard to it.

QUESTION—RAILWAY STATION, WEST PERTH.

MR. QUINLAN asked the Director of Public Works: 1, When were the improvements to West Perth Railway Station likely to be effected. 2, Whether

a more suitable site had been approved. 3, When it was proposed to open up Havelock Street Railway Viaduct to vehicular traffic.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: 1, The construction of subway is under consideration, but it is as yet in an embryo stage. 2, No. This is also under consideration. The crossing is at present closed by Act of Parliament.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Correspondence as to patriotic verses written by Mr. F. Lyon Weiss.

By the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Plans of Brown Hill railway loop line; Kalgoorlie-Gnumballa Railway Bill.

Ordered to lie on the table.

NOXIOUS WEEDS BILL.

COUNCIL'S AMENDMENTS.

Schedule of four amendments made by the Legislative Council considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

On motions by the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, the Council's amendments agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a Message accordingly transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BROWN HILL LOOP RAILWAY BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. B. C. Wood), in moving the second reading, said: This is a small Bill and a formal matter. I understand that this loop line of railway is highly desirable, will probably return a good profit on the working, and be of great advantage to settlers in and around Kalgoorlie and the mining district there. A full description of the route is contained in the schedule, and is also shown on plans laid on the table of the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

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

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

LAND DRAINAGE BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I have much pleasure in asking the House to agree to the second reading of this Bill. It is a very important one, and I think hon. members will agree, when they have had time to fully consider it, that this measure will prove very useful. For a long time past, in some parts of the colony the necessity for a Bill of this character has been much felt, and for many years this House and the Legislature have provided money for the drainage of land; but I am not aware that any great advance has been made with the work. The piece of country which has come most prominently before us in this House as requiring attention in regard to drainage is that area lying to the westward of the railway line south of Pinjarra as far as the Harvey River, in the parts known as Drake's Brook, Simpson's Brook, and Lode's Brook. In regard to the creeks or gullies running from the Darling Range, which passengers along the South-Western line notice as crossing the railway at numerous points between Pinjarra and the Harvey River, I do not think any of these water-courses find their way into the Harvey River by a defined channel, but as soon as they get across the railway line they spread out, forming swamps in some places and in others flooding the country in winter time. There is scarcely any defined channel for all the gullies and brooks that the railway crosses from the Murray River to the Harvey River. It is an important piece of country, well suited for all kinds of garden produce; and with the facilities of railway transit provided in recent years, a great many people have settled on that land. They went there in the summer time, when they saw the land looking very good; they found very rich swamps, difficult to clear, but very fertile when cleared; and people have taken up the land in those localities under the ordinary regulations, and have not sufficiently taken into account the heavy floods which sometimes, though not in every year, occur in that part of the country. As a consequence, some of those settlers have been flooded out, especially during the year last past. The provisions of this Bill will be a convenience to settlers in

that part, and be available also to settlers in any other part of the colony, and may be utilised by any number of people who desire to utilise it. The Bill is founded on the grand principle which we like to see adopted, that of local self-government—the management of our own affairs, which is so much appreciated and valued by all Britons. The Bill will be available for any number of people who desire to utilise it, and all they have to do is to avail themselves of its provisions, and they can have their land drained if they are willing to pay for it. The principle of the Bill is local government, the management of your own business, the Government assisting. The Government undertake, if people will carry out the provisions of this Bill, to provide the money and do the work; and in return, the people benefited will have to provide the interest on the amount expended and the sinking fund. This Bill is not novel in its provisions. I do not know that it follows altogether the principles of any Drainage Act elsewhere, but the principles on which the Bill is founded are, in my opinion, good and sound. Many of the clauses in this Bill will be found to be already in operation in regard to other Acts on our statute book. Hon. members will perhaps find some of these clauses in the Lands Purchase Act, others in the Metropolitan Water Supply Act, and others again probably in various other Acts which have been passed having the same object, that object being to assist the people settled on the land, but without any cost to the State. Before I go further, I may tell hon. members that I have personally given attention to this measure, and I consider it an excellent Bill. I hope it will meet the requirements of the people; but of course if those people who are settled on the land expect the State to drain their land at the cost of the State, I do not suppose this Bill will be much availed of by them, as such an expectation on their part would be out of the question altogether. I can well understand the Government draining land belonging to the State or otherwise improving it, with a view to selling the land under the ordinary regulations or on terms that may be considered desirable, and charging an enhanced price to the persons who purchase the land;

but I do not understand how it can be argued that the Government should clear and drain private land, and charge nothing for the work. Just think for a moment if my two hon. friends opposite (Mr. Illingworth and Mr. Wilson) had possession of little properties and wanted them drained at the expense of the State, or suppose all the members on that side of the House had little properties and wanted to have them drained—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Suppose members on the other side wanted their properties drained?

THE PREMIER: I only refer to hon. members opposite because they are so readily seen, and are prominent persons; but take any members in the House who might want their properties drained at the expense of the State, what would be said if the Government brought in a Bill which had for its object to drain those lands and to enhance their value to the private owners at the expense of the State? It would be terrible! The Government would be hounded from public life, if we even suggested such a thing. This illustration shows how impossible it would be for the Government to introduce any measure which had for its object the improvement of private lands by draining them at the expense of the State. If private lands were drained, of course the Government must charge the owners with the cost of improving those lands. I think this Bill will be found to carry out the object we have in view in a simple way, and also in the cheapest way possible. With regard to the clauses of the Bill, it is provided firstly that there shall be a Minister to administer the measure, and he may be any Minister of the Crown who may be appointed by the Government. Probably the Commissioner of Crown Lands would be the medium of communication with the local boards to be appointed under this Bill, and he would administer the Bill, although he would have nothing to do with carrying out the works if he were Commissioner of Crown Lands. We have availed ourselves of provisions in other Acts which are in force, and which are well known, in order to make this measure simple in its operation in regard to ratable property; we have used the procedure of the Roads Act, which is well known in the country, both as regards ratable property and

as regards the voting for and electing of local boards. For the drainage boards to be created under this Bill, we use the same machinery as is in use for local roads boards. It is proposed in Clause 3 that the measure shall not "prejudice or affect any power or authority vested in Her Majesty, or in the Governor, or in the Director of Public Works or Commissioner of Railways; and no action shall be brought against the Crown for anything done on the recommendation of a board constituted under this Act." Hon. members will see further that the Government do not propose to make drains through the country unless the drainage board which it is intended to create shall ask the Government to have the work done. Under this Bill the Government will not do anything that is not very necessary; because if the work were left to the Government or with the department to make drains through the country, and if the people occupying land were asked to pay interest on the cost, they would never be satisfied with the work that was done, and some of them would say the drains were not necessary, or they cost too much, or those people would have nothing to do with them; and so there would only be dissatisfaction resulting from such a course of action. I would like to point out that drainage districts and drainage boards have to be proclaimed. Clause 4 says:

The Governor, from time to time, by Order-in-Council, may, on petition in that behalf from a majority of the ratepayers in any place, declare the same to be a drainage district for the purposes of this Act, and may give a name to such district, and may add to or curtail from such district any area on a similar petition from the majority of the ratepayers in such area; but may refuse to curtail any district during the currency of any loan effected on the security of the rates thereof.

Some people might curtail the drainage district to such extent that there might be no rates available. The board elected in a drainage district may drain any area for which the people ask, and of which the Government approve. Of course it will be very necessary, in proclaiming a district under the Act, to take care to include, not only those places where the water enters the drainage area, but also the portions where the water flows out into the river. Ratepayers may, in their petition, give the names of six persons to

be members of the board, and those persons shall constitute the board until the annual election. That is to cover the intermediate time between the time they petition for a board and the time when an election takes place. At the election, those six members will go out, and the board will become elective. It is proposed that such board shall consist of six members, three of whom shall form a quorum for the transaction of business, and that the election shall take place in the same way as the election for roads boards; that the election of members, their entry upon their duties, the retirement of members, and generally the whole business connected with the constitution, election, and rights and powers of members of these boards, shall be on the same principle as that governing the local roads boards at the present time. The qualifications, the right to vote, the number of votes an elector may have—everything, in fact, connected with the electoral list, is intended to be on the same basis as under the present Roads Acts. It is proposed that the drainage board shall be a body corporate, and shall be named the drainage board of the district, with perpetual succession and a common seal, like a roads board. The board have power to appoint officers, and to pay them what salaries they choose, subject to the approval of the Minister. As we shall see later on, the Government may have to contribute towards the funds of the board; and it is therefore necessary that we should have some control over salaries paid, and should take care that the salaries be reasonable; hence these are subject to Ministerial approval. Next we come to the providing of the money. We have the board in full working order, and we now have to provide the funds. In Clause 16 hon. members will see how this is proposed to be done. The financial scope of the Act is to be limited, in the first place, to £30,000. We are to obtain the money in the same way as we obtain the moneys for other boards now in existence. The same plan is adopted in this case as is adopted with the Metropolitan Waterworks Board; that is, the Treasurer can find the money for the board up to a certain amount, either from any moneys in his hands, from moneys voted by this House, or

from moneys that the Treasurer may borrow from the Savings Bank; and he may borrow from the Savings Bank for drainage boards in the same way as for the Metropolitan Waterworks Board, for the Agricultural Bank, or for any other board; and the consolidated revenue is the security. The consolidated revenue is already liable for the Savings Bank funds, and has to be the security also for money borrowed to be loaned to these boards. If we borrow from the Savings Bank, we are not allowed to give more than four per cent. for the money, which of course is as high a rate as we are likely to be charged for money borrowed by the Government; and the moneys so raised are to be secured—

By any Government securities, in accordance with Section 20 of the Post Office Savings Bank Consolidation Act 1893, or out of moneys raised and which the Colonial Treasurer is hereby authorised to raise, upon debentures secured upon the consolidated revenue of Western Australia, interest not exceeding the rate aforesaid, and redeemable not later than twenty-five years after the date thereof.

