

Legislative Assembly.

TUESDAY, 21ST JULY, 1896.

New Member for Fremantle—Presentation of Address-in-Reply—Question: Leyton's Railway Crossing, North Fremantle—Question: Telephone Service at Fremantle—Question: Prevention of the Tick Pest—Motions: Leave of Absence—Municipal Institutions Act Amendment Bill; first reading—Motion: Return re Pastoral Leases—Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill; second reading—Coolgardie Goldfields Water Supply Loan Bill; second reading moved—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

NEW MEMBER FOR FREMANTLE.

MR. SPEAKER announced that he had issued a writ for the election of a member to serve for the Electoral District of Fremantle, in the place of the Hon. W. E. Marmion, deceased, and that from the return thereto it appeared that Mr. John Joseph Higham had been duly elected in pursuance of the said writ.

Mr. Higham was then introduced by the Premier and the Commissioner of Railways, and took and subscribed the oath required by law.

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS-
IN-REPLY.

At twenty minutes to five o'clock, Mr. Speaker, accompanied by members, proceeded to Government House to present the Address-in-Reply to the Speech of His Excellency the Governor; and having returned—

MR. SPEAKER reported that he had, with members of the House, waited upon His Excellency the Governor, and had presented to him the Address of the Legislative Assembly in reply to his opening Speech, agreed to by the House on Thursday last, and that His Excellency had been pleased to reply as follows:—

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE
LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

I receive with satisfaction the assurance

of your continued loyalty and affection to our most Gracious Sovereign.

I thank you for your Address-in-Reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament, and for the assurance that you will give the most careful consideration to all subjects that may be submitted to you, so that the permanent happiness and prosperity of this portion of Her Majesty's dominion may result from your endeavors.

Government House, 21st July, 1896.

QUESTION—LEYTON'S RAILWAY CROSS-
ING, NORTH FREMANTLE.

MR. MOSS, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways—Whether it is his intention, now that the duplication of the line is being made, to provide a passenger platform at North Fremantle, near the locality known as Leyton's Crossing, and thus give accommodation to about 500 persons residing in close proximity.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied that the Government had not decided to construct a passenger platform at Leyton's Crossing.

QUESTION—TELEPHONE SERVICE AT
FREMAN TLE.

MR. MOSS, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier—1, Whether it is the intention of the Government to connect North Fremantle Police Station with the telephone system? 2, If so, when? 3, Why the North Fremantle telephone exchange is closed at 11 p.m., and whether it is the intention of the department to place North Fremantle on the same footing as Fremantle and Perth as regards telephonic communication.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest) replied as follows:—1, Yes. 2, The connection will be made immediately. 3, As there are but 13 subscribers, it is not at present considered necessary to keep the office open later than 11 p.m. Should the necessity arise, the Department will be glad to consider the question of keeping open all night.

QUESTION—PREVENTION OF THE TICK
PEST.

MR. HOOLEY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of

Crown Lands. Whether he is aware that the colonies of New South Wales, Victoria, and South Australia are taking steps to prohibit the introduction of live cattle or green hides from Queensland, owing to the prevalence of the tick pest in that colony; and whether the Government intend taking similar action. Also, whether any steps are being taken to prevent cattle from the East Kimberley district being travelled overland into the West Kimberley and Northern districts of this colony.

MOTIONS—LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion of the Premier, leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to Mr. Travlen (the Greenough), and Mr. Connor (East Kimberley).

On the motion of Mr. Iillingworth, leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to Mr. Leake (Albany), Mr. R. F. Sholl (the Gascoyne), Mr. Keep (Pilbarra), Mr. H. W. Sholl (Roe-bourne), and Mr. Loton (the Swan).

MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by Mr. Moss, and read a first time.

MOTION—RETURN RE PASTORAL LEASES.

MR. HOOLEY, in accordance with notice, moved—"That a return be laid upon the table, showing the acreage held under pastoral lease from the Crown for the years 1889, 1890, 1891, 1892, 1893, 1894, and 1895, and the districts in which such leases were held." He said his object in moving for this return was to draw the attention of the House to the great falling-off that had taken place in one of the principal exports of the colony, that of wool. A few years ago, as honorable members were aware, people were eager to invest in sheep-farming in this colony, just as people were at present eager to invest in gold mining; and at that time a great many persons put their money into sheep stations in the back country, and endured severe privations in carrying on their operations. Large tracts of country were taken up in this way, and during some years, while things were prosperous, the pastoral lessees were able to pay the rent charged for their holdings; but a change of season

brought severe droughts, and the price of wool having fallen about the same period, these lessees found themselves unable, in many cases, to pay the rent that came due. A very large quantity of land had, in consequence, been forfeited by those who held it, and that land now lay unoccupied and unproductive. The only way in which this forfeited land could be again made useful, under terms of occupation, besides millions of other acres in the country, would be to alter the rents on pastoral leases so as to adapt them to the changed conditions under which pastoral occupation had now to be carried on. One honorable member, in referring to this subject a few days ago, had suggested that it would be well to allow such country to be occupied even without a rental, so as to make some use of it; but he (Mr. Hooley) could not go so far as that. Comparing this pastoral land with other land of a similar character in South Australia, he said that a rental which was sufficient in South Australia should, in his opinion, be sufficient here for such country; and by lowering the rental here to that standard, these great areas of country might be again taken up, and settlers be enabled to conserve water, to fence, and otherwise to improve the land for increasing its carrying capabilities. He hoped the Government would consider this, in view of the large amount of country that had been forfeited, and which could not at present be made use of at such rental as was now charged.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson) said the Government would be happy to have the return prepared, and would lay it on the table as soon as it was ready.

Motion put and passed.

AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest): The object of this bill, sir, is to make the Agricultural Bank Act of 1894 a little more liberal than it was considered desirable at the time to make it. As honorable members will notice, the alterations proposed in the Bill are not very large, but they are important. In the first place, under the Agricultural Bank Act of 1894 it

was questionable whether the Manager of the Bank was enabled, by the terms of the Act, to take security other than the land that was to be improved. I myself thought at the time that there would be no objection to his doing so, and that no harm, but rather good, would result. Still there was a little vagueness in that provision, and there arose a question as to whether the Manager was legally entitled to take as security any other than the land which was to be improved. Sub-section 2 of this Bill gives the necessary power to the Manager to take as security for any advance that he makes, in addition to the security of the lands to be improved, such other security of freehold or leasehold properties of any kind as may be tendered to him, including lands under special occupation, conditional purchase, or pastoral lease under the Crown. It seems to me this will be a very valuable provision, and will enable persons to obtain loans from the Bank with much greater facility than they can obtain them without this clause. And the reason why we propose to give the power of taking as security a pastoral lease is that it very often happens a farm is situated within a pastoral leasehold, and the value of the farm is to some extent affected by the pastoral land around it; and so we propose to allow the Manager of the Bank not only to take as security the land that is actually to be improved, but also any other land that is freehold or leasehold which the owner may have to offer. Sub-section 2 of Clause 2 of the Bill makes two important alterations in the existing Act. At the present time the Manager of the Bank is able only to give an advance to the extent of one-half of the value of the improvements that the owner makes; but by this Bill the Manager will be allowed, if he thinks it advisable, to make advances equal to three-fourths of the value of the improvements that will have to be made. Of course, honorable members will understand that it is to be discretionary with the Manager as to whether he will make these larger advances. He need not recommend such a large loan as three-fourths of the value of the work to be done—that is, leaving one-fourth of the improvements for the borrower to make at his own expense—but under

circumstances that the Manager considers favorable, and will justify him in doing it, he is to be empowered to recommend that three-fourths of the value of the improvements to be made should be lent to the owner of the land. Sub-section 2 also empowers the Manager to lend to any one person £800 as a maximum, instead of, as in the original Act of 1894, limiting the advances to £400. It is found that there are cases in which it is advisable to lend an amount larger than £400. There are many very good men in the colony who are farming on a considerable scale, and to whom this increase of the amount will be of advantage. I see no reason at all why the sum should be restricted to £400 as in the original Act. Clause 3 of this Bill provides that the improvements to be made shall not be so restricted as in the original Act. As honorable members will recollect, in the original Act improvements were restricted to three kinds—clearing, cultivating, and ring-barking—these being the only three things the Manager could advance upon, whereas in this Bill we propose to include fencing, draining, wells of fresh water, reservoirs, buildings, and any improvements which, in the opinion of the Manager of the Bank, increase the agricultural or pastoral capabilities of the land. That widens the scope of the Act to a very considerable extent. In the beginning, of course, we desired to be very careful, not only that this Act should pay its way, but also that there should be no risk about it. Indeed, it was a sort of innovation, this lending of money to agricultural people, and this House was naturally careful as to limiting the kind of improvements which should be advanced upon. As time goes on we shall find, I think—hon. members and the country will also find—that this is not such a dangerous Bill as some anticipate, and that it is a productive one. It has already been productive, and it will be more productive, and do still more good in the country. I go further and say this, that we have to risk some money for the purposes the Bill is designed to carry out. For my part, there is no class of improvements or developments, no class of work, that I would rather risk some money in than in trying to better the condition of the people on the soil, and add to the resources of the country. It

seems to me that, even if we have some loss, the country would have value for its money in the advantage that would be given to the colony. I have prepared a return showing the operations of this Act during the last year, from the 30th June, 1895, to the 30th June, 1896. These operations are not very extensive, I am bound to say—I have said it before—but no one can say that this Act has been a failure. I altogether deny that it has been a failure. It has been productive of a very great deal of good; and, considering its restricted operation, due to the carefulness of the Legislature, which I altogether appreciate and agree with, but which has prevented the Act having much scope, I think we need not feel disappointed with the results. Under the improvements and additions that we propose it will have a very much larger scope, and I have no reason to think otherwise than that the amendments will have a satisfactory result. I believe the Bank will be carried on without expense to the country, and that it will be a vast benefit to the agricultural community. Now, up to the present time there have been 188 loans approved. Hon. members may know that a loan can only be approved by the Governor after it has had the recommendation of the Manager of the Bank. The Manager cannot lend any money unless the loan is approved by the Governor, and the Governor must have the recommendation of the Manager before he gives his approval. This is, I think, a very effective method for giving security to the public. As I have said, 188 loans have been approved, amounting to £18,105, and 132 of these loans have been fully or partly paid by the Government. The amount of interest collected has been £188 4s. 2d., and application fees have amounted to £196. Roughly, about £400 has been received in fees and interest. The arrears of interest due to 30th June, which is not long past, as hon. members are aware, amounted to £7 15s. 6d. This shows that the people who have borrowed this money are not people who are borrowing only to try and leave the colony, but are borrowing the money under the careful supervision of the Manager; and they have paid the interest when it was due, for I do not think that the £7 15s. 6d. is worth

taking into account, as it may be paid up at any time in a day or two. What has been done by lending that money is the next question which hon. members and the people of the colony would like to get an answer to. Well, we have cleared 4,286 acres, and we have ploughed 2,468 acres, and have ring-barked 6,358 acres. I do not think this is a very bad record for this small institution that is making its way, considering the counter attractions which our goldfields offer to people who might settle on land. At the present time people are running after gold in one direction and another, and are not anxious to stick to farming. There is a good deal of hard work about farming, so that I consider the Bank's returns are very satisfactory. The figures show that the expenses of the Bank are small, £1,007 7s. 9d. having been the expenditure for the year ending 30th June, 1896. It seems to me that when we are able to lend more money under the enlarged scope of this Bill, the returns will cover the expenses of management—I hope so, at any rate. Of course, hon. members know that, under the constitution of the Bank, the repayments of loans do not commence for some time—I think borrowers have five years from the time they obtain their loan before they commence to repay—so that in the meantime all that we shall get is interest on the money. The House is also aware that the Government, taking advantage of the cheap rates for money ruling at the present time, have reduced the rate of interest on the Bank's loans, dating from the 1st July, from six per cent. to five. I think we have shown that we are pretty fair lenders of money to the agricultural community. At any rate, we do not stick to a high rate of interest, as soon as the rate at which we can borrow comes down. I cannot see, myself, any reason why this Bank should not be a great institution in this colony, and a paying institution as well. All I ask is that hon. members will give it a little time. We are only beginning with the Bank, and, in the improvements proposed in this Bill, which I have suggested to the Government, and which have the entire approval of my colleagues, and, I may say also, the Manager of the Bank, I think we shall find that it will be a very useful institution, and a far better

one than it is at the present time.

MR. RANDELL: Before the hon. the Premier sits down, will he please tell the House whether it is contemplated, in proposing to loan money on buildings and fencing, to require that the security shall be insured?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest): I am not able to answer the hon. gentleman in that respect. It has been pointed out to me, by a member of the Ministry, that fences and buildings accepted as security ought to be insured, but I do not think much of the point. It seems to me that the Government are the best insurers of their own property, and I do not think there will be any great risks in the security we propose to accept. Still, that would be a matter for the Manager to deal with in each case. I agree that in some parts of the country, where bush fires are more prevalent, it might be well to have the property insured; but, on the whole, I think we had better take the risk. The matter has not been brought under the notice of the Manager, and I think he will be pretty careful to look after himself in this matter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The particular objection I have to this Bill is that the fourth word in the title of the Bill is wrong. It should read, "A Bill to Repeal the Agricultural Bank Act 1894," and this would be the most successful amendment that could possibly be made in this Bill. We have had 12 months' experience of the Bank, and the Premier has placed before us the most favorable view that can be taken of it, with the result that the loans show an absolute loss of £616 11s. 3d. Now, if we are to assist the great agricultural interest, I would very much rather assist farmers by giving a direct bonus for some product rather than support the Bank, which is a mere subterfuge. No man gets any benefit from this Bank, because he cannot get any loan from the Bank which he could not obtain elsewhere. [No, no.] I say borrowers can get these advances elsewhere. Now, as to the alterations which the Premier desires to make in the original Act, I have no very grave objections to them, because I feel that Ministers have not been convinced that this Bank is a failure. They will not be convinced of it until it has been

demonstrated to the full. The amendments that we made in the original Bill when it was going through the House, at the suggestion of hon. members on this side, are the amendments which the Government blame for the failure of the Bill. That it has failed is obvious. No one who has heard the statement from the Ministerial benches can put any other construction upon the history of the Bank. The Act which created it has ignominiously failed, as we said on this side of the House that it would fail, and this amending Bill will ignominiously fail also. The Bill does not possess the essential elements of life that can possibly endure, and consequently it is bound to fail, come what will. There is one thing, however, that is worth notice, and that is that the Ministry, in the selection of the Manager of the Bank, certainly secured, I think, the best possible man that could be placed at the head of this institution. [MR. SIMPSON: He has nothing to do there.] One thing is certain—that if any man less capable than the present Manager had been placed at the head of this Bank, we should have been launched into very serious consequences indeed. Now, I have it from the Manager himself, who is a pretty good authority, that a gentleman went to him, and asked him for an advance of £400 upon his property. The advance would possibly have been made had not the Manager asked the intending borrower what he would do with the money, and the reply was—"I am going to clear out of the country." I say that the wisdom which has been manifested in the selection of the Manager is proved by this incident, for he was too 'cute for this individual, who did not get the advance. It is probable that the care which the Manager has taken to secure good security has to some extent caused the restricted operations of the Bank, but I do not think that too much care has been manifested to protect the advances of the State. Now, what is the policy of the Government in regard to this Bank? They say that they can borrow the money at three per cent., allow one per cent. for sinking fund, and loan the money at five per cent. The sum of £100,000 was set aside as the capital of the Bank, and we find that, while only £18,000 has been loaned, the expenses of management

amount to over £1,000 per annum. What assistance is the Bank to the class whom it is intended to benefit, seeing that they could borrow elsewhere at a little higher rate of interest, and that the improvements have to be made before the money is advanced? [MR. A. FORREST: You would not lend them the money at all, neither would anyone else.] I should be very glad to lend it, only that I have not got the money, unfortunately. I have no objection to the amending Bill, simply because, if it is passed, the Government will be better satisfied that the Bank is a failure. The only amendment that I wish to see adopted is that the word "amend" should be struck out of the title.

MR. A. FORREST: I should like to say a few words upon the remarks that have fallen from the hon. member for Nannine. Anyone who knows anything about Western Australia will be aware that the hon. member knows little or nothing about farming. I think that the Government are to be congratulated on bringing in the Bill, and establishing the Agricultural Loan Bank in 1894. It is well known that, at the time this Bill was passed through Committee, there was great opposition to it, and many clauses with reference to improvements were struck out. Now, I say that the great drawback in the Act of 1894 was the small maximum of the amount that could be lent, and the limited scope of the improvements which could be accepted as security. Many of our best people are farming on a large scale, and the amount to which the Manager was limited to lend to a single borrower was simply absurd. If a man who has 200 acres is entitled to borrow £400, why should not a man who has 400 acres cleared get £800? The hon. member for Nannine laid great stress upon the statement that the farmers could borrow elsewhere. I deny it. I say that if a farmer tramped the whole of the city of Perth, visiting every financial house and bank in the place, he would not get any money to improve his property. That is a fact that will not be disputed by anyone who takes any interest in the progress of the colony. I am sure that if a man asked me to lend him money for agricultural improvements, I should say No, although I should be very glad to assist the right class of people to get on the land. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: No; but

you would lend the country's money.] It is almost impossible to get people of energy and industry to go on the soil. The record of what the Bank has done is a very satisfactory one, that 4,286 acres have been cleared, and 2,468 acres ploughed as the result of the advances of the Bank. This is a matter for congratulation, as this land might never have been brought under cultivation if it had not been for the Bank. I agree with the hon. member for Perth that the houses that are accepted as security should be insured: this can be done at a very small rate by arrangement with the Bank Manager. As for the fencing, I think that settlers can be trusted to look after their own property, as fences are more easily saved than houses, which might be burned down, and it would be a loss to the State if they were destroyed while they were mortgaged to the Crown. I am sorry that, after my return from the old country, I should find that some hon. members in the House have not liberal views. The hon. member for Nannine ought to travel. He would find that the great question in England, and all over the world, is how to settle people on the soil. People are leaving the soil for something that pays better than farming, and it is an important matter with statesmen how to keep them on the ground. In England, at the present time, the question is engaging much attention, and the farmers were being helped in every possible way. Here in this colony, where there is a large population on the goldfields which cannot grow their own food, some hon. members want to import everything. Why not help the farmers to cultivate their land, and add to the wealth of the country? The uncultivated land is an eye-sore to everyone who travels through the colony. I am sure that the hon. member for Geraldton in travelling from Geraldton to Perth must regret to see so much land uncultivated. We should help forward agriculture, even if we make a loss of £600 a year. What is it if we make a loss of £6,000, if we get 6,000 additional acres under the plough? I am sure that we shall be doing a benefit to mankind.

MR. THROSSELL: So far from agreeing with the opposition of the hon. member for Nannine to the Bill, I only regret that the measure does not go

further in the direction of similar legislation adopted in the other colonies, and which makes a provision for advances up to £5,000 upon large holdings. I think the present limit proposed in the Bill offers an inducement to a man to split up his estate, or, if necessary, to make it over to his children in order to obtain a loan largely in excess of the maximum authorised in the Bill. The Bill does not provide against that, nor do I see any objections to it. I am sorry that the Government does not at once make provision for larger advances, because every increase in the agricultural development means an increase in the producing resources of the colony. The hon. member for Nannine says that farmers can borrow outside the banks at higher rates of interest, but it is certain that a farmer cannot afford 8 or 9 per cent.; neither can he run the risk of being called upon to pay up an overdraft to a bank at short notice when possibly there may be a bad season. The only safe borrowing for a farmer is to get loans from a State bank on long terms, with easy instalments of repayment and at a low rate of interest. I am glad that there is such a simple measure introduced into Parliament, which is intended to do so much good as the Bill before the House. I think, however, that some provisions should have been inserted to make a distinction between the freeholder and the leaseholder. I think that it is an anomaly that the freeholder of 500 acres should not be able to obtain a larger loan than the man whose only interest in 500 acres of conditionally-purchased land is that he has paid the first year's rental of £12 10s. I do not think that that is quite right. I think that the freeholder should have been placed in a better position, because his security is better than that of the conditional purchaser. I hope before the session is closed that we shall be able to deal with the question of large estates in one form or another, either by purchase, advances, or by taxation; but I do not suppose that the Premier, with all his courage, will care to face taxation. I do not see why the owner of country property should not be able to borrow Savings Bank funds the same as the owner of city property; yet there is no organisation in this colony from which the farmer may obtain money on fair

terms, except the loan bank we are now dealing with. I only hope that the Government will have the courage of their opinions, and will make their arrangements so as to encourage the development of large estates. There would be nothing novel in doing that. The principle is adopted in the other colonies, in one of which a man can borrow £5,000 on a large estate without being asked what he intends to do with the money.