The next question is, how is the Treasurer to spend the money? If the board thus constituted wish to have any work done in their district, they may apply to the Minister for the construction of main drains, or any other drainage works; and if, after investigation by the Government, the work is approved, then, on approval of the application by the Governor-in-Council, the board "shall be called upon to execute to the Colonial Treasurer an instrument creating a sole charge upon the drainage rates under this Act in the form set out in the schedule hereto, securing interest at four per cent. per annum, on the cost of the work, and a payment at the rate of 2 per cent. per annum to a sinking fund for repayment of such cost; and the Colonial Treasurer shall thereupon raise or apply, in accordance with this Act, a sum of money to meet the cost of the work." That is, a sum of money out of the £30,000 available for this Act. If the board apply to have the work done; if the Minister, after investigation, recommend it to the Governor-in-Council, and if the Governor approve; then this bond, in the form set out in the schedule, has to be executed by the board, being an undertaking to pay this four per cent. interest and two per cent. sinking fund, on the amount required

for the work; and when such bond is executed, the Colonial Treasurer is authorised to provide the money. Clause 17 says—

No other charge on the drainage rates shall be created or arise until the discharge of the security hereby required to be given.

The sinking fund is to be applied in repayment of the debentures, or in any other way the Colonial Treasurer may consider right; that is, by investing the fund. If he cannot get in the debentures to pay them off, which of course is very unlikely, he can invest the money in a fund for their redemption. Now we have provided the board, the money, the recommendation of the board that the work be done, and we have the work approved by the Governor: all is ready for the work to be undertaken, and Clause 18 shows how that is to be done. The Director of Public Works comes upon the scene by his engineers, the people of the district having been consulted beforehand; and the Director may, from time to time, by his engineers, surveyors, agents, officers, and workmen, do the various things necessary. In other words, the work is entrusted to capable persons, and there is no use entrusting it to anyone else but the Engineering Department of the Government, for there is no other department so well able to carry it out, and Clause 18 gives power to the Engineer-in-Chief and his officers to go upon the land and do the work. We now come to the powers and duties of the board. The work having been done, the works are then vested in the board, and become the board's property; and it becomes the duty of the board—

To cleanse, repair, and otherwise maintain in a state of efficiency all drains and drainage works vested in the board, and for that purpose the board may exercise all or any of the powers hereinbefore conferred on the Director of Public Works for the construction of the same.

We have now the drains made, and put in charge of the people most interested in looking after them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have not got their rates yet.

THE PREMIER: We shall come to that directly.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is the crux of the whole Bill.

THE PREMIER: Then we come to the branch drains. Clause 21 reads:

On the application of any owner or occupier of any land within the district, the board may authorise such person to make branch drains communicating with any main drain on such terms as to maintenance, cleansing, and otherwise as to the board may seem fit.

These are drains through people's own land, and also on land adjoining, where small drains are required. They are subsidiary drains, constructed, not by the Works Department but by the people themselves, for draining their own lands into the main channels. The owner or occupier has to apply to the board for permission to cut into the main drain, in order that the work may be carried out systematically, and that people shall not choose for themselves as to where they shall connect with the main drain. If these branch drains are not constructed by the owner or occupier, it will be competent for the board to make a branch drain and recover the cost thereof from the owner or occupier under the procedure of Sub-clause 2 of Clause 21:

(2.) Where, on land adjoining a drain constructed by the board under this Act, the water collects in such quantity as to render it necessary, in the opinion of the board, that a branch drain should be made to carry the water into the drain constructed by the board, the board may serve notice on the owner or occupier, requiring him to make such branch drain, and if the owner or occupier makes default for a month after such notice, the board may make the branch drain and recover the cost thereof from the owner or occupier. Such notice shall specify the nature and direction of the branch drain required, and where and in what manner it is to be connected with the drain constructed by the board.

We now come to the power of the board to levy rates. This is exactly the same as roads board rating; the same procedure will be followed:—

The rolls of ratepayers of a drainage district shall be conclusive evidence that persons whose names appear therein respectively are liable to the rate to be levied as aforesaid.

And the rates are to be applied in the same way as the rates of the Metropolitan Waterworks Board, the clause being copied bodily from the Board's Act. Clause 23 reads as follows:—

The rates received by the board by virtue of this Act shall be applied in the first place to paying to the Colonial Treasurer interest at the rate of four pounds per centum per annum on the amount borrowed by him on debentures,

nd in the next place to the sinking fund for the repayment of the amounts paid or applied to meet the cost of construction at the rate of two per centum per annum on the said amount, and, after such payments, to the management, maintenance, and improvement of the drainage works within the district.

By Clause 24, it is competent to levy a rate:

In manner as directed by the advertisement thereof, which may from time to time be altered or revoked by the board, either—

- (1.) On a uniform scale; or
- (2.) On a graduated scale according to the classification of lands in the district.

All lands in any district which, by their situation, configuration, or other physical causes are excluded from deriving any benefit from the drainage works, may be exempted by the Minister on the recommendation of the board from all rates to be levied in respect of such works.

The rates to be levied must be sufficient to pay interest; and if the board refuse to strike the rate, the Minister has, in such case, all the powers of the board, and may

Make, levy and collect drainage rates as if he were the board, and may exercise all the powers of the board for that purpose.

And by Clause 26:

Whenever, in any year, the drainage rate is insufficient to pay the interest and the contribution to the sinking fund as aforesaid, the deficiency may be advanced out of the Consolidated Revenue, and shall become a charge upon the rates, repayable, with interest, in like manner as the charge hereinbefore provided for.

By Clause 27:

After making the payments aforesaid, and after the expenses of maintenance, management, and improvement have been met, the board may, if they think fit, with the approval of the Minister, employ any surplus in their hands in reduction of rates.

Of course, after the works are done, there will probably be a great increase in the ratable value of the land, and the rates will be larger than if the land were unimproved and not so valuable; and further, where Crown lands are improved, the Government may contribute towards the expense. Of course, I could not advocate any proviso that the Crown should be rated. It is, of course, contrary to all our Acts to provide in specific terms that the Crown shall be placed in exactly the same position as the subject; but we make this provision, which, perhaps, is even better:

Where any drainage works constructed under this Act improve unoccupied Crown lands in

the district so as to promote settlement there, the Governor may make a contribution to the funds of the board to such extent as he may see fit.

We may depend upon it the board will not be slow in applying to the Government to make this contribution; and it is quite certain the Government will always act as liberally as possible with any board doing such good work. Then we have provisions as to the accounts to be kept, how the money is to be paid into banks, and some very useful regulations to which I need not particularly refer, such for instance, as penalties for interfering with drains, and for malicious destruction of property; and a tribunal is created to deal with rating, to determine who are liable to be rated; and there is provision for the limitation of actions, and for penalties, how recoverable; and then we have a proviso at the end, the same as that in the Roads Act, exempting all members of the board from personal liability; and there is a provision that the board may make by-laws, such as all other boards have the power to make. That is the whole Act. I think if it be carried out it will be the means of providing what is required. The taxation need not be too great, for the people themselves, by whom the taxation is imposed, will know what they want, and they will not be likely to advise larger expenditure than is necessary, seeing that the burden will fall on their own shoulders. At the same time, they would be glad, I believe, to be rated to a limited extent with a view to improving their own property. In the area I have particularly mentioned, of which we have heard so much—the land between the Murray and the Harvey rivers—there is a good deal of Crown land, and of course I have no hesitation in saying the Government would contribute liberally towards the board in respect of any work which would improve Crown lands and render them capable of being utilised; for the State could recover the amount by adding to the value of the land, which could be done through the land regulations. At present there is a fixed minimum price of, I believe, 10s. an acre for Crown lands; and of course if we spent upon such lands 1s. or 2s. per acre in improvements up to the time we sold it, from that time of course it would become ratable, and the money spent in

improvements would be charged to the person who took up the land in its improved condition. I do not think I need say much more, except that the Bill is, in my opinion, simplicity itself. I have carefully studied it, having been assisted by the Commissioner of Lands and the Under Secretary of the Lands Department. We have given it great attention, and I believe the Bill will be found to work well; and it certainly can not be considered a hardship on anyone, because it is purely permissive. Local self-government assisted by the State is the principle of the Bill, and therefore the people have the matter in their own hands. Whether the powers conferred by the Government will be sufficient remains to be seen. It may be the people will not improve their lands under this permissive measure, and some compulsion may be needful. Well, that is not the principle we desire to carry out. We do not want to compel people to do things against their will. We think there is sufficient good sense and regard for self-interest in the community to induce people to take advantage of such a liberal measure. There are several hundreds of landowners in the district to which I have referred who will have sufficient regard for themselves to take advantage of these provisions. The rate of interest is not excessive; no work can be undertaken unless at the desire of the people concerned; and the board will of course have the plans submitted to them of what is intended to be undertaken, and will have an opportunity of approving the works before the Government can spend any money. I beg to move the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed from previous sitting.