MR. CLARKSON: I am sorry that the hon. member for Nannine showed so much opposition to this Bill. Well, I can assure the hon. member that he is making a mistake. I think that every hon. member in this House should be anxious to see agricultural development in the colony. To any country it is a matter of vital importance to see its lands cultivated. We know that agriculturists, if they are left to themselves, are likely to get swamped before men of small means get fairly under way. I am willing to admit that the Bank Act has worked very satisfactorily in the past, and I think that the amendments which are now submitted to us will be very beneficial. It is quite true that agriculturists may be able to borrow money on freehold security, but they cannot get any advances on leaseholds. If it is possible for the Government to lower the rate of interest even below 5 per cent., cheap money would prove to be a very great aid to the development of the agricultural lands of the colony. I do not think that the insurance of the buildings and fences on the mortgaged farms is very necessary. As far as wire fencing is concerned it does not run much risk from fire. I think these matters may be left in the hands of the Manager of the Bank, who is a practical man, and well acquainted with all the details of the case. I think we may safely leave these considerations in his hands. I hope that the House will pass this little Bill, and that it may be a great help to the agriculturist, and will make the Bank a success.

MR. GEORGE: I am going to support the Government in regard to this Bill. I do not think anything of a loss of £600 per annum that is devoted to helping the farming community. If the loss were £6,000 per annum, and the Bank should prove to be of real service to the produc-

ing interest, I think that the country could bear to lose the money. I am certain that we have been very fortunate in the selection of the Manager of the Bank, and that the amendments which are now proposed in the constitution of the Bank will make it a great success. I do not think that in the matter of legislation of this kind we should criticise too narrowly; provided that we lend on good security—that is all we have to ask. So far as the finding of money for the loans is concerned, if the Public Works Department will forbear from placing buildings of extravagant design and great cost in the wilderness, and place in their stead buildings of suitable design, and erected at moderate expense, there will be plenty of money from the savings of that department to find the loans for the farmers. I hope that the Premier will bear with me while I ask him to supplement the good work that he is doing in connection with this Bill by making the railway to the Williams, and thus earning the undying gratitude of the people in that district of the colony.

MR. RANDELL: I am sure we are all pleased to see that the hon. member for West Kimberley has returned from his mission to the old country with his ideas enlarged, and I hope we shall derive great advantage in this House from his experience. I am very glad to see him back, if only to keep the Ministry straight. As regards the Bill now before the House, it has been said that the Agricultural Bank Act is not such a dangerous measure as some people thought it would be. Although deprecated in some quarters, I believe it was the honest desire of the Ministry to promote the good of the agricultural community, and as a further measure in this direction the Amending Bill deserves the support of the House. This amendment is for the purpose of increasing the scope of the original Bill for the special benefit of the farming class, and for the good of the country at large. I am sure we shall all rejoice to see it amended so that it will be productive of much more good than it has been hitherto. I am glad to hear that the cultivation of so many acres has been attributed to the operations of the Agricultural Bank, and I hope rightly attributed. I gather that there have been

188 loans approved, to the value of £18,000, and that £7,000 have been advanced. I presume there are no undue difficulties put in the way of those who wish to borrow from the Bank. I am sure this House approves of every precaution being taken in making enquiries concerning securities; at the same time, I suppose there are no undue (I use the word again) restrictions placed in the way of obtaining a loan, such as were instanced by the hon. member for Sussex. Perhaps he can explain a matter which appeared to be very mysterious. I am also pleased to hear that a large increase has taken place in the area under cultivation and ring-barked. I think these improvements must obtain almost unanimous concurrence from this House. Some features in the Bill have been objected to strongly, and amongst others by the hon. member for the Swan, who is possessed of considerable knowledge in this direction, and whose opinions in all matters connected with agriculture, as well as finance, carry great weight in this House. I asked just now, before the Premier sat down after moving the second reading, as to whether insurance was contemplated. The fencing I had in my mind was not wire fencing, which, I admit, it is not so necessary to protect from danger by fire, and even if a fire occurred the fence could be repaired without difficulty. The disability seems to occur with other kinds, such as post-and-rail and picket fencing. I think, however, discretion in this respect may safely be left in the hands of the Manager of the Bank, who possesses a great deal of power at present, though of course subject to the control of the Ministry and the Governor-in-Council, who will be careful to exercise their discretion, and will be sure not to recommend any loans unless the security offered is such as can be safely taken by the country. I do not quite understand what special value can attach to some of these securities mentioned in Clause 2—I presume in some cases very little, as in the case of special occupation or pastoral leases or conditional purchase from the Crown, and I suppose in these cases only from the length of time they have been in possession. I suppose, however, the Manager will take all these things into careful consideration, and refuse all securities unless they are really valuable. I

notice that the maximum of advance has been increased from £400 to £800, and I think no one will raise any objection to this; if the security offered is of sufficient value, there can be no reason why the amount should not be more than £800; but I suppose that the Government, in thus limiting the operations of the Act, are aiming at giving the benefit to the small producer. I heard something about £5,000 from the hon. member for Northam. I was not able to follow him entirely, but I certainly think the Act contemplates no such purpose. The Bill is considerably liberalised by an inclusion in the 3rd clause of certain improvements upon which security can be raised, namely, fencing, draining, wells of fresh water, reservoirs, buildings, and "any improvement," which is a very comprehensive phrase. I intend to vote for the Bill, because I believe it will extend the operations of the Act; and though the amount of the loans may not be very great, I think the Bank will benefit all concerned to a wider extent. I believe we all desire that agriculture should be aided in every possible way that is right and reasonable. The hon. member for the Murray said that even if it involved a loss of £6,000 a year this House ought to support the measure, but I do not agree with him. The Government, in introducing the original Act, did not contemplate a loss; I think the Premier said it would pay its way. If, as the hon. member wishes, we want to give the settlers assistance, we should go about it in another way, and give it directly. I should prefer that this Bank be carried on not at a loss, and if we wish to help, let us be straightforward and give a bonus or help in other directions. I am quite sure the Government is only too willing to sanction everything for the benefit of the agriculturists and pastoralists, and make it as easy as possible for them. I really think it is desirable to do so, because in many cases a man who gives security, to the extent of three-quarters value places himself in a very difficult position; in fact, I really think it would be to the best interests of the farmers or borrowers if the amount were lowered to a half. I have drawn attention to these few matters because I really desire to see this Agricultural Bank a success. The hon. member for Nannine said if the £100,000 were advanced there

would be an income of only £1,000. I did not hear the hon. member refer to fees.

THE PREMIER: It is much more than that.

MR. RANDELL: I hope the man who comes to borrow will not be subject to heavy fees. I shall be very glad if the operations can be facilitated and made more beneficial in the interests of the farming class. I shall support the second reading.

MR. SIMPSON: I purpose supporting the second reading. There was an understanding at the time the first Bill was introduced that the manager would necessarily have large discretionary powers. The Government were very fortunate in their selection, and my confidence in the operations of the bank have been largely concentrated in the integrity and ability of the gentleman who controls it. Of course, it is a good thing in a land where, for the benefit of the producer, over £100,000 is obtained through the Customs, to advance money on security equal to three-fourths, and that the borrower can practically secure £7 or £8 per ton for his chaff. I consider he is doing very well. Although I admire the hon. member for West Kimberley, who has just returned from his European tour, I fully recognise that, if the poor, honest, indigent farmer approached him for the money which he says he is quite prepared to advance to the extent of three-quarters of the value, the farmer would obtain it. I think the hon. member is as well able to look after his own advantage as anyone. The suggestion of the hon. member for Perth as to insurance is a reasonable one, for in the event of a fire destroying the premises, a man would get his advance back again. Speaking of the measure generally, I do not think we can say the Bank is a failure; we really can form no conclusion as to this within four or five years, and I agree with the hon. member for Perth that, if it is to be a failure, the loss should be small. Certainly, the trend of legislation all over the world is in the direction of mortgaging the credit of the State to settle people on the land. The hon. member for West Kimberley was not particularly happy in his allusion to home politics, for the Rating Bill has been

framed more for the benefit of the landlords than the tenants.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): As one of the very strongest advocates of this Bill, I must say something in support of it, although it is a Government measure. It is quite necessary that something should be done to further amend the original Act and liberalise its conditions; and for that reason it has been decided to bring in this Bill during the present session. I think it will be admitted by all that the object which the Government had in introducing this measure was not that it might be a money-making Bill, but that it should assist the farming and pastoral industries; and although it has been pointed out that producers receive assistance from different sources, still it will be admitted that, in assisting the farmers to develop the lands of the colony, this work will be lasting. There is no doubt that we reap large advantages from our goldfields; yet at the same time we should enable the people to produce what is required for consumption on these goldfields. With regard to the conditions under which these loans are made, I think that, if the original provisions embodied in the Bill introduced to this House in 1894 had been allowed to stand, there would have been no necessity to bring in this amendment, and the Bill would have been a very much greater success than it has proved; although it has not been a failure, yet it has not been availed of to the extent anticipated, and the reasons are not far to seek. Many of these conditions were proposed by the Government in 1894, and if they had been allowed to stand, the Bill would have proved a greater success. Now that the amount has been increased, and the security liberalised, I think the Act will work very satisfactorily in the future. I am speaking from experience when I say that the Act has worked very well even under present conditions, and many men have been induced to take the advantages offered. It is really a poor man's Bill, to enable anyone to take up land as a leaseholder and clear it. I know of one instance where a poor man started with £200 or £250, and, because of the assistance given, out of a total of 130 acres he cleared 50 for cultivation, and enclosed the whole area with a

very substantial fence. The improvements on his property are considerable, and he is one of those farmers who have availed themselves of the benefits of the Agricultural Bank. I hope the result of the amendment will be satisfactory in the shape of a larger development, and, as a consequence, larger production. With reference to the valuation of the security, viz., three-quarters of the value of the loan, that is left entirely to the manager, and, no doubt, he will be very careful to see that the security is sufficient. In no instance have we found the security insufficient, and as he has been so careful in the past there is no doubt he will execute the same vigilance in the future. The Bill will be safe in his hands. The hon. member for Northam referred to the condition of the leaseholder as compared with the freeholder, and thought the freeholder should have the preference; but the man who pays only £12 10s. for a leasehold is placed on the same footing, and this is the principle of the Bill, namely, to help men to take up more leases, and as far as I know the Bill is intended to encourage leaseholders as well as freeholders. We should encourage the leaseholder as well as the freeholder. The question of fees was mentioned. I think last session transfer fees were reduced from £2 to £1, and that is certainly quite sufficient, taking into consideration the payment of the per cent. on the loan. Of course, there is danger that the present manager will not always have control of the Bank, but, if necessary, future restrictions could be framed to protect the State. I can assure hon. members that the advantages offered by the Bank have been very great in the past, and I believe in the future this measure will become very useful indeed.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson): I have no intention of prolonging this debate, but there are two points I should like to refer to. One is the advance on the three-quarters basis. I certainly do not like the look of that very much myself, but on further consideration I would point out to hon. members that the enlarged scope of this Bill includes not only improvements already made, but the manager may take security on other lands besides the land on which

the loan has been raised; that is, he can take other lands or tenements as security in addition to that subject to the loan. Another question is that of insurance. It seems at the first a very grave omission, but, on the other hand, a heavy premium has to be paid by someone. Why should the occupant be protected from blame in case of fire? Why should not the Government become their own underwriters? The question of insurance, although it looks at first sight of great magnitude, has really not much in it.

MR. COOKWORTHY: During the recess I had occasion to interview the Premier with regard to the narrow restrictions imposed under the Act. It is practically impossible for many men to get an advance. One man in particular told me that he built a house, sunk a well of fresh water, planted a garden of fruit-trees, constructed cattle-yards, and made other improvements, besides having cleared the ground. This man found out that all these improvements were not within the scope of the Bill, and he could not get an advance from the Manager, although he had made large improvements. I congratulate the Government on introducing this measure. I really think the benefit of the enhanced scope will be very great. Previously, there was very great difficulty in stocking, for it costs a good deal of money to build cattle-yards, although these were not included as improvements. I think the amendment will be of great benefit to the farming class.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest): I beg to move that the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed, and the Bill read a second time.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest): I beg to move that the House shall go into committee on this Bill to-morrow.

Agreed to.

At 18 minutes past 6 o'clock, p.m., the Speaker left the Chair.

At 7.30 p.m., the Speaker resumed the Chair.

COOLGARDIE GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY LOAN BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest): Mr. Speaker: Sir,—In rising to move the second reading of this very important Bill, I may say that I do so with a very great amount of pleasure, but at the same time with a full sense of the responsibility that is cast upon me. First of all I should like to thank hon. members of this House who have deferred giving an opinion on this matter, at my special request, until I had the opportunity which I have to-night of placing the whole matter before them. To the hon. member for Perth (Mr. Randell) my special thanks are due for the way in which he dealt with this matter, and his willingness to defer forming an opinion upon it until he had heard all that the Government had to say in regard to it. The same observation applies to many other hon. members of this House who have spoken upon the subject. Of course it is not possible for the Government to influence hon. members in regard to when they should speak upon a measure, but it seems to me that before any extravagant terms are used in regard to the action of the Government in bringing in a Bill of this sort, and in urging it upon the country, it is only right, reasonable, and fair that the Government should have an opportunity of placing their views fully before the House. Although I have introduced a good many measures into this House during the last six years, I have never had a better case to place before hon. members than I have to-night. If I am not able to convince hon. members as to the wisdom of the policy of the Government in regard to this measure, it must be due, I am sure, to my own inadequate advocacy rather than to the merits of the case. The Government desire to give the fullest information to hon. members in regard to this matter. We have no desire to hurry it through the House. The more it is discussed here and throughout the country, the more everything in regard to it is investigated, the better the Government will be pleased.

PROPOSE ONLY TO DEAL WITH THE QUESTION FROM A BUSINESS POINT OF VIEW.

I may say at once that I do not intend to deal with this question of supplying water to the Coolgardie and Yilgarn goldfields from any other point of view than that of a business one. I hope to be able before I sit down to-night—and I am afraid I will have to weary hon. members to some extent—to prove that the work is necessary, that the scheme proposed by the Government is the best scheme that can be adopted, and that the scheme will pay. If I can show hon. members of this House, and the people of this colony, that these three things are proven—(1), that the work is necessary; (2), that the scheme is the best that can be framed; (3), that it will pay—then I think I have the right to expect that the Government should receive the support of both sides of the House. First, then, as to whether this water supply is necessary. I do not think it requires very much argument to prove this point. No one probably will get up in his place in this House and say that the water question is not the great question that requires solving in regard to the Coolgardie and Yilgarn goldfields. Everyone I think agrees in regard to this. If anyone, however, has any doubt on this point I should only wish that he had travelled as I did over the Coolgardie goldfields in December last. There was not sufficient water for crushing anywhere. Water was being sold at the condensers at from fourpence to sixpence a gallon. It cost a pound to water my five horses. I do not know what small sum it would cost—I can hardly calculate it—for doing the same thing if the scheme we propose were carried out. It certainly would not cost more than a penny or twopence to do what cost a pound in December last. What did I see during my visit to those goldfields in December last? Absence of water everywhere. I found a numerous population of hard-working men, as dirty as ever they could be. No water to wash in—scarcely enough to drink. At one place called Bardoc, I got there early in the forenoon, and found about fifty men waiting at a small inn, and I asked if there was any water. They said that there was not, and that they did

not expect any till evening, when a team was coming in with water, but when it would actually arrive they did not know. They were in the greatest straits for want of water to drink. The only mines at work on the goldfields at that time were three at Kalgoorlie and one at Broad Arrow, at a mine called Hill End, and they scarcely had sufficient water to go on with the work on that mine, which has turned out some of the richest quartz in the district. They had to carry salt water several miles in order to crush with it, and then could only obtain a small quantity at very great cost. Things are very little better at the present time on the fields than they were in December, excepting that there has been some rainfall, but I have no doubt that anyone who visits the Coolgardie goldfields in December next will find very little difference as compared with the state of things I experienced there last year. I will ask this House if this state of things is to continue. Are the large centres of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie to depend on condensed water at twopence or threepence per gallon for ever? These two large towns, if they develop in the way we all hope to see them develop, will want at least three-quarters of a million gallons each for domestic purposes; and if the population we expect goes there, and the mines prosper, as we believe they will, how are these three-quarters of a million gallons of good fresh water to be obtained for the towns of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie? Are they to be obtained by condensing even at a half-penny a gallon? Is that to be the state of affairs that is to go on for ever? Is that to be the permanent water supply for that country? I hope not. No stock could be kept in all that territory in December last. I did not see a single hoof except it was round a condenser, or a small number of sheep kept for killing purposes. I did see, however, and it was painful to see it, horses left on the roads tired and jaded, left to die in the wilderness, and it was only at the Government tanks, where the water lasted—and there were very few of them—that these animals could get a drink. It was only while there was water in the Government tanks that there was any chance of these poor animals getting a drink, as no one else, ex-

cept the Government, would give them a drink for nothing. There were no stock paddocks—not a single stock paddock in all that country; and if there had been there was no water to sustain the stock, unless owners were prepared to pay for water at 4d. or 6d. a gallon. The stock required for the meat supply was sent up by rail, as far as the railway ran, and was killed as quickly as possible.

INTERIOR OF COLONY SUBJECT TO DROUGHTS.

There is no doubt about it—I speak from experience, and there are other experienced men in this House who will support me—that there is in the eastern portion of this colony, and in Central Australia generally, a very small and uncertain rainfall. It is an absolute certainty that it is a droughty country. We do not want anyone to tell us that. Those of us who have lived here, and had any experience in travelling in the interior of Australia, know that as we go to the eastward, when we get over the coastal ranges, the rainfall decreases. Even in our own eastern districts, at our very doors, we know there is almost always 10 inches difference in the rainfall as compared with the rainfall in the Darling Ranges, and as you go further eastward we know from experience that the rainfall is more uncertain and in smaller quantity. Some people will say, and have said whilst this matter has been under discussion, that we can depend upon the rainfall in the interior for the water supply on the goldfields. Have we not had seven years' experience of Southern Cross and four years' experience of Coolgardie? We know with what result—that there is not a single drop of fresh water at Southern Cross unless it is caught from the heavens, or unless it is condensed, and if you catch all the rain it is possible to secure there will not be nearly enough. During the seven years that we have known Southern Cross, the rainfall has not averaged more than five inches, and we know from experience the tanks that we have had constructed are never full, that the tank at the "13 mile" from Southern Cross, which has a good catchment, has never been half full, and it has been constructed two or three years. The tank at New Zealand Gully