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

Vote—*Mines*, £87,481 1s. 8d.:

MR. WALLACE complimented the Minister on his successful administration, which was evidenced by the fact that he was the most popular man on the Treasury benches. In the Loan Bill

£30,000 had been set down for public batteries, of which much had already been spent. This money should be equitably distributed. He (Mr. Wallace) had received a letter from Mt. Magnet, in which the writer, who was interested in some leases, complained of the disadvantages attendant on the treatment of tailings by a private battery, and stated that tailings assaying 12dwts. per ton for 46 tons, worth £110, had been treated at a private battery, the miner getting only £39 2s.; that such instances were frequent, and amounted to wholesale robbery. Miners did not look so much at the cost of crushing as at results, and were prepared to pay a reasonable rate, feeling assured they would get justice from the Government. All must recognise that public batteries were not expected to pay a direct profit. Indirectly the State was receiving a large benefit from public crushers; therefore this House should not hesitate to vote further sums to establish public crushers, thereby assisting not only the men who had exploited the wilds of the colony, but also benefiting largely the agricultural producers in the country. With regard to what had been said as to people giving assistance to the Minister and officers in carrying out the public battery system, he would point out that there was a general idea that when a public battery was erected in a district and was not supported sufficiently to pay expenses, even then the people there considered they had a local right to that battery, and if it were proposed to move the battery, they set up an outcry against it and got the local member to put pressure on the Minister. This was very undesirable, for instead of harassing the Minister, his opinion was that the Minister and officers of the department were in a better position than other persons to judge as to the necessity for removing a battery which was found not to be payable, and could judge more impartially as to the place to which that battery should be removed. The district he represented obtained probably the first battery that was erected; but as it was not supported sufficiently, the Minister decided, quite properly, to remove it. He (Mr. Wallace) was then informed of the intention to remove that battery; but he did not attempt to put any obstacle in the way of

the Minister's action, for he recognised that the course taken by the Minister was perfectly justifiable. He hoped every member would take the same reasonable view in dealing with this vote for public batteries. With regard to the amount of money placed on the Estimates for additional batteries, we were told that the erection of four new batteries was under consideration, and he knew that a deputation in favour of the erection of a battery at Boogardie (Mount Magnet district) had waited on the Minister. He (Mr. Wallace) had a letter from the same district on the subject, and he knew that the member for the Murchison (Mr. Mitchell) and the member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason), who was interested in some properties there, had pressed the matter on the attention of the Minister. If a battery were erected at Boogardie, he (Mr. Wallace) felt sure it would bring in a large revenue to the department. Mining leases yielded to the department about £12 10s. each, and he knew of 17 or 18 leases in that locality which were being worked now, not by companies, but by working men who had been hanging on to their properties for years, and this was the class of people the Government should help. Just as Mulline and Mount Ida, which were formerly spots of poverty, had been changed into places of comparative wealth through the benefits resulting from the erection of public batteries, so if a battery could be erected at the place he was referring to, it would be a great help in assisting the properties that were being worked, and also in developing low-grade mines in the district. We must look to low-grade properties in the future for bringing the Murchison into prominence, and he hoped the Minister would favourably consider the case which had been put before him by that deputation with a view to granting its request. He (Mr. Wallace) was one of the first of 29 persons who worked on that field some nine years ago, and in visiting the district in recent years he had seen many of the old faces, showing that the men were still holding on to their properties. He knew that many of them had sent stone away to various places to be crushed, but the returns had not been sufficiently encouraging to enable those men to develop their properties as they would

like; and as soon as they got fair and just treatment, which they would certainly get from a public battery, he believed those men would be considerably encouraged, and that great development would be the result. Recently the Inspector of Public Batteries laid before the Minister a scheme for the erection of a battery of 30 head in that district; and Mr. Baxter, of the well known firm of Baxter and Prince, proposed to lay down a light line of railway to bring the ore from several mines to the proposed site for the battery. This went to show there must be something in the district about Lennonville and Mount Magnet to induce men to hang on for years to their properties, and to induce a business man like Mr. Baxter to propose a considerable expenditure in building a railway. The return from public batteries for October showed that from eight batteries there was a return of 2,216oz., averaging 1oz. 1dwt. 3 grains to the ton; and, with such an average, the Government had every reason to be proud of the day on which they instituted this State assistance to prospectors in the form of public batteries. It was not desirable to assist prospectors with sums of money, but rather to help them to obtain facilities for crushing, so that all persons might be treated alike, and might feel assured they got the best possible return from the stone they sent to the battery. We on the Murchison were not so clamorous and certainly not so noisy as those on the Eastern goldfields, and we patiently waited for that attention which the district deserved on its merits. He hoped the Mount Magnet District would not be forgotten when the vote for new batteries was being distributed.

MR. D. FORREST: Representing not only a pastoral but a gold-mining district, he would like to bring under the notice of the Minister the claim of the Upper Ashburton goldfield for assistance in the erection of a battery. Although the district was only alluvial up to the present, it was developing to an extent which really deserved attention. He had seen men dollyng gold and making it pay. Unfortunately the Government had never done anything towards providing a public battery for the Upper Ashburton, but he hoped the Minister would satisfy himself by inquiry that the district was worthy of some help in this direction. Those

who were on that goldfield and others who were interested in it were prepared to put a little money into a battery, if the Government would assist in providing one for the Upper Ashburton, which would be of great assistance to the Secret, the Dead Finish, the Top Camp, and other parts.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The complimentary remarks made by the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) were appreciated. It was his desire to meet the wishes of the people on the goldfields as far as he was able to do so; and although friction did occur sometimes between people connected with the goldfields and those in the department, still it was his desire and his duty to remove that friction whenever it was possible. Referring to the amount of money available for the erection of additional public batteries, there was a balance of about £2,000 remaining from the last financial year; and in this year about £30,000 for this purpose was to be raised by loan, but only £20,000 of this sum was estimated to be expended during the current year. There were present liabilities on account of works promised and other works already entered into. The department had paid up to the end of October something like £6,000 on account of these works, and there were other liabilities for completing the works which would bring the expenditure up to about £15,000; so that taking off the £2,000 of credit in starting the year, there would remain about £7,000 unallotted and to be expended on other works out of the £20,000 provided for this year. The battery for Meekatharra was estimated to cost about £5,000. The machinery had been ordered, and efforts were now being made to obtain water, which had not been reached at 100 feet. He wished to make sure that the water was there before attempting to erect the machinery. Hon. members might think the sum of £5,500 was a good deal to spend in the erection of one battery; but the heaviest part of the cost was the cartage over long distances. He knew of a contract which had been made amounting to £17,000 for carting 1,000 tons of machinery from Cue to Lake Way, for one of the mines there; therefore hon. members would see how a great deal of the money was unavoidably spent on cart-

age. There was a battery at Donnybrook now working, and it had cost about £1,500 for five head of stamps, although there was no difficulty in getting water, and the machinery had to be conveyed only three miles from the railway. It was also necessary that a battery should be housed, because the machinery deteriorated rapidly when it was not housed, and some expense for this purpose was unavoidable. It was proposed to put a cyanide plant and another ten head of stamps at Mulline. This was one of the most successful batteries the Government had yet erected, and the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory), who was justly proud of the work done at this battery, often pointed out the good which had accrued to that district from the erection of the public battery. The battery at Mulline had crushed 8,420 ozs. of gold for £32,630 in value, and this was the result of working from the time of starting up to the 30th June last. During that time there had been a profit on revenue as against working expenses amounting to £537, a return equal to $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the capital expended; and allowing $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for interest on capital, that being about the rate at which loans were raised by the Government, the balance of the earnings was available to go against wear and tear. Hon. members would say we were fully justified in putting up a cyanide plant and ten head of additional stamps in that district. The battery which was erected at Yerilla had to be moved to Niagara, that being considered the most suitable place after careful examination of the country in that part of the goldfields. We were also putting up heavier stamps for the battery at Norseman. That battery had been purchased some years ago from a moribund company, and the stamps were found to be too light. He would never again agree to purchase light stamps for a public battery, as they always caused a difficulty, and heavier stamps were necessary in order to get satisfactory results. This cost for heavier stamps, together with the purchase of a condenser, would require about £1,200 for Norseman. The water obtainable at Norseman was so dense that it was difficult to use it for amalgamating purposes, and it was apt to eat away the condensing plant in a short time. It even clogged the pipes

through which water was pumped from the lake, in some instances. It was also necessary to expend some further money in sinking a well at Lennonville, and there was also an amount which was being spent during the present quarter in sinking a well at Paynesville. These various items made up a total of about £15,000; and taking into account the £2,000 remaining as a credit balance from last year, the works already entered on would require about £13,000 out of the proposed expenditure of £20,000 for the year. If this estimated amount were fully spent, there would remain only about £7,000 for the erection of new batteries, and there were ten or a dozen applications in the Mines Office at present for new batteries to be erected at various places. If these numerous applications were complied with, he supposed the total cost would be about £100,000. He had been pleased to hear what the member for Yalgoo said about Boogardie, and the member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) had frequently urged the claims of that district. As soon as this vote for public batteries was passed, he would have to ascertain the best method of spending the money, and the claims of Boogardie would not be overlooked. There was a battery at Lennonville, only seven miles away, and there were some private batteries also in the district; but the prospectors did not seem to have confidence in private batteries, and were under the impression that the Government could give them all the gold obtainable from stone they sent to a public battery. This question of selecting suitable sites for public batteries was a most delicate one, and in starting the scheme of public batteries the Government were really entering on mining, because in putting up a battery they had to incur some risk, just as a miner did when he went on sinking, and of course the miner expected the stone would improve as it went down, though in too many cases it became poorer rather than richer the further down it was followed. He (the Minister) had to be careful; and after the experience he had had in regard to these matters, his endeavour was to make sure that before a battery was erected in any place, there must be stone of a payable character, and there must be an assurance that sufficient stone would

be supplied to keep the battery going. A public battery on the Ashburton goldfield would not be justified, considering the total output at that place during 1899 was 369ozs., and a 10-head battery could have crushed in three months all the ore which that represented. Most of the gold was alluvial. The public battery scheme had just been initiated; and though there had been a direct loss in 1899 of £6,000, many difficulties had confronted the scheme at its inception. Of these, one of the principal was want of water. In future, if, after a sufficient trial, it were found a battery could not be kept working, it would be removed.

MR. GREGORY: Or increase the charge for crushing.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Possibly some of the centres now asking for batteries could be supplied from places where the crushers were not kept going.

MR. WALLACE: The 10-head battery at Lennonville had not been sufficient to cope with demands.

MR. MITCHELL: Though £6,000 had been lost on public batteries during the year—[MR. WILSON: £8,278]—it would be a great mistake to change the policy, for there was an indirect benefit. Too much attention must not be paid to complaints of miners. The average miner over-estimated the amount of gold his stone contained.

MR. KINGSMILL: There was no need to lose on public batteries. Charge more for crushing, and do not pauperise the mining industry. If a non-paying rate were charged, no permanent good would result, for the time must come when the stone would have to be crushed at the normal rate by private batteries, and then it would possibly be found much of the ore was not payable. The Ashburton goldfield was one of those remoter districts to which the public battery scheme was applicable. Would it not be possible that the batteries should show a profit next year? The loss was not in crushing, but in time. At Pilbarra, his own constituency, the people had been sufficiently enterprising to provide their own batteries.