has never been half full, and all along the line, although these tanks have been constructed with splendid catchments, in very few instances have they been altogether full. The average rainfall of the interior is not likely to exceed five inches. It is five inches so far as our information goes, and it is not likely year by year to exceed five inches. [AN HON. MEMBER: It may be less.] Yes; it may be less at times and it may be more on some few occasions. Of course thunderstorms will come, but they are uncertain, and cannot be depended on. Where are the catchments, and where is the rain to fill them? What I wish to say is that there is no certainty, and that all experience shows that the annual rainfall you have to depend upon is not likely to exceed five inches. It is my opinion, founded on some experience, that no scheme based on the rainfall in the interior of Australia can be depended upon as a permanent water supply for a large population. I have some experience of these matters. In 1874 I crossed from Champion Bay to the overland telegraph line, from Adelaide to Port Darwin, and on that route—the hon. member for West Kimberley was with me, and can support what I say—we passed places which were named as places where permanent water was to be found. These were Windich Springs, Weld Springs, Fort Mieller, Beare's Creek, and Lungley's Gully, four places where there was running water. We thought that season was a very dry one, and declared that these places had permanent water, but we have heard that the beautiful running streams we saw were dry the year before last, and that a surveyor who visited Weld Springs had to dig for water. He found some by digging. Fort Mieller, we know, has been absolutely dry, from the experience of some explorers who have visited it since I was there. Beare's Creek, in the Musgrave Ranges, where we could hear the hum of running water half a mile off, has since been dry, and explorers have had to dig 20 feet to get a drink. At Lungley's Gully, a stream that we saw running between high hills, and which had every appearance of permanency, has been altogether dry since. We need not go so far into the interior as the places I have been

speaking of. My friends, the hon. member for the De Grey, and for Beverley, who have had experience in the Nor'-West in pastoral pursuits, and where there are immense pools with every semblance of permanency—have they not found them all dry on some occasions? What about other places? We can go to the Gascoyne or elsewhere in this country, and even in the Northern settled districts within range of the coastal rainfall, and what is the evidence? We find there are droughts, and long droughts. On a station on the coast, belonging to my friend the Attorney-General, only a total of five inches of rain fell during five years, or an average of about one inch a year. So it is wherever you look, even comparatively near the coast. Well, then, if these things have occurred even close to the sea, how much more will they occur away in the interior, where there are no mountain ranges and no rivers, for it must be always remembered that there is no river system in the whole of Central Australia? Surely these are evidences that the House will not set aside. In 1869, when I travelled along by Lake Barlee and Mount Margaret, through country which has since become famous goldfields, there were abundance of marsupials in that country; but where are they now? When I asked the aborigines what had become of the kangaroos and other marsupials they told me that drought had killed them all. Soon after I was in the Coolgardie goldfields, viz., in January last, every tank belonging to the Government was dry. There was not a drop of fresh water throughout the goldfields in any catchment from the rainfall, and the people had to depend upon condensed water for their sustenance. Notwithstanding all this knowledge of my own, and the evidence of others, people who have had no experience in these things in this colony have come to me and propounded schemes, saying they were prepared to raise funds in the British market to carry out the work of erecting reservoirs in the interior of these goldfields, and from those catchments to supply the large and increasing populations that are going to these fields, and also to provide the mines with water. I am not going to be led astray by people of that sort. I have my own knowledge

and the knowledge of other people, and I am convinced that any scheme based upon the rainfall in the Coolgardie goldfields is not one that we can place dependence upon, but is one that would probably lead us into great difficulty and great disaster.

CONSERVATION AS AT PRESENT CARRIED OUT NOT ECONOMICAL.

There is no doubt whatever that water for ordinary purposes in small quantities can be conserved on the Coolgardie goldfields; but even if small reservoirs can be built and filled say once a year—and that is the most that our experience tells us can be expected—it is already clearly shown by the figures I have before me, and which I will place before hon. members, that the plan is not economical, besides being uncertain. I will show hon. members how we arrive at that conclusion. During 1895 tanks were in existence on the Coolgardie goldfields with a capacity of twelve million gallons. There were actually ten million gallons collected in those tanks, but, after allowing for evaporation, the cost of providing this water was about ten shillings per thousand gallons, that is counting the interest on the capital cost of the tanks and sinking fund—4 per cent. altogether—also the cost of the caretaker, making little or no provision for maintenance. The Engineer-in-Chief sums up the matter thus:—"It would appear, therefore, that "water can be supplied, by means "of the proposed pumping scheme, at "much less cost per thousand gallons "than by means of reservoirs of the "description herein described, and it "therefore becomes a question as to "whether reservoirs of this description "should continue to be constructed (un- "less for immediately urgent require- "ments) in the localities which would be "supplied by the pumping scheme, to "extent at present contemplated." That seems to me a rather startling piece of information, that even if the tanks are constructed on these goldfields, and the water could be caught, it would cost three times as much under the present system to supply the same quantity of water that is contemplated by the scheme now proposed by the Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That would be

the cost in the first year only.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): No; the cost every year.

MR. GEORGE: How many tanks?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): As many as you like. I do not mean to say that if the tanks were very large, and had many millions of gallons in them, the cost of supervision would be proportionally the same, but when you have built the tanks you have to obtain the water to fill them. When we have not been able to fill the tanks we have to their capacity of twelve millions of gallons, I think that this clearly shows that there is no likelihood of sufficient water being obtained from the rainfall, and what can be obtained is not only expensive but is also a very uncertain supply. A scheme has been brought before the Government, to some extent, by Mr. S. R. Wilson, which the hon. member for Geraldton referred to, and which has for its catchment area the country sixty odd miles to the north of Meuzics, the idea is that the reservoir area will be filled annually, or two or three times a year, I believe, by the rain; and that is the scheme which the hon. member and those who think with him would like to see made the scheme for supplying all those goldfields with water.

MR. SIMPSON: How do you know it is?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): My idea is that the project is a foolish one, and based altogether on inexperience.

MR. SIMPSON: I will back Mr. Wilson's experience against yours.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I prefer my own opinion in this case. I have had more experience of the interior of Australia.

LIKELIHOOD OF OBTAINING ARTESIAN WATER.

Now, sir, the next point I wish to touch upon is the question of the likelihood of obtaining an artesian supply of water. That, of course, is a favorite scheme with hon. members, and with the general public. They all believe that if you bore down into the bowels of the earth far enough you will not only get a sufficient supply of water, but that it will be perfectly fresh and good, and that there

will be sufficient pressure to raise it to the surface and, therefore could be distributed at a very small cost. On this question I cannot do better than quote the Engineer-in-Chief, in his own words which clearly express my own opinion and that of the Government:—

"Coming now to the question of various possible means of supplying water for the requirements of the Coolgardie goldfields which have been suggested other than by surface reservoirs, there is the much-talked-of possibility of attaining artesian water: concerning which, however, everyone who has studied it, and who can be looked upon as in any way an authority on the subject, has given his opinion that it is in the very last degree improbable. I think, therefore, that as regards artesian water, in the ordinary acceptance of the term—that is to say, water under high pressure, which will cause it to rise to the surface or above the surface (and which, consequently, has come from mountain ranges of considerable height, and not too far distant)—can safely be left out of the question.

"Before leaving this phase of the question, I would wish to say that—while it has, many times, and by many people, been broadly asserted that geologists have been more often wrong than right in their predictions as to the probability, or otherwise, of obtaining artesian water, and that, especially in the case of the copious and famous artesian supply in Queensland, they predicted distinctly against the probability of it, I have never, myself, been able to find any important case which bears out these assertions; and, as regards the case of the Queensland artesian basin especially, I am altogether disinclined to believe the assertion, as it seems to me, from geological sections which I have seen of the country there, that they point in a most distinct manner to the very great probability of artesian water being found, and also to the probability of its being found under high pressure. I cannot, therefore, believe that even any ordinary layman, having the most rudimentary knowledge of the conditions which govern an artesian supply, could have had any doubt as to artesian water being likely to be found

"under such conditions as the geological surveys show to exist in the Queensland artesian area; and, if this would apply to a layman, it would apply still more so to a geologist.

"Taking, again, one more instance, viz., the case of the artesian water which has been struck in the vicinity of Guildford, I would wish to take this opportunity of mentioning a fact, which I do not believe is very generally known, as regards that supply, namely, that the undertaking of the bore there by the Government was chiefly due to the light thrown upon the conditions existing there by Mr. Woodward, the Government Geologist of Western Australia, in the year 1891, and to his distinct opinion that artesian water, under considerable pressure, was present there. In this case, too, the geological conditions upon which Mr. Woodward based his opinion were distinctly less obviously favorable than those which prevail in the artesian district of Queensland.

"While believing that artesian water, in the true sense of the term, will never be obtained in the Coolgardie district, there are, however, several experts who believe that underground stores of water will be found there: most of them probably salt, but some of them possibly fresh, or, at any rate, drinkable—but which will not probably rise to any considerable height, if at all, above the level at which they are struck.

"In relation to these possible underground stores of water, however, we have to face the facts—

"(a.) That they will only probably be found (in large quantities) at very great depths.

"(b.) That, in order to utilise them, they would have to be pumped from these very great depths.

"(c.) That, if they are salt, they would have to be condensed before being of any use for human or animal consumption.

"Taking, first, in reference to Item (a.) above, the question of the bores necessary to reach such waters at great depth, it is not, I think, generally realised what a length of time it takes to put down such bores; and I therefore enclose herewith (*vide* Appen-

"dix A) an extract from a newspaper showing the time which it took to put down a bore of this description in Queensland (which, by the way, never reached water at all), the rate of progress being stated to have been unusually rapid; while the time taken to bore 3,000 feet is stated to have been two years.

"It is evident, therefore, that even the first preliminary part of the business, viz., the finding of the water at depths of 3,000ft. or thereabouts, would take a long time, especially if several places had to be tried before such water was struck.

"Then, again, as regards Item (b.), it is scarcely necessary to say that any pumping which could be done from a depth of anything like 3,000ft. through an ordinary bore-hole (if practicable at all) would be the merest trickle.

"If, however, it is suggested that, having found water, we should then put down a large shaft, through which to do the pumping, this shaft would take probably several years to complete.

"Besides this, too, if one is to seriously contemplate the undertaking of pumping from the bottom of a shaft 3,000ft. deep, it should be borne in mind that the total head to be overcome, between a reservoir on the Greenmount Ranges and the top of Mount Burges (including friction head) on the basis of the pumping scheme at present under consideration, is only 2,505ft.; and I have no doubt whatever, in my own mind, that the cost of pumping five million gallons daily, against this 2,505ft. in the open, would be much less than pumping a similar quantity from the bottom of a shaft 3,000ft. deep.

"Besides this, too, the amount which such shaft might cost would be utterly impossible to estimate, from any data which we have got at present, but it would, most assuredly, be very large indeed.

"Over and above all this, also, there is the still more serious consideration that it would be utterly impossible to ascertain as to what quantity of water there might be in such underground reservoir, and consequently as to how long it would last, and, it might consequently be found, after an enormous expense had been gone to,

"that it would run dry in a few weeks or months.

"Such, in fact, has been our experience in a great number of cases where we have found underground reservoirs of water, at depths of from 100 to 200 feet, and from which we have pumped steadily as much as from 2,000 to 3,000 gallons a day, for as long as a year or two, but which eventually suddenly gave out (their existence having probably been due to long ages of accumulation), and have never since returned to the condition in which we found them, and some of them have, in fact, remained apparently quite dry.

"To adventure hundreds of thousands of pounds, with the possibility of such a result as that, would, I think, be altogether unwarrantable.

"Coming now to Item (c.) above, it is scarcely necessary to say that if the cost of supplying water from very deep bores, or shafts, of this description would probably compare unfavorably (as I believe it would) with the cost of supplying water from reservoirs in the Greenmount Ranges, the comparison would be still more unfavorable to the bores and shafts alternative, if the water obtained therefrom were salt; as it can safely be stated that the cost of condensing such salt water (and it is very salt indeed) as prevails in the Coolgardie district would never be less than from £6 to £12 per thousand gallons, whereas water could be delivered from the Greenmount Ranges, at from 3s. to 6s. per thousand gallons.

"With further reference to the idea of procuring a sufficient water supply for the Coolgardie Goldfields by the aid of bores and shafts, I should mention that the mere raising of water in this way to the surface would be only one item in the cost; the lifting of it to a further height, in order that it might be carried by gravitation over a radius of 50 miles or so, or (in the absence of any such convenient height in the vicinity) the pumping of it directly to the surrounding places, being another very considerable item in the cost."

These words conclusively, in my opinion and in the opinion of the Government, deal with the question of artesian water supply, and they show, I

think, how foolish it would be to trust to any other than the adequate and certain scheme of the Government, which is called by the Engineer of Water Supply on Goldfields (Mr. Hector), "the surest, the best, and the most economical."

THE SCHEME PROPOSED WILL BE A REPRODUCTIVE WORK.

Having now dealt with two important questions as to whether the work is necessary, and as to the best scheme, and having, I think, conclusively shown that the work is urgent and necessary, and that the Government scheme is the only adequate and certain one, I now propose to show not only that it is feasible, but what is very much more important, that it will pay. The cost of the works we propose to undertake, as hon. members are aware, is estimated at £2,500,000. This is made up as follows: Pumping engines and sheds, £200,000; 90,000 tons of pipes, 30in. diameter, £1,470,000; carriage of pipes from Fremantle—I do not know whether they will be made there. Personally, I hope that the pipes can be made in the colony as economically as out of it, and that only the steel will be imported. The carriage of the pipes from the Port will cost £140,000; laying and jointing, £220,000; reservoirs, £300,000; distributing 12in. mains 100 miles—from Mount Burges—£170,000; making a total capital cost of £2,500,000. I now come to the amount of the annual working expense, interest, and sinking fund. The interest on the capital of £2,500,000 at 3 per cent. £75,000; sinking fund 3 per cent., £75,000—and here I may mention that we propose a 3 per cent. sinking fund instead of the ordinary 1 per cent.; maintenance, £45,000; cost of pumping 5,000,000 gallons daily, £109,000 per annum, all these calculations are on a yearly basis; general administration, £16,000; making the total working expenses £320,000. For this expenditure we will supply 1,825 million gallons of water at a cost of 3s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons.

PRACTICABILITY OF THE SCHEME.

The practicability of this scheme has been questioned both inside and outside this House; in fact, some people have gone

so far as to say it was a maniacal project. On that point I will read the opinion of the Engineer-in-Chief:—

"As regards the practicability of this scheme there cannot, I think, be any reasonable doubt, as it has been already declared to be quite practicable by many competent engineers, even while some of them deprecated it from other points of view.

"To say, in fact, that it is not practicable must surely involve a misconception of the question, as there are few people who do not know of an equal quantity of water having been pumped through a lesser height, and for a shorter length, than is provided for in this scheme; and, when it is realised that this scheme, although probably of larger magnitude than others which are within the knowledge of most people, is simply a repetition, several times over, of schemes which are within the knowledge of most people, it is difficult to realise how anyone can consider it to be impracticable.

"Thus, for instance, if it were proposed to pump, say, 5,000,000 gallons daily to a height of, say, 300ft., I cannot imagine that anyone would consider that to be impracticable; and, if it is not impracticable to do that once, it cannot surely be impracticable to do it eight times in succession.

"As to what is practicable again, it may not be out of place to instance a fact which is known to many people in this Colony, namely, that the dredge 'Premier' has frequently filled her hoppers with 600 tons of sand in 20 minutes; and, as it has been found by experience that the quantity of sand which can thus be pumped is about one-fifth of the accompanying water, it follows from this that the pumps must be capable of lifting at least 3,000 tons of water in 20 minutes, which is equivalent to 9,000 tons of water in an hour, or 216,000 tons of water in 24 hours; and, as a ton of water is equal to 224 gallons, this would mean 48,000,000 gallons (or, say, in round figures, 50,000,000 gallons) in 24 hours.

"The height to which the water is raised by this pump is only about 10 feet; but, on the other hand, 50,000,000 gallons of water is 10 times as much as 5,000,000 gallons of water

"and consequently the same power would lift 5,000,000 gallons of water per diem through a height of 100 feet; and, in this case, there is only one pump, whereas it is proposed to have several pumps at each of the 8 or 10 pumping stations, so that there can manifestly be no practical difficulty (by the aid of several pumps at each of the pumping stations) in raising 5,000,000 gallons per diem through the height of 300 feet or so, which will intervene between each pumping station and the next one."

This opinion, given by the adviser to the Government, a gentleman who bases his reputation upon it, seems to me to be conclusive evidence—if we want evidence—that the scheme is practicable. These words must commend themselves to everyone here. It is most simple that if you can raise water so many feet by a certain force, then by repeating that force the number of times required, you can surely raise the water to the height desired.

ADEQUACY OF THE WATER SUPPLY IN DARLING RANGES.

There is an important matter which will no doubt be referred to by hon. members, as to the extent of the catchment area on the Greenmount or Darling Ranges, and as to the adequacy of the supply which is to provide the five million gallons of water per day. On this point the Government obtained the opinion of Mr. Hodgson, the Engineer for Sewerage and Water Supply for towns, who says:—
"I have no hesitation whatever in saying that at this stage the Helena River is the source upon which our estimates should be based. On the Helena I have had several sites surveyed, and I can with safety recommend one situated about five miles south-west of Sawyer's Valley. The site is almost an ideal one; the foundations of the dam site are bed-rock, the valley at that point is very narrow, and the sides precipitous." I may also inform hon. members that the concrete dam, which would be about 100 feet high and 650 feet wide, would back up the water for seven miles, and would impound about 4,619 million gallons, and the quantity available, after making a liberal allowance for evaporation, soakage,

&c., would be 3,330 million gallons, which would amply provide for the consumption of 5,000,000 gallons per day throughout the year or even nearly double that quantity. In addition to this reservoir there are plenty of other catchment areas available, some large and some small. The height of the proposed reservoir is 320 feet above the sea. The water-shed area, from which the water would be obtained, is 350,000 acres. Assuming that we have an absolutely certain rainfall of only 20 inches in the year—of course it is far more than that, nearly double in some years past—but assuming, for the sake of illustration, that we have only 20 inches, it is a positive certainty that the reservoir would fill every year if only 3 per cent. of the rainfall found its way into it. In addition to these advantages the quality of the water is excellent, and there is practically no sediment in the catchment area, and no danger of pollution. Surely nothing could be more favorable for a catchment area than this one, where a two-years' supply could be impounded in a large reservoir with a dam only 650 feet long, with solid rock for the base and ends, and I think Mr. Hodgson was perfectly correct when he said that it was an almost ideal site, and the best possible that he could choose out of dozens which he has inspected throughout the Darling Ranges.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How many feet deep would it be?

THE PREMIER: 100 feet, if we want a two-years' supply. Of course that would be more than is necessary, but still there ought to be a sufficient supply for one and a half or two years at least.

CAPITAL COST OF PROPOSED WORKS.

The next question is as to capital cost, and upon that point the Engineer-in-Chief says: "As regards the estimated capital cost, I believe that the works can be carried out for the amount stated." There is no shilly-shallying about that. The statement is made by the Engineer-in-Chief of the colony; it is a deliberate statement, and should carry weight coming from an officer of the status and experience of Mr. O'Connor. The Engineer-in-Chief goes on to say:—

"As regards the pumping engines, which constitute an important item in the estimate, the amount set down for them is based upon information specially obtained from England for the purpose. (*Vide* Appendix D, hereunder.)

"As regards a still more important item, namely, the pipes (weighing about 90,000 tons), the estimate is supported by prices at which manufacturers have offered to deliver the piping required.

"As regards the cost of the reservoirs, which is another very important item in the estimate, there is ample evidence that they can be constructed for the amount set down. (*Vide, inter alia*, Mr. Hodgson's memorandum to me, dated 15th instant, hereunder, Appendix E.)

"As regards the other items in the estimate, which are for works of an ordinary and every-day character, there is no reason to doubt that the ordinary prices, at which they have been valued, will be found to be sufficient."

WORKING EXPENSES.

Then, as regards probable working expenses, the Engineer-in-Chief's opinion is that:—

"As regards the estimated working expenses per annum, which include interest and sinking fund, as well as maintenance and cost of pumping, and general administration,

"(a.) The amount set down for annual interest and sinking fund is sufficient to pay interest on capital, and also to pay off the said capital in a period of about 20 years.

"(b.) The amount set down for maintenance is sufficient to keep the whole of the works and machinery in good going order.

"(c.) As regards the probable cost of pumping, this has been deduced from various well-recognised authorities on the subject, notably, amongst others, Unwin on the Development and Transmission of Power, with due allowance, of course, for the local price of coal, and labor, &c."