MR. GREGORY: Public batteries could be made to pay; and where sufficient stone was not brought in to keep them going, the charge should be raised. The Minister and the superintendent

were, however, justified in fixing the price at 15s. At Mulline and Mount Ida the batteries not only paid expenses, but showed a profit. At the latter place, in a month and ten days, 856 tons had been crushed. Many officials in the department, notably the Inspector of Mines and the mining registrars, were still on the temporary staff. Surely these responsible officers should be made permanent. Several wardens received special consideration. Those at Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and the Murchison had received higher salaries than others, and also £50 extra in allowances. The wardens at North Coolgardie and Mount Margaret had to travel more than those in the older districts; and in a new district the warden was put to more expense in entertaining visitors. These allowances should be equalised; and a fair sum would be £100 for each warden.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The superintendent of batteries had brought under notice the necessity of keeping them going, and when returns fluctuated, prospectors should be warned that unless three months' work were in sight, the battery would be closed down, and all the staff except the manager discharged until sufficient stone was at grass. There were doubtless many officers on the temporary staff; but in June last, when the Estimates had been prepared, the draft of the Public Service Bill had not been available, and it was not then apparent that officers on the temporary staff would be at a disadvantage compared with those permanently employed. Next year the question would be thoroughly considered, and he would make a record in the department so that the matter should not be overlooked. Regarding wardens' salaries, Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Cue had always been recognised as the three great centres; the officers in question were the oldest in the service, and also acted as chairmen of quarter sessions. True, every warden had to entertain strangers, and as far as possible wardens were recompensed for such expenditure. The warden at Mount Margaret, a very zealous officer, had had an increase this year as well as last year.

MR. GREGORY: Regarding the return of survey fees, an applicant for an abandoned lease had to pay the full fee,

and if a new survey were not required, the money, with the exception of £2 10s., was refunded. Surely this fee was too large for an abandoned lease, more especially where the applicant agreed to accept the original survey?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The question was under consideration. When he first took office, the full fee had to be paid for an abandoned lease; and it was now reduced to £2 10s. The Government did not get the whole of this amount, for £2 had to be paid to the surveyor.

MR. GREGORY: Why not have Government surveyors?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Because nothing would be gained by that. In giving a title to a lease, the exact position of the land must be known, and in the case of an abandoned lease, care must be taken to see that the pegs were in their old positions.

MR. MORAN, referring to item, "Warden, East Coolgardie, £750," said this old public servant, Mr. Finnerty, had done pioneer work on the Coolgardie goldfields, and was also chairman of quarter sessions. He might fairly have a £50 increase.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Seeing that it was not intended to have Supplementary Estimates, he feared it was impossible to comply with the hon. member's request. The value of this officer's service was fully recognised, and his claim would not be overlooked when opportunity offered. The remuneration for the post, however, amounted to about £1,000, with a house. Credit should be given to the Mines Department for paying the salaries of resident magistrates and chairmen of quarter sessions who were also wardens.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, referring to item "Outstanding percentages due to Inspectors, £50," asked for explanation.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Inspectors of mines had been appointed inspectors of boilers under the Steam Boilers Act, and allowed 25 per cent. of the fees. That allowance had been stopped and salaries substituted; and this item represented a balance of percentages outstanding.

MR. MITCHELL: The salaries paid for boiler inspection seemed large.

MR. GREGORY: They were well earned.

MR. MITCHELL: Each inspector seemed to have a clerk. Why was this?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: An inspector of boilers who was also an inspector of mines must, in his absence, have a clerk to look after the office.

Vote put and passed.

Geological Survey, £4,150—agreed to. This completed the Mines votes.

At 6:30, the CHAIRMAN left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

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

Crown Law Officers, £3,471 13s. 4d.

MR. WALLACE: Speaking generally on this vote, there were ugly remarks made in various parts of the colony in regard to the indiscriminate manner in which persons were appointed as justices of the peace.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That had nothing to do with the Attorney General's Department.

MR. WALLACE: Who made the appointments?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That belonged to the Premier's Department.

MR. WALLACE: If this were the proper place, he wished to draw attention to the indiscriminate manner in which such appointments had been made. Members of this House would be aware of many instances in which appointments had been made without any consideration as to the necessity for the appointment, the wisdom of the selection made, or the ability of the person to fill the honourable and responsible position of justice of the peace. Some steps should be taken to inquire into the reputation of persons who were put forward as suitable for appointment. He hoped some explanation would be given from the Ministerial bench, in order to show how these appointments were made, whether on the recommendation of the warden, the recommendation for the member for the district, or of some responsible body. Members of Parliament knew the awkward position in which they were sometimes placed when asked by local bodies to recommend certain persons for appointment as justices of the peace. Notwithstanding the recommendation of the local member of Parliament, it was the duty of the Minis-

ter responsible for these appointments to make further inquiry into the reputation of the persons put forward as suitable for this high and honourable position. Of late there had been certain cases in which the Government found it necessary to strike off the list of justices persons who had committed serious breaches. Another question he wished to ask was why members of Parliament who held a commission of the peace for a magisterial district were not permitted to hold a commission for the whole of the electoral district which they represented. At present, the magisterial district of Yalgoo did not agree in its boundaries with the magisterial district for which he was a justice; and he thought that if members were fit persons to represent the community in their electorate, that fact should be sufficient to enable a member to act as a justice for the whole of the electoral district which he represented in Parliament.

MR. D. FORREST: The Act would have to be altered, before that could be done.

MR. WALLACE: Certain deviations had been made recently from the usual practice, and he would like to know why that was done. It might appear that he was slightly aggrieved, and he admitted it, for he could not see why he should not be allowed to act as a justice in all parts of his electorate, when he was qualified to act as a justice within the magisterial portion of his electorate. He knew that in some cases members of Parliament were enabled to act as justices outside the magisterial district of their electorate.

MR. MITCHELL: They must have been made justices before the recent Act was passed.

MR. D. FORREST: When was the hon. member appointed?

MR. WALLACE said he was not dating back to the time when there were only a few persons in the colony who could be appointed as justices, but he alluded particularly to the case of the late member for Geraldton. It was well known that he was buttonholed by the Premier, and appointed a justice of the peace for Geraldton and also for Perth; whereas he (Mr. Wallace) represented the electorate of Yalgoo, but could not act as a justice outside the magisterial district which was only part of his electorate. Many justices of the peace had

pointed out the particular case of the late member for Geraldton, and it was especially noticeable when the unfriendly relationship between that member and the Premier became so evident. Cases of this kind gave room for suspicion and dissatisfaction; and he would like some assurance that hon. members holding commissions of the peace would be permitted, so long as they were members of Parliament, to sit and act as justices in any part of the colony. Another matter was the question of the stock of printed copies of the statutes in the Government stores. He could not see what good purpose this stock of printed matter could serve, and it would be more reasonable if persons who were appointed justices of the peace could have copies of the statutes without having to incur the great expense involved in purchasing them. The statutes were there, and the longer they remained the more likely they were to be eaten away by white ants.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The control of those copies belonged to the Stores Department.

MR. WALLACE: Without urging that copies should be distributed to all justices of the peace, he did think that members of Parliament who gave their time to the country should be able to obtain copies of those earlier statutes, in addition to the right they now had of obtaining statutes which were passed during the time they sat in Parliament.

MR. GEORGE: With regard to supplying copies of statutes to justices of the peace, when a member of Parliament was appointed a justice of the peace, surely he should not be expected to expend a considerable sum in purchasing copies of the statutes. With regard to the appointment of members of Parliament as justices in districts within their electorates, he (Mr. George) had been appointed for the constituency he represented and also for the Perth magisterial district. The appointment was unsolicited; but one result had been that he was used very much as a convenience in connection with the signing of certificates in the case of railway travellers who had lost their tickets and wanted to make a declaration, his place of business being near the station. There were instances of appointments made to the honorary magistracy of men who were a disgrace

to society and to honest men, and some of these cases must be within the knowledge of members of this House. Certainly those cases were a disgrace to those persons who had recommended such appointments. As to the honour of being appointed a magistrate, was it not more a bother than an honour? And certainly when we saw persons on the bench who got their livelihood in a way that was a disgrace, and which in the case of others would render the person liable to prosecution for getting their livelihood in such a manner, one could not see that there was any particular honour in belonging to the magisterial bench in company with such persons.

MR. D. FORREST: Having been a justice of the peace for about 15 years he must say it behoved the Government not to appoint men merely because they were recommended by the member for the district, or by the resident magistrate. He (Mr. D. Forrest) had been asked by the Ashburton constituency to recommend certain gentlemen for appointment as justices of the peace. In regard to those cases he did not know exactly where he stood; but he did know that if he failed to recommend those persons they would not vote for him at the next election. (General laughter.) Still the two or three persons he intended to ask the Premier to appoint for the Ashburton district would probably be regarded by the Premier as suitable for the position. It behoved members of Parliament not to recommend persons for the commission who were not worthy of that position. From his little experience he knew many men on the commission at the present time who were not worthy of the honour. He knew that as a fact. He also knew that many persons were appointed as justices of the peace merely for the convenience of signing certificates for the destruction of wild dogs. The Government should not appoint persons if Ministers did not know anything about them, nor should they appoint persons merely on the recommendation of a member of Parliament nor through political influence.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: As to the appointment of justices of the peace, the complaint made by the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) was really against the present system by which appoint-

ments were made, because the magisterial district was not co-extensive with the electoral district, in the case of the hon. member and others. If the hon. member felt this as a grievance, he should have made representation to the department with a view to obtaining appointment to the adjoining district, so as to remove the difficulty of which he complained.

THE PREMIER: He was a justice of the peace before he was a member of Parliament.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Perhaps the hon. member had not moved in the matter about being appointed for the adjoining district.

MR. GEORGE: Would it not be well to have the two areas on the same lines?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: There would be much difficulty in carrying out the suggestion. If the jurisdiction of resident magistrates were extended to embrace an electoral district, it would in some cases take a magistrate a week to get from one part of his district to another. If the hon. member (Mr. Wallace) had made representation and been refused by the department for appointment to the adjoining district, then he had cause of complaint. With regard to the distribution of the printed statutes, these copies were not in the custody of the Crown Law Department; and if that department required any copies, it had to present a requisition in ordinary course, the same as any other department would have to do. As the volumes now in stock would be worthless when the statutes were consolidated, it might be advisable for the House to consider whether they should not be distributed free of charge.