“(d.) As regards the general administration, it simply means “(in view of there being ample “provision for maintenance) “the collection of the revenue, “and the keeping of the “accounts, and it is believed “that 5 per cent. on the revenue “should be ample for that “purpose.”

PRICE AT WHICH WATER CAN BE PROVIDED.

Then, as to the price at which water can be delivered, the Engineer-in-Chief says:—

“The estimated price at which the “water can be delivered, viz., 3s. 6d. per “thousand gallons, is simply an arithmetical resultant from the total estimated working expenses per annum, “on the basis that five million gallons “(on the average) will be sold, daily, “during 365 days in each year; but, as “regards the ‘on the average’ element “in the matter, it is only right to “say that this result would not accrue “if the five million gallons per diem failed “to be sold for several days running, as “the estimate only provides for a storage “reservoir at Mount Burges capable of “holding two or three days’ supply.

“It is, however, proposed to keep “all the reservoirs along the pipe line “continuously full by aid of the pumping main; and this would, to some extent, restore the balance, if the quantity available failed to be sold for more “than two or three days at a stretch; “as the working railways, for instance, “could then use the water out of the “reservoirs along the line, instead of “taking it from the pumping main.”

ADVANTAGE OF SCHEME TO WORKING RAILWAYS.

We come now to a matter of great importance—indeed, it is one which hon. members will no doubt attach great weight to, and that is the advantage of the scheme to the working railways. I will quote what the Engineer-in-Chief says on this head:—

“As regards the working railways “element in the matter, it is shown, in “Appendix C hereinbefore referred to, “that the requirements would be about “200,000 gallons per diem, for eight “months in the year, and that the saving which would be attained by ob-

“taining this supply by the pumping “scheme, instead of, as is done at “present, by hauling it in running tanks, “would be about £30,000 per annum.” I may mention that this £30,000 refers only to our present requirements, and not to the future. I have not consulted the Engineer-in-Chief or the General Traffic Manager concerning this question, but, in my opinion, the traffic will be in the future—I hope in the near future—four times as much as at present, and, if so, this scheme would save annually to the Traffic Department alone £120,000, almost sufficient to pay the whole of the interest and sinking fund on the proposed loan. I ask hon. members particularly to consider this advantage, as it is one which affects all of us very closely; for we are now spending £30,000 per annum for water for our railways in those districts, and as population increases, as it undoubtedly will, and the demand in consequence increases, the cost of the water for the railways must increase in proportion.

COMPARISON OF PRESENT AND FUTURE COST OF WATER.

I will now show that water can be delivered in the Coolgardie district by the proposed scheme cheaper than by any other method we know of. I will put it in the words of the Engineer-in-Chief:—

“Coming, now, to the question “as to how the cost of water delivered by “this pumping scheme to the Coolgardie “district would compare with the cost of “water delivered by any other method, I “find, as is shown in Appendix F hereunder, that the cheapest of all the “water supplies hitherto existing in the “Coolgardie district, viz., the supply “from reservoirs constructed by the “Government, cost the country (exclusive of the cost of maintenance of the “reservoirs themselves, concerning which “I have at the moment no actual data) “at least 8s. 6d. per thousand gallons; “and, if the maintenance of the reservoirs “were taken into consideration, it would, “I have no doubt, bring the cost up to “fully 10s. per thousand gallons.

“It is manifest, therefore, that the “pumping scheme would attain a very “large reduction on even the cheapest “rate at which water has hitherto been “obtainable (and there was, really, in all, “a very insignificant supply obtained at

"that rate), and, that being so, it is need-
 "less to say that the pumped water would
 "be enormously cheaper than water ob-
 "tained from any of the other sources of
 "supply of which we have any present
 "knowledge.

"As compared with condensed
 "water, in fact, as already alluded to,
 "the cost of this pumped water would
 "be only about half as many shillings
 "per 1,000 gallons as the condensed
 "water costs in pounds per 1,000
 "gallons, and often even less than that.

"Looking at the matter from the
 "point of view as affecting the whole of
 "the community on the Coolgardie gold-
 "fields in the future, the difference
 "in the cost at which they could
 "obtain the quantity of water absolutely
 "necessary for human consumption, by
 "this pumping proposal, as compared
 "with the cost at which they obtain it
 "now, is simply marvellous, the figures
 "being about as follows:—

"That is to say, I have seen it
 "stated recently that there are as many
 "as 40,000 people in the Coolgardie dis-
 "trict, and, although I scarcely think that
 "that can be so, it is quite probable that
 "that number of people may be con-
 "gregated there by the end of the three
 "years which this pumping scheme
 "would take to complete.

"If we assume that each of these
 "40,000 people has to pay even as little
 "as 6d. a day for water, which would be
 "only allowing them from two to three
 "gallons per diem, as prevails under
 "existing conditions, this would amount,
 "for the 365 days in the year, to £9 per
 "annum for each person, and the total,
 "for 40,000 persons, at that rate, would
 "be £360,000 per annum, whereas the
 "same quantity of water could be at-
 "tained, by proposed pumping scheme,
 "for less than £10,000 per annum. It
 "is evident, therefore, that if pumping
 "from the Greenmount Ranges is adopted,
 "as compared with any local source of
 "supply that we know of, there would
 "be relief to these 40,000 people to the
 "extent of £350,000 per annum, whereas
 "the whole annual working expenses of
 "the pumping scheme would be only
 "£320,000 per annum.

"Besides, this, too, there is the
 "fact that, after all these people had
 "been supplied by the pumping scheme,

"with the same quantity of water which
 "they got before, there would still be
 "about 1,750 million gallons of water
 "per annum available for other purposes.
 "That is to say, the total quantity,
 "equivalent to 5,000,000 gallons per day,
 "for 365 days in the year, being about
 "1,800 million gallons per annum, and
 "the quantity which would be consumed
 "by 40,000 people, under the existing
 "conditions, viz., at the rate of, say,
 "three gallons per head per diem, being
 "less than 50 million gallons per annum,
 "there would, as before stated, be 1,750
 "million gallons per annum, out of the
 "total of 1,800 million gallons per an-
 "num, still available for other purposes,
 "and, if the said 1,750 million gallons of
 "water is sold, as it is assumed
 "that it will be, for mining and other
 "purposes, at the rate of 3s. 6d. per
 "thousand gallons, the relief to the
 "40,000 people above mentioned, to the
 "enormous extent of £350,000 per annum,
 "would be attained without any cost to
 "the country whatever."

THE TIME THE WORKS WILL TAKE TO COMPLETE.

The only other question dealt with in
 the Engineer-in-Chief's report which I
 intend to refer to is that concerning the
 time which the works we propose will take
 to complete. That is a matter which I
 feel sure will have due consideration.
 The Engineer-in-Chief deals with it as
 follows:—

"There is, I think, only one more
 "point which I need touch upon, viz., as
 "to the estimate that the work can be
 "completed in three years, concerning
 "which I have to state as follows:—

"(a.) We have been assured by steel
 "pipe manufacturers that the
 "whole of the pipes required
 "could be made in two years.

"(b.) If the delivery of these pipes
 "were commenced within even
 "six months of the date of the
 "work being authorised, and
 "completed in 30 months from
 "same, they could, I have
 "no doubt, be all laid within
 "the three years.

"(c.) If, again, the excavation of
 "the pipe trench were started
 "almost immediately after the

"work was authorised (as it could be) there is no reason that I know of why it could not be kept well ahead of the pipe-laying, and consequently also completed within the three years.

"(d.) As regards the pumping engines and sheds for same, there is no reason at all that I know of why they could not be procured and erected and constructed, respectively, within three years.

"(e.) As regards the reservoir, or reservoirs, they would, no doubt, have to be designed with great promptitude, and put in hand as soon as possible, in order to be completed within three years, but there is no reason that I know of why they should not be completed within that time."

I have now dealt with the evidence supplied by the Engineer-in-Chief and other officers in regard to this scheme, and hon. members will not only be able to judge from what I have read, but will also have the opportunity of reading and considering it themselves.

WHAT WILL BE DONE WITH THE WATER AFTER IT REACHES MOUNT BURGESS.

There is another point which has been raised—I do not know whether by members or not—but it has found its way into the press and into the opinions of the people outside—and that is the question of what will be done with the water when it reaches Mount Burgess. As I have already said, provision is made in these estimates for reticulation from Mount Burgess for 100 miles by a 12in. pipe.

MR. MORAN: What centres do you propose to serve?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir John Forrest): No doubt Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie will be two of the centres, and I think I may venture to say that the supply will be served to a good many other places. I think I have now got over that part of my duty which consists of quoting the opinions of others and reading extracts. In my opinion, the authorities I have quoted

prove the whole case in favor of the Government scheme. One very important consideration is that, when we get the water to the summit of Mount Burgess, it will naturally gravitate all over the Coolgardie goldfields, and the cost will be small, as by gravitation the cost of pumping will be saved. Mount Burgess is 416 feet above the town of Coolgardie, 590 feet above the town of Kalgoorlie, and 420 feet above the town of Menzies. It dominates the whole country, and it seems to have been placed thereby a wise Providence for the purpose of distributing water over these immense auriferous but waterless regions. I think that it is a very important element in this matter that when you get the supply to the summit of Mount Burgess there is no more trouble to distribute it, not only to Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Kanowna, but also to Menzies, &c.

INFLUENCE OF THE PROPOSED WORK ON THE COLONY.