MR. WALLACE: A point unnoticed by the Attorney-General was that at present anyone could be appointed a justice.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: No.

MR. WALLACE: The fact that some men had been struck off the roll proved that proper inquiry had not been made before appointing them. The late member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) had been appointed a justice of the peace for Perth, probably owing to his friendship with the Premier; and why should not all hon. members be similarly treated? The fact that a man was a member of Parliament proved his fitness to hold a commission for the whole colony, at all

events during the term of his Parliamentary career.

MR. VOSPER: That was the custom in Queensland.

MR. WALLACE: Had the appointment of the ex-member for Geraldton been cancelled?

THE PREMIER: Certainly not.

MR. WALLACE: What claim had Mr. Robson more than present hon. members to hold a commission for Perth, and why should not each hon. member be entitled to a copy of the statutes?

MR. D. FORREST: Great care was necessary in appointing a man a justice for the whole colony. Some men might do well as justices in places like Yalgoo and the Ashburton, who might not be suitable for the city of Perth. None should be appointed to the commission for the colony generally unless well known to the Government and the public.

THE PREMIER: This discussion on honorary justices was out of place on the Estimates, and should be brought up on motion. Justices were appointed under the prerogative of the Crown, and none, not even members of Parliament, had any right to such appointments. The fact that the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) had been appointed a justice prior to his election to Parliament gave him no right to have his magisterial district made commensurate with his electorate. Honours from the Crown should not be applied for, but merely accepted when offered spontaneously. Regarding the late member for Geraldton, it had for two or three years been the custom, when appointing a member of Parliament a justice, to make him a justice for Perth as well as for his own district, seeing that most hon. members lived in Perth during the session. There had, therefore, been nothing exceptional in the appointment of Mr. Robson, for other members had been similarly appointed. The only difficulty in the way of the free distribution of the statutes was that these represented cash, and a vote would be required to pay for them, else the Government Storekeeper would have a shortage. Probably justices would be furnished with copies of the statutes if application were made; but he (the Premier) had no recollection of applications from members of Parliament. There was no difficulty with the annual statutes, the cost of which was

included in the ordinary expenditure of the Government Printer; but the complete volumes of statutes had been purchased in England, and, if drawn from the Government stores, must be accounted for.

MR. WILSON: The member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) was not asking anything from the Government. The hon. member had been appointed a magistrate for his district, where his services were highly prized by the police, and in travelling round his electorate had been asked by the police to adjudicate on some trivial cases.

THE PREMIER: Surely the magisterial district and the electorate were of the same size?

MR. WILSON: No; the hon. member had found he could not adjudicate on a certain case of drunkenness.

THE PREMIER: Where?

MR. WILSON: At Mullewa.

THE PREMIER: Some 70 miles from the hon. member's district!

MR. WILSON: With the result that the unfortunate prisoner had been detained in gaol for a week or a fortnight until a magistrate could be found.

THE PREMIER: It was not for individual members to judge of a man's fitness to hold a commission for the whole of the colony.

MR. WILSON: A member of Parliament fit to be a justice for Perth was fit to hold a general commission, and there should be no objection to his appointment.

MR. GEORGE: To show whether those at present holding the commission for the whole colony were superior in ability or in honour to members of the House, he would read a few of the names of such justices. These were, Mr. William Alexander, Geraldton—no doubt a good man, but not far superior to hon. members.

THE PREMIER: That appointment had been made before the present Act came into force.

MR. GEORGE: The same might be said of Mr. F. H. Backhouse of Sussex, Messrs. Francis Bird of Albany, Ernest Black of Esperance, T. W. Chipper of the Williams, Bernard Clarkson of Newcastle, Thomas Clinch of Greenough, I. J. K. Cohn of Southern Cross. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Oh!] Was that gentleman superior to hon. members in ability,

honour, and so forth? Then there were Messrs. E. K. Congdon of Fremantle, J. R. A. Connolly of Esperance, Joseph Cookworthy of the Vasse, Frank Craig of Perth, E. Darlôt, M.L.A., Arthur Du Boulay of Geraldton, I. S. Emanuel of Perth, Robert Fairbairn of Fremantle, Sir John Forrest, Messrs. J. L. Forrest, D. Forrest, M.L.A., A. Forrest, M.L.A., John Fowler of Bunbury, T. G. Molloy, a member of the City Council and once a member of this House. There were also many Piesses and Phillipases, and there was Mr. H. C. Rason, M.L.A.

THE CHAIRMAN: The hon. member was somewhat out of order. This discussion on justices had been allowed to go on thus far; but as justices were honorary, they should not be discussed under the Estimates.

MR. GEORGE: The Premier had made a personal reflection on hon. members, contrary to the Standing Orders, and he (Mr. George) was refuting the right hon. gentleman's statement.

MR. VOSPER: At what stage could the general administration of justice be discussed.

THE CHAIRMAN: Now; but the discussion of the appointment of honorary justices was out of order.

MR. VOSPER: On the vote for the Attorney General's Department, were not the Committee at liberty to discuss the administration of justice, for which the Attorney General was responsible?

THE CHAIRMAN: Yes; but that Minister was not responsible for the appointment of justices of the peace.

MR. VOSPER: Not only in connection with the unpaid magistracy but also in connection with the stipendiary magistracy, we frequently found persons holding positions who were not fit to fill them. A person had been appointed to Roebourne, notwithstanding remarks made previously about him in this House, and he seemed to be an undesirable person to be on the bench at all. He had been granted a commission to try a capital charge, as also had his predecessor in the same office at Roebourne; and it was high time this House took some cognisance with a view to getting reform in these matters. Although the Attorney General could not control the unpaid magistracy, still, if frequent breaches of the law were committed by magistrates, such cases

should be under supervision. He (Mr. Vosper) desired to call attention strongly to the fact that in many remote parts of the colony, magistrates paid and unpaid did things that in many respects were not only contrary to law, but outrages on decency. At Eucla, a magistrate had taken on himself to sign permits to white men to cohabit with native women. These certificates were signed and issued by a justice of the peace, and that person was still retained in that position.

MR. MORAN: Had the hon. member evidence of that?

MR. VOSPER: said he had got one of those certificates signed by that magistrate.

MR. MOORHEAD: How long was that ago?

MR. VOSPER: It was dated 1897, and was a license for concubinage.

MR. MORAN: That person ought not to be allowed on the bench for a day. It would be a scandal in any Christian country to keep such a person as that on the bench.

MR. VOSPER: That person still held a position as justice of the peace. Had not appeals been sent to the Attorney General about one magistrate at Coolgardie? And was not the Attorney General aware that other magistrates had declined to sit with him, and that the course of justice was interrupted for three or four weeks on one occasion, because no other magistrate could be got to sit with him on the bench?

MR. GEORGE: Who recommended him?

MR. VOSPER: That question was unnecessary, when he informed the Committee that this man was intimately connected with the Government, not as a politician, but in his private capacity; that he was related by blood to the leader of the Cabinet; and the presence of that person on the bench was a scandal and a travesty of justice, and was calculated to bring our administration of the law into contempt. When we saw the inferior courts of the colony dragged into the dirt day after day, and when we knew that the acts of some of the magistrates of those courts were stinking in the nostrils of the people, we could not expect that respect for the laws of the country would be maintained. Scarcely a week went by without complaints reaching him (Mr. Vosper) about the administration of

justice as carried on in the Northern districts. Almost every man who happened to be a squatter in the Northern country could get on the commission of the peace; and many of them seemed to act in co-operation, one justice laying a charge and the other trying the accused person, who was pretty sure to be convicted. It was impossible for all those things to occur without some of them coming under the notice of the Attorney General; and if it was not that Minister's business to rectify those wrongs, then whose business was it? The Committee ought to know, and the work ought to be done. He hoped the custom which was followed in Queensland, of appointing every member of Parliament a justice of the peace, would not be carried out in this colony, and certainly not so long as the magisterial bench was known to be what it was to-day. The time had arrived for a strong protest to be made against many of the appointments as justices of the peace. He was not blaming the Attorney General in the slightest degree, but if the Attorney General was not the officer in charge of these things, then a searching investigation was urgently required, and if the matter did not fall within the Attorney General's province, it was time the responsible Minister should begin an investigation.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was an unfortunate circumstance that magistrates in this country were not as perfect as they ought to be, and that many of the appointments which were made had unfortunately turned out bad ones. But when a case such as that mentioned by the member who had just spoken was brought on the floor of this House, one ventured to say that in any decent community, that person would not be allowed to remain on the bench one half-hour. But he (the Attorney General), as the judicial officer, would have to be satisfied with evidence before he could take any such action as had been suggested. We must not allow people's characters to be blasted by statements of a seriously injurious character, unsupported by evidence. There had been enough of that, both in the public Press and certainly on the floor of this House. Every hon. member who valued his own character, and equally respected the character of his fellow men, should

not brand any man as guilty until he was proved to be so. He the (Attorney General) would like to ask the hon. member (Mr. Vosper), if he had had this information for some time, why did he not communicate with the Government or with the Minister directly concerned? Why keep the matter back until he could bring it on the floor of this House, and then accuse the department or the Government of not having taken action, which they must necessarily be unable to take until they had some definite information? One would imagine the proper course should be to lodge a written complaint of the matter with the Premier or with any other Minister concerned with the particular case, and if the complaint were not acted upon and inquired into, it would be the hon. member's bounden duty to express openly his opinion of the administration of government in this country. Why the hon. member should wait, having this information, until he could bring it on the floor of this House, one did not know. He (the Attorney General) had never heard of the case before until he heard it from the hon. member this evening. [A MEMBER: It was in the newspapers.] We saw many things in newspapers that were utterly untrue, and we were not going to be carried away by those inflammatory harangues in some of the newspapers—he did not say all newspapers in the colony, but in a portion of the Press—and which were put forth not with the genuine desire to procure some reform, but for the purpose of creating a spurious circulation, by putting forth slanders and libels on their fellow-men or making sensational statements.

MR. GEORGE: Raking in the dollars.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Exactly. When any person's character was to be aspersed, it should surely be the duty of the hon. member to make a written statement on the matter, so as to give an opportunity to the Government for making a proper inquiry, before the hon. member flaunted the matter on the floor of the House.

MR. VOSPER: What did the Attorney General do about that justice of the peace in Coolgardie, when his attention was called to the case?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said he was glad the hon. member had mentioned

that matter. About 18 months ago the hon. member had made a complaint about a justice of the peace at Broad Arrow. He (the Attorney General) immediately caused an inquiry to be held, and he asked the persons who had put forth the charge to attend the inquiry. What was the result? A board of magistrates was appointed to inquire into the matter including a stipendiary magistrate; and when the persons who had put forth the accusation were required to appear before the board, although those persons had been so fearfully anxious to make the charge before, they failed to appear and produce evidence. Consequently, the board of inquiry could do nothing. No body attempted to prove the allegations.

MR. VOSPER said he never mentioned Broad Arrow in the House, when he mentioned that case. He said "Coolgardie" then, and he said "Coolgardie" now.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member had not made any complaint to him since he (the Attorney General) had been in office. Whenever a complaint had been made to him against an honorary justice, if there was any *prima facie* evidence he had instituted an inquiry. I was only fair that when an accusation was made, there should be some definite evidence in support of it in order that inquiry might be instituted. Certainly no one would tolerate a man on the bench if he had done what the hon. member alleged in this case in regard to Eucla. If such an act were really done that person must be a madman or worse. The practice of the Attorney General's Department was that it undertook the duty of inquiring into any complaints but until he got some evidence, he could not venture, as Attorney General, to support an allegation that might be made to him against some member of the bench.

MR. VOSPER: Nobody wanted the Attorney General to do that.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: I was not fair to attack a person's character on the floor of this House, until particular complaint had been made to the Minister or person whose duty it was to inquire and if inquiry did not follow upon the complaint, the hon. member could then bring forth his grievance.

MR. VOSPER: Without attempting to follow the Attorney General in his diatribe against the Press of the colony—

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Not against the Press of the colony, but against a section of the Press.

MR. VOSPER: That section was capable of taking care of itself. With regard to the charge he had made against the magistrate at Eucla, this matter was brought under the notice of the Aborigines Protection Board; and in consequence of the action of the board, some kind of notice was sent to the magistrate that the practice would have to be stopped. He (Mr. Vosper) was told that the practice had been stopped. But it was sufficient for him to know that the man who had issued that certificate was retained on the bench to-day, and ought not to be there. The records of the Aborigines Protection Board, if searched, would bring to light the whole of the facts of the case; and if the Attorney General desired to further follow this question, he (Mr. Vosper) would give him every facility he could by placing at his disposal the information he had in regard to it. In reference to the Broad Arrow business, the Attorney General was under the impression that he (Mr. Vosper) was alluding to a magistrate at Broad Arrow, when he was in fact referring to this same magistrate at Coolgardie whom he had mentioned to-night, and he had not mentioned the Broad Arrow case. Owing to some confusion in the House at the time, he was unable to disabuse the Attorney General's mind of the idea that the justice referred to was not at Coolgardie but at Broad Arrow. A board of inquiry was appointed in regard to the Broad Arrow case, and no one came forward to make a charge. He (Mr. Vosper) had nothing to do with the charge; but on the contrary, if he had been concerned at all, it would have been in defending those men who were charged, and who had since written to him. The justice he referred to on that occasion and referred to now, occupied a position on the magisterial bench at Coolgardie; and he had been kept on the bench despite the repeated protests of his fellow magistrates, and against the weight of popular opinion on the goldfields; also in the face of the fact that the grossest charges had been made against him in the Press, and he had not dared to lift a finger to vindicate his character. Some members on the Government side supported him finan-

cially, and some of his operations on the goldfields were carried on with capital found for him by those persons. These complaints and charges were not made merely in a section of the Press, but some of the most respectable newspapers in the colony had echoed and indorsed them. Yet we found this man flaunting on the bench day after day, and he was said to be a magistrate of the whole colony. In the last few weeks the grossest charges of partiality had been made against him; and when travelling about the goldfields and in railway trains, he openly discussed cases that came before him as a justice, and announced his intention of doing so and so if certain persons came before him. Yet this man remained on the magisterial roll of the colony! Surely this was a grave ground of complaint, and this House was the proper place to bring the case forward. Until the bench was materially purified, it would be undesirable to associate members of Parliament with the "honour" of appointment to the bench.

MR. MOORHEAD, referring to item 6, "Managing Clerk (civil business), £400," said that taking this item in conjunction with one or two others, he suggested that a managing clerk on the civil side of the Crown Law Office was not worth £400 a year; and if such position was given to one who was not professionally qualified to appear in court, how much more should the position of Taxing Master of the Supreme Court be worth? The managing clerk on the civil side was not professionally qualified to appear in court; and while not cavilling at the amount of the salary, he must say that if this officer was worth £400 a year and this was also a fresh appointment, surely the Taxing Master was worth considerably more than £390 a year. Up to the present year the salary of the taxing officer was £350, and he was now raised to £390; yet even at this sum he was £10 below the amount paid to an unqualified officer in a subordinate position and new to the work. Speaking as a member of the profession, there was no position which tallied in responsibility with that of Taxing Master. In Victoria, an effort was being made to place the Taxing Master in a position independent of every department, the same as the Auditor General and Judges. The pre-

sent Taxing Master deserved more than this pitiable allowance, for during the last year he had saved to the country something like £30,000 in taxing down the bills of the learned profession. The fees payable to his office were something over £600 a year; therefore the office was not costing the country anything. Looking at what the office brought to the revenue and the amount he had saved to the country, we should deal generously with this officer. Considering also the position he occupied in regard to the rest of the profession, we should put him above temptation and give him a salary sufficient to render him unapproachable. In this colony, one was happy to say our law clerks in the Supreme Court and in the Crown Law Department were above that; but, in principle, we ought to place them in such a position as to render them above suspicion of being approached. There were few positions in which it would be more to the advantage of the officer to deal leniently with those items that came before him than in the position of Taxing Master.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The managing clerk of the civil business was not a qualified man, professionally. In making that appointment he (the Attorney-General) particularly disliked to get a professional man, because he knew from experience elsewhere that if a clerk in this position appeared in court to argue cases, it became difficult to keep him in his place. What was wanted was a managing clerk to do the work out of court, and not to plead in court. Therefore he thought that in the interest of the department, if he could get a man with good experience who was not a professional man and yet thoroughly understood his work, that would be the best man to get for the position. It was with that view the appointment was made. It was not his (the Minister's) fault that the taxing officer was not better paid.

MR. GEORGE: There was £40 increase this year.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The taxing officer's work was scarcely ever appealed against, and that was one of the highest compliments an officer could receive. Next year he (the Minister) hoped to be able to grant a substantial increase.

MR. GEORGE, referring to item "Accountant, 3 months at £250 per annum," asked for explanation.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The officer had resigned, and owing to circumstances, three months' salary had been allowed.

Vote put and passed.

Supreme Court, £10,400 19s. 4d.:

MR. MORAN, referring to item, "Taxing Officer, £390," said this officer, who was the protector of the public against exorbitant bills of costs, should be placed on the same basis as the Auditor General. For such a position £750 or £800 would not be too high a salary. Last year some £30,000 had been taxed off bills, and the saving thus effected was important in a colony where there was, for the population, an enormous amount of litigation.

MR. GEORGE: As there was a provision of £200 for a clerk to the fourth Judge, and as a fourth Judge was not to be appointed, this sum should be added to the Taxing Officer's salary.

MR. PRESSE: To do that, a Message would be required.

MR. KINGSMILL: Appoint the taxing officer a clerk to the fourth Judge.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Unfortunately, the suggestion could not be adopted.

MR. GEORGE, referring to item "Clerk to Fourth Judge and Clerk of Arraignment, £200," moved that the item be struck out. A fourth Judge was not to be appointed.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Such appointment might be made next session, and the money would then be required.

MR. GEORGE: A clerk could be provided for under "J."

MR. MORAN: Would the Attorney General promise that the Taxing Master would be liberally treated in the next Estimates?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly. Motion put and negatived.

MR. MOORHEAD, referring to item "Librarian, £170," said that though this officer was to receive £170, the usher was to receive £190.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The librarian also received £50 from the Barristers' Board.

MR. MOORHEAD: It was hardly fair to consider that fact. A librarian

was on a higher plane than an usher, and this officer was above the ordinary level, and thoroughly competent.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : Some eighteen months or two years ago the position of librarian was a sinecure, owing to the diminutive size of the library. Now, the Supreme Court Library was fairly well stocked, and the librarian was a responsible officer who, it was pleasing to note, was thoroughly skilled, not only regarding reports and text books, but also in case law—a most valuable acquisition, saving much time to Judges and counsel. An effort would be made to have the salary increased.

Vote put and passed.

Official Receiver in Bankruptcy, £1,825—agreed to.

Curator of Intestate Estates, £705—agreed to.

Stipendiary Magistracy, £26,912s. 7d. :

MR. CONNOR, referring to item “Kimberley East, £200,” said last year only £70 19s. 4d. had been expended. This magistrate was also medical officer at Wyndham.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : And for the two offices he received £450, with a forage allowance of £50, and a house free.

MR. CONNOR : Even so, there was difficulty in obtaining a qualified medical man as magistrate, evidenced by the many changes during the last few years. There was not much private practice, and there was little inducement to good men to hold both offices. Better appoint a magistrate and a medical officer. The residents were complaining.

MR. D. FORREST : These dual appointments, even in small places, gave little satisfaction.

MR. VOSPER : How much was paid to the resident magistrate at Derby?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : In addition to his salary on the Estimates, £110, £18 as customs officer, and a forage allowance as well—about £350 a year in all. Regarding these dual appointments, there was much to be said on both sides. In a small community it was necessary to have a permanent stipendiary magistrate, and the private practice was not sufficient to warrant a man's becoming a resident. To make the offices separate would mean doubling the expense; and if that were done in each coastal town, the increase would be serious. No com-

plaints had been received from the present officer at Wyndham; and the climate, he believed, was responsible for the frequent changes. Was there any other colony in which medical men were provided for the public at the expense of the Government?