Having now, sir, dealt with the details of this scheme, I propose to refer to the influence it would have on the colony, and how it would affect its indebtedness and welfare. This loan would not be like an ordinary loan. As a rule, when we construct railways, buildings, or other public works, we have to wait some time before they are re-productive—in fact we know that in many cases they will not be re-productive for a long time. In others—for instance, railways—I have been accustomed to say that if they pay within five years I shall be satisfied. But in this scheme the works would pay interest, working expenses, maintenance, and sinking fund from the day they were completed, and therefore I think it cannot be looked upon in the same light as the ordinary loan which we float for the construction of works the success of which is sometimes more or less uncertain, although our experience has fortunately been that they have proved generally re-productive. I would like hon. members to consider, in thinking over this large scheme designed to benefit these auriferous areas from which we are receiving and have received so much benefit, what these goldfields are doing for the colony. It has been said that

British and foreign capital to the amount of between 50 and 60 million pounds has been invested in this colony. I am not so foolish as to think that all this money has found its way to this colony. It is not likely it would, but I do think that the British investors who have put their capital into these mines are looking for a return for their money, and I sincerely trust they will get a good return. What is going on at present at Perth and Fremantle? I can speak for Perth, for before my eyes every day it is being rebuilt, and I have no doubt, to some extent the town of Fremantle is also being rebuilt. What is the reason of the large increase in population, in the revenue and the general prosperity? It is not due to the three million pounds' worth of gold that have been obtained from the goldfields of this colony, but to the British capital that has been invested in this colony. I wish everyone in this colony to remember that it is British and foreign capital that has increased their population, made our railways pay, provided markets for our produce, and which has enabled the Government to build that work which is designed to give a commodious harbor to the chief port of the colony, at Fremantle. The hon. member for Nannine, in speaking on the Address-in-Reply the other evening, made use of an apt and appropriate phrase when he said "We have arrived at the 'parting of the ways.'" We are at the "parting of the ways" to-day. Not, perhaps, in the sense that the hon. member intended to convey. The investors are demanding a return for their money, and it is quite possible for us to give it to them. But, while the gold is there in abundance—and no one has ever said to the contrary—they cannot extract it without water. I have met hundreds of people—men who have practical experience, and who have visited our goldfields—and they are all unanimous in stating that the gold is there in abundance. I think it is a most satisfactory thing that all these experts from all parts of the world should agree in this belief, which I am sure is also shared by hon. members in this House; but all these people have also told me that the one great difficulty in extracting the gold was the scarcity of

water. The hon. member for West Kimberley, who has just returned from England, was interviewed by a reporter from one of the daily papers the other evening before he had had an opportunity of discussing the question with me, and on Monday morning the first thing I saw was that, on being asked his opinion of the proposals of the Government to supply the Coolgardie goldfields with water, he said:—"Certain details "of it, as foreshadowed by the Premier in his speech at the Coolgardie "banquet, were cabled to the London "Times, and aroused great interest. All "the London people interested in Western "Australia look forward eagerly to the "Government undertaking the work. "They regard it as the one thing necessary to make our mines equal to those "in South Africa. I may say, however, "that if the Government was not prepared to supply the fields with water, "and would grant the necessary concessions to a private company, there "would not be the slightest difficulty in "raising the capital. It is regarded as "impossible that each mine should find "its own water supply, and therefore "some big scheme—whether provided by "the Government or by private enterprise "matters little—is an absolute necessity. "Until there is some certainty of such "a scheme being undertaken, I don't think "that capital will flow into the colony "as freely as it has done in the past. I "was very much struck with the confidence which the London people have in "our mines. Many South African "dealers have lately come into the Western Australian market, and it only needs "an assurance as to a speedy and sufficient water supply, and some more good "crushings, to send things along briskly." That is the opinion of the hon. member straight from London, and when he has the opportunity of addressing this House, he will, I have no doubt, be able to tell us more about this matter. But it is important that people who have invested so much money, and to whom our prosperity is to a very large extent due, should have expressed such a strong opinion on the water question, and should be entirely in accord with the Government as to the necessity for this work. It is evident that the capitalist is willing to continue to invest money, provided the Govern-

ment devise means for supplying water to the goldfields. In our opinion the water must be supplied immediately—I do not think that any members of this House will question that—or difficulties, great difficulties, will most assuredly come upon us. The Government can see only two ways of dealing with this matter. One is that the work should be undertaken by the Government in the manner proposed, and the other that it should be given over to private enterprise. The work is absolutely necessary if we intend to keep this colony in its present career of progress, and in our opinion there are only two ways—the Government scheme, or else to hand the whole thing over to private enterprise. In our opinion it is perfectly clear that there is only one perfectly certain safe source of water supply for these goldfields, and that is the supply from the coastal ranges.

THE LOAN WOULD NOT BE A BURDEN ON
THE WHOLE PEOPLE.

I have already referred to a phase of the question to which I will again refer, and that is that the loan will not be a burden on the people of the colony. I want to impress that on everyone in this House and out of it. It would be no burden upon the people of the colony any more than a self supporting concern is a burden on a private individual. Here we have a project which will pay interest, working expenses, maintenance, and sinking fund, and this being so, how can it be considered as a burden upon the people of the colony? We know very well that there are many men in this colony who have immense liabilities, but who also have immense assets, and yet who figure in the eyes of their fellows as wealthy men. This scheme can only be a burden upon the people of the colony if the work is a failure, but the Government see no chance of that. The people who use the water will pay for everything in connection with the work. I repeat that it is an absolute certainty that it must succeed, and that it will be reproductive from the day that it is finished, because the people who use the water will pay not only interest on construction, but the up-keep and maintenance. To state the idea more clearly, I will take the case of the Fremantle harbor works, which are at present a

burden upon everyone in the colony, for they have cost about £3 per head of the population, and before they are finished will cost a good deal more. When they are finished, as we all hope they will be in a few years, they may be a paying concern—but whether they pay or not, they are a necessity, a great national work, and must be carried out. But here we have a work which, while it will benefit the whole of the colony, the people generally will not have to pay for it. In this case the people on the goldfields, who use the water will have to pay for the whole work as well as upkeep, interest, and sinking fund. With this scheme, too, we are going to have a 3 per cent. sinking fund, and in about 22 years the principal will be repaid by the sinking fund.

INDEBTEDNESS OF THE COLONY.

Seeing that this is going to be a reproductive work, I see little reason to consider the question of indebtedness. Still I can easily prove that it will not affect the indebtedness of the colony unless the scheme does not pay, which, in my opinion, is impossible. Our present indebtedness in round numbers is 4½ millions, and our population is something like 123,000. It has increased by 33,000 during the past 12 months—a very great and agreeable fact—and if during the next three years it increases the same, which I do not think is an extravagant estimate, the population will be nearly a quarter of a million. I see no reason why it should not. I see no reason whatever why the population should not increase more quickly than during the last 12 months; and, if that is the case, we can afford to borrow during the next three years about four millions of money, and yet not materially alter our indebtedness from its present amount of £37 per head. I say again that, if our population increases during the next three years to the same extent only as it has increased during the past year, our population will then have reached nearly a quarter of a million, and we will be able to borrow about four millions without materially increasing our indebtedness.

INDEBTEDNESS OF AUSTRALIA.

In comparing our position with that of

other colonies of Australia—of course we should not judge altogether as to whether a colony is prosperous or not by the comparative amount of its indebtedness, for we know that some colonies which have a large indebtedness per head are yet more prosperous than others which have a smaller indebtedness—I find that South Australia at present has a debt of about £64 per head of population, Queensland has a debt of about £67 per head, New South Wales about £57 per head, Tasmania about £50 per head, Victoria about £41 per head, and Western Australia £37 per head. There is little, therefore, to fear on the score of our indebtedness in reference to this scheme, especially when the works we propose to construct will be reproductive, and will pay from the day they are completed. Our revenue for the past 12 months ended 30th June was £1,858,694, and our indebtedness is as I said, £37 per head, as compared with £48 per head for the whole of Australia. Our public debt on the 30th June last was four and a half millions, and it is important to observe that this is only two and a half times our annual revenue, as against the public debt of the whole of Australia, which is seven times its annual revenue. The public debt of the Australian colonies is about 170 millions, the annual revenue of the Australian colonies is about 24 millions, and, as I said, there is an indebtedness of £48 per head of population as against our £37 per head. If we compare the position of this colony as shown by these figures, I think there is great cause for satisfaction in our present financial position.

THE ADEQUACY OF THE PROPOSED WATER SUPPLY, AND WHAT IT WILL DO. X

I now come to a very important matter—one that has been touched on by the hon. member for Nannine, and which I have very great pleasure in dealing with—and that is the question of the adequacy of the Government scheme for supplying the Coolgardie goldfields with water. I say this scheme is fully adequate for the present, and I will prove it. What will this supply of five million gallons a day of good water do? When I have finished what I have to say on this point, I think the facts will make hon. members

think seriously before they oppose the Government proposals. This scheme will supply abundance of water to the people of the Coolgardie goldfields, and at the cheap rate of 3s. 6d. per thousand gallons. I will say, for argument's sake, that two million gallons will be used for domestic purposes, and that ought to be sufficient to supply the wants of from 70,000 to 100,000 people. Hon. members can judge for themselves of that as well as I can; but, generally, I have understood that 30 gallons a day per head is a liberal allowance in a large city; but, be that as it may, it is a very liberal allowance as compared with two or three gallons a day that these people have to put up with now. Two million gallons will be, as I believe, adequate for from 70,000 to 100,000 people, and there will then be three millions of gallons a day remaining for mining purposes. These three million gallons a day will keep 300 batteries going, each battery having, 20 head of stampers. I have it on the authority of one of the leading mine managers, Mr. Harper, who was manager of Fraser's Gold-mining Company at Southern Cross, and who is now manager of the Mount Robinson mine, near Kanowna, that 10,000 gallons of water is sufficient to keep a 20-head battery going for 24 hours, and, if the quartz is clean, he told me that 6,000 gallons will do it. He also informed me that a battery of 20 stampers would crush 40 tons of ore in 24 hours. Therefore, each of these 300 batteries could crush 40 tons a day, and if they worked 300 out of the 365 days in a year, going night and day, they could crush in a year 3,600,000 tons of ore. [MR. SIMPSON: That would be a bad thing for some of them.] Supposing the yield of that ore to be only half an ounce to the ton—and, as we all know, people won't look at half an ounce or one-ounce stuff up there at present, for they want 3, 4, or 5 ounces to the ton—at half an ounce to the ton the output would be worth about seven millions sterling a year; whereas, if it were one-ounce stone the output would be worth fourteen millions sterling a year. If these figures are anything near the mark, if they are anything like correct this

colony would soon produce more gold from the Coolgardie goldfields than is produced from all other parts