MR. CONNOR : Yes; in North Queensland, and on Thursday Island.

MR. WALLACE, referring to item “Murchison and Gascoyne District, Itinerant Police Magistrate, £200,” asked was this necessary?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : Yes; the magistrate was required to travel constantly.

MR. KINGSMILL : A similar request which he had made for his district had been rejected as irregular and unprecedented; yet such itinerant magistrates evidently existed. How was this?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : This appointment had been made in 1895, and the officer had done good service, having saved the Government the expense of three stipendiary magistrates. He was making inquiries regarding the district of the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill), and if these were satisfactory, the appointment of a stipendiary magistrate there would be recommended.

MR. VOSPER : Referring to item 29, “Clerk of the Court at Derby, £140,” said that without desiring to injure the person holding this position, he was said to be absolutely incompetent. Complaints had been made officially and otherwise of this person's incompetency. Care should be taken to select a person fit for the duties. This person was described as not understanding his duties.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : It was to be regretted that any observations were made in this case. This person had had experience as honorary magistrate in New South Wales for a number of years, and he (the Attorney General) wanted to see if there was something beneath this complaint. He came here from New South Wales with good credentials. The magistrate at Derby was leaving the place, being dissatisfied with it, and perhaps that was the reason why complaint was made against the clerk of the court.

MR. DOHERTY : If he happened to be a teetotaller, he would probably not be wanted there.

MR. WALLACE: Referring to Item 66, "Mullewa, Clerk to Magistrates, £20," said this amount was placed on the Estimates year after year, yet nobody held this position, and in fact nobody was there.

MR. MONGER: Referring to item 129, "Law Books, £100," said he regretted the item was not twice the amount, and he hoped it would be increased in the future.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said he had tried to do what he could.

Vote put and passed.

Land Titles, £9,770 16s. :

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This department was one in which the public paid for services rendered, and were entitled to get those services. The Titles Office yielded a profit to the State; yet the Commissioner of Titles, receiving £750 a year, was engaged in other kinds of work. He was called on to do work that belonged to the Parliamentary Draftsman, instead of confining his attention to the duties of Commissioner of Titles, which was sufficient to occupy his attention and his services to the full. It was to be hoped this officer would be relieved of the large amount of work he was doing outside his department, and for which he received no pay.

MR. VOSPER: Among other positions the Commissioner of Titles was also Secretary to the Crown Law Department.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: He got no salary for that.

MR. VOSPER: That appointment was distinctly opposed to the spirit of the Land Transfer Act. The Commissioner of Titles was a quasi-judicial officer, who might be called on to give decisions on questions involving a large amount of property, and he could not partake of the position of an advocate.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: He did not appear in court.

MR. VOSPER: Still this was a violation of the spirit of the Act, if not a breach of its letter. There should be a distinct appointment to the position of Secretary to the Crown Law Department; and the Commissioner of Titles should attend simply to his duties as Commissioner.

MR. MONGER: Referring to item "Registrar of Titles and Deeds, £550," said that while not desiring to reduce the

amount, it was strange that an officer should proportionately have 10 per cent. increase, when officers beneath him got practically no increase. Looking at the salaries paid in the Post Office to men who had been in the service years longer than this officer, and yet were receiving an increase of only £5 as compared with 10 per cent. in this case, he thought the officers in this and other departments should be treated on a more equitable basis, and that length of service should be recognised by more liberal payment.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: This officer had never had an increase since he joined the department, until the present year. The same position in Victoria carried a salary of about £800 a year. He (the Attorney General) had tried to get this officer an increase, and promised to get it for him this year, and he stuck to it till he did get it. This was an excellent officer, and in regard to his attention to the public he could not be beaten.

Vote put and passed.

This completed the votes for the department.

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

Vote—Office of Colonial Secretary, £12,081:

MR. VOSPER: The office of the Colonial Secretary was one that deserved as much attention from this Committee as any other department, because this Minister controlled many of those departments and public institutions which were necessary in every civilised community, and which affected a large number of persons. Under his control were several large industrial establishments, having a considerable number of employees; and the Colonial Secretary, in framing his estimates for the current year, had shown more weakness than most of his Ministerial colleagues. The increases given to servants in his department did not shine in comparison with those given in other departments, and in fact a sense of injustice was felt in the various branches of this department. Employees were complaining of the way they were treated, as compared with other branches of the public service. Referring particularly to the vote for "Gaols, £25,905 12s. 6d.," he was anxious to see the Government amend the ticket-of leave regulations, the

present method being calculated only to increase crime and create criminals. This was a relic of our old criminal system. Many of these prisoners found themselves compelled to drift back to prison, and the result was that they were a perpetual charge on the State; whereas under a more rational penal system, many of those persons might be earning their own livelihood. It was not desirable that such antiquated rules should remain in force, and it was marvellous that these atrocious old rules had been kept alive so long. He was not pleading for extra comforts for criminals, but that men who were desirous of becoming useful citizens and reforming themselves should have a chance of turning over a new leaf. Referring next to the "Government Printing Establishment, £31,551," a motion of which he had given notice was still on the paper, and was kept well towards the bottom. In the meantime these Estimates would have been passed before that motion could be discussed, and this House might then talk till members were hoarse without affecting the position of these employees in the printing establishment during the current year. He again asked that the Government should do something to ameliorate the condition of those workmen. Their condition was worse than that in the Government Printing Offices of other colonies, and was on the whole inferior to any private printing business in Perth. There should be an immediate remedy, and he knew that if these Estimates were once passed, no matter what resolution this House might afterwards pass, it could not be carried into effect till next year. The time for rectifying injustice was the present; and he trusted the Government would consider the matter, and do something of a practical character as early as possible. Referring to the salaries in the Post and Telegraph Offices, if ever a body of employees had just ground for complaint, these men had. Among those who were granted increases in the public service, the average increase all round was lower in the Post and Telegraph Department than in any other branch of the public service. Striking an average in the increases to officers receiving fixed salaries in the different departments, it was found that in the Public Works Department the average increase was £21; in the Police Department (clerical branch), £21;

Education, £14; Harbour and Light, £17; Customs, which would be turned over to the Commonwealth next year, £15 10s.; Railways, £17; Treasury, £17; Mines, £20; Excise, £20; Postal Department, £9 14s. There was no attempt to do justice between the various branches in the Government service, as shown by these unequal increases, and he attributed it to the weakness of the Colonial Secretary. He knew the Ministers were put under pressure by the Treasurer, and that the Colonial Secretary had been more yielding than any other Minister; consequently his department suffered proportionately. Another feature, which was particularly pointed out in the report of the Royal Commission on the Post and Telegraph services, that the salaries paid in these branches of work were as a rule on too low a scale, particularly in the case of subordinate officers engaged in work of a responsible character. That was the case then and continued to be the case now, and year after year Estimates were passed by this House without discussion, and these anomalies continued. Then as if the report of that Commission were not enough in itself, we found the salaries were arranged by a board comprising heads of departments, and that the Post and Telegraph increases were prepared by that board.

MR. A. FORREST: They would be better under the Commonwealth.

MR. VOSPER: But why should we leave the task to the Commonwealth? Probably many months must elapse before the Commonwealth could give attention to these matters, and in the meantime these men would be placed at a disadvantage as compared with persons holding similar positions in the service of other colonies in the Commonwealth, the salaries paid here being on a lower scale. It would thus become the practice for the Postmaster General under the Commonwealth to send the worst men over here as a punishment, and the department here would be the most inefficient of all the departments in the Commonwealth. We should suffer seriously if we allowed this department to be taken over by the Commonwealth in its present condition; whereas if we raised the scale of pay for those men, and made it equal to that paid in other colonies, we should be doing our

duty to these employees. By doing nothing at present, the effect would be that the best men from the service here would go to the Eastern colonies for appointments, and the riff-raff would come here. He was informed that the increases which were prepared by the board comprising the heads of departments were strongly recommended by the board, also recommended by the Postmaster General and by the Minister; but, at the instance of the Premier, the Ministerial heads were told to curtail their estimates. The Colonial Secretary was the only one who carried out the Premier's instructions.

THE PREMIER: That was not so. It was not a matter of favour, but of necessity. The Colonial Secretary did not do it any more than other Ministers, so far as he knew.

MR. VOSPER: These Estimates did not support that statement.

THE PREMIER: In other departments there might be a few large amounts, which made the difference in average; but there had been £10 increases throughout the service.

MR. VOSPER: Evidently, to officers on fixed salary there had been much greater increases in other departments than in the Post Office. In the Railways there were 775 officers on fixed salary; and of these 55 received increases under £10, 226 received £10; 48, £15; 78, £20; 35, £25; 20, £30; 9, £35; 5, £40; 2, £45; and 7, £50. In the Attorney General's Department were 162 officers on fixed salary; and of these, none had received an increase under £10; 41 had received £10; 1, £15; 11, £20; 8, £25; 1, £30; 1, £40; and 4, £50. In the Customs Department were 126 fixed salary officers; and of these the increases were: 44 at £10; 15 at £15; 34 at £20; 3 at £30, and 2 at £40. In the Lands and Surveys the fixed salaried officers were 74. Of these the increases were: 26 at £10; 4, £15; 12, £20; 1, £25; and 1, £50. In the Harbour and Lights Department were 72 officers, of whom 25 received increases under £10; 1, £10; 2, £15; 2, £25; 2, £35; and 3, £50. In the Mines Department were 57 fixed salaried officers, of whom 1 received an increase under £10; 13, £10; 3, £15; 3, £20; 4, £25; 1, £30; 1, £35; 1, £45; and 3, £50. In the Treasury were 40

such officers, of whom 6 received £10; 3, £15; 15, £20; and 1, £25. In the Public Works Department were 21 officers, of whom 1 received £10; 2, £15; 1, £20; and 6, £25. In the Education Department were 18 officers, of whom 9 received £10; 4, £20; and 1, £30. In the Government Stores were 13 officers, whose increases were: 5, £10; 3, £15; 1, £20; 1, £25. In the Explosives Department were 10 fixed-salaried officers, of whom 1 received £10; 2, £20 and 1 £40. In the Police Department (clerical) were 9 officers, of whom 1 received £10; 1, £15, and 3, £25. In the Excise were 4 of these officers, and 3 received a £20 increase. In the Defence Department were 3 officers who did not receive any increase. The total figures for all these departments were as follow: Number of officers on fixed salaries, 1,384; and the increases amounted to £15,745, being an average of £16 7s.; whereas in the Post and Telegraphs Department, with 8,155 of such officers, the total was £8,155, or an average of £9 14s. per man. What could justify such a difference? The Postal Department had received little more than 50 per cent. of what was allowed to other departments, in spite of the fact that a Royal Commission had reported the Post Office could not be efficiently worked because of existing anomalies. Moreover, the Government had appointed a board of heads of branches in that department, and the board had recommended a basis of classification, which had been adopted by the Postmaster General and by the Minister.

THE PREMIER said he had never heard of such a board.

MR. VOSPER: Possibly not, but the Minister at the Premier's request, had ignored the board's recommendation.

MR. MOORHEAD: Why not stop these increases altogether?

THE PREMIER: If continued, they would ruin the country.

MR. VOSPER: No doubt the time would come when they must cease.

THE PREMIER: It had come already.

MR. VOSPER: Nevertheless, the departments could surely be levelled up or levelled down till justice were done. None could maintain the justice of giving other departments 50 per cent. higher increases than were given to the Postal

Department. He protested in pursuance of a promise he had made, and regretted he could not do more. Again, in the Postal Estimates were 39 persons enumerated as letter carriers in Perth, where there were only 25 letter carriers employed. That meant some men were working as mail-sorters, doing a higher class of work, but receiving letter carriers' salaries. That was merely a form of sweating. Unless these anomalies were removed before the establishment of the Commonwealth, this bad system would become an integral part of the federation, and would continue for an indefinite period.

MR. A. FORREST: The thanks of the community were due to the last speaker for publishing such an interesting return, showing clearly how increases had been allocated. For many years the postal officials had been badly paid. That might be said of other departments also: but Parliament must now consider how far these increases of salary were to go; because, if they continued, the civil service would eat up the whole revenue, and there must be a "black Wednesday," as in Victoria. Perhaps many civil servants of whom hon. members never heard better deserved increases than those whose cases came year after year before Parliament. Hon. members had voted themselves £16,000 by way of salary. He (Mr. Forrest) would forego his salary for this year if other hon. members would follow his example, and let this sum be distributed amongst postal officials.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member had supported the retrospective clause in the Payment of Members Bill.

MR. A. FORREST: And justifiably so. Taking the departments generally, there were too many officers. The work could be better done with fewer men at double pay; and the hours were too short.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There must be fewer men and higher salaries.

MR. A. FORREST: The chief clerk of the Colonial Secretary had been in the service 35 years, and had received a small increase of only £25, and yet a similar officer in the preceding department in the Estimates got a £50 increase. Such anomalies excited jealousy, and discouraged young officers.

MR. SOLOMON: Regarding asylums, certain officers had been promised £10

increases last year, and had received only £5; and this year there were no increases. Dr. Black's report, regarding hospitals, had not been compiled with sufficient care. For the country hospitals exact figures were given, but the report said the Perth Hospital returns had not been received, and the cost per head was stated at 6s., while the cost of the Fremantle Hospital was put down at 7s. 4½d. He (Mr. Solomon) had investigated the latter item, and found the real cost was 6s. 3½d. As the returns from country places had been procured those for Perth and Fremantle should have been available. The Central Board of Health were growing out of all proportion, and now cost over £2,000 a year, a quite unjustifiable tax on the community, considering there was no epidemic at present to be combated. During the plague outbreak, certain people had had their property destroyed, and their claims should be satisfied.

MR. MONGER: The Registrar of Titles had received a ten per cent. increase, whereas the salary of the Superintendent of Telegraphs, who occupied a much higher position, remained at the old figure. In one department there was some personal influence. If that Minister did not look after any department better than the Post Office, we should hear with satisfaction of his retirement from public office. Various recommendations were made by the Royal Commission, but few of them had been adopted. He was surprised the Colonial Secretary had allowed the Estimates of the Postal Department to come down in the manner in which they appeared. It seemed strange that the Registrar and Correspondence Clerk of the Colonial Secretary, who was an officer of many more years standing than the Colonial Secretary's own son in the department to which he belonged, was receiving a very small salary as compared with that received by the son of the Colonial Secretary. This registrar and clerk was, proportionately, the lowest paid officer of those occupying positions of a similar nature in the Government service.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. MONGER said he was absolutely right.

THE PREMIER: The registrar in the Premier's Department got only £180 a year.

MR. MONGER: That was a new office. Considering that for several years no increase had been given to the officer to whom he referred, and during that time the Colonial Secretary's own near relative had received a big increase, members wanted to be occasionally somewhat personal.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. MONGER: It was to be hoped that when the Supplementary Estimates came down members would find that consideration had been shown to some of those officers whom some considered to have been unfairly dealt with.

MR. CONNOR: In regard to the Rottneest establishment, one hoped the time would come when we should see the item struck off the Estimates. It would be a work of utility if this establishment at Rottneest were cut up, and the place made a great summer pleasure resort for the people living in the interior of the country. That would be of great benefit, and he was sure the people on the gold-fields would appreciate it. He had nothing to say as to the management and staff at Rottneest, because he believed them to be excellent, and the establishment was economically managed. Still, if the establishment were removed from Rottneest, the change would be of great benefit to the country, and it would also be a source of revenue; for land could be let on business leases, and if a good hotel were put up, it would be much patronised. The few blacks who at present were sent down to Rottneest could be treated as well in the North, and could be made the same use of there. Moreover, facilities for the children at present sent to the reformatory at Rottneest could be obtained here. It would be a good thing if a service of steam launches were brought into requisition for trips to Rottneest during the summer months.

MR. SOLOMON: A motion was carried in this House, but it was no good.

MR. CONNOR: The matter was well worthy the consideration of the Government. Another matter in relation to Rottneest was as to the Postal Department. He thought people connected with shipping companies should have the right to ring up the pilot station at Rottneest, and get information, so long as they were paying for the telephone. It was not necessary to sell the land,

which could be let on building leases and a good revenue obtained. A sports ground might be provided with a good hotel erected, and attractions be thus provided which would prevent visitors going round to Melbourne or Sydney. As to increases in the votes, it was very easy to propose them, but when the time came for decreases, the Government in power would find where the "shoe pinched." The working of the Observatory was not to be commended, and the reports given to the daily Press were about the silliest trash it was possible to imagine; and the gentleman at the head of the department should show a little more for the money he received, and for the honour of the position he held. In the matter of weather reports people depended entirely on the Queensland Meteorologist.

MR. MITCHELL: It was to be regretted any hon. member should have the idea that the Education vote was unnecessarily increased, seeing that the amount was only something like £14 per head. In the Post Office the increases amounted to £9 10s., or a little over, while in the Customs, under the same head, the amount was something like £25.

MR. WILSON: The Post and Telegraphs would be transferred to the Federal Government, and in view of the fact that this transfer might have to be made before the 1st July next, why did the Estimates provide for the whole twelve months' expenditure.

THE PREMIER: To the 1st July would be twelve months.

MR. WILSON: But if the Postal Service were to be transferred before the twelve months, why should the Committee vote expenditure for the full year.

THE PREMIER: The money would have to be paid, all the same.

MR. WILSON: In New South Wales, provision had been made for the Postal Department being taken over by the Federal Parliament before the expiration of twelve months.

THE PREMIER: They must provide for the same amount somewhere else on the Estimates.

MR. WILSON: When the Federal Parliament took over the Postal Department, they would take over the revenue and expenditure.

THE PREMIER: That was to be maintained on the same basis for five years.

MR. WILSON: It would not form a portion of our Estimates once the department passed from our control.

MR. MORAN: The Federal Government would probably leave the salaries as they were.

MR. WILSON: Some provision should be made for contingencies of that sort. He would like to know what action was going to be taken in regard to the Post Office Savings Bank.

THE PREMIER: The Government were going to introduce a Bill.

MR. WILSON: To separate the Savings Bank from the Post Office?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. WILSON: said he was glad to hear the Premier was going to bring in a Bill.

THE PREMIER: The Bill was nearly ready.

MR. WILSON: We had borrowed from the Savings Bank, and it was necessary to provide some means of separating the Post Office from the Savings Bank.

THE PREMIER: The Government were going to deal with that. The Federal Government had nothing to do with the Savings Bank.

MR. WILSON: It was satisfactory to have that reply. He indorsed the remark which had fallen from previous speakers as to the salaries in this department. He (Mr. Wilson) sat on the Royal Commission twelve months ago in regard to the Post and Telegraph Department, and the conclusion arrived at was that there were many deserving officers under the Postmaster General who were underpaid. There were many men who had been years in the service who were working well for the State, and the opinion of the Royal Commission was that perhaps a number of officers could be dispensed with. There were a number of officials who could be worked for an hour or two longer in the day and receive better pay. In that way some officers would have more work to do, but it would be better for the officers themselves and the country at large. He admitted that there would be a considerable difficulty in carrying out this arrangement. It would be an unpleasant duty, because those dispensed with naturally would have a grievance. At the same time it would

have a salutary effect on those clamouring for increases when they did not deserve them. It would show these officers that their "billets" were not life-long "billets"; that they had not a vested interest in the service, and if in the interests of the State it was necessary to dispense with their services, that could be done. This was a duty that ought to be undertaken in connection with this department before it was handed over to the Federal Government, because whoever took charge of this department under the Commonwealth would not have the same consideration for the employees as the local Government would have. Therefore, perhaps, in the interests of the employees themselves, if the Premier took the matter in hand and rearranged the department, increasing the salaries of deserving officers and dispensing with the services of others, it would be better for all concerned. If the matter were taken in hand now, there would be no heartburnings.

On motion by **MR. QUINLAN**, progress reported and leave given to sit again on the next Monday.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10-58 o'clock until the next Monday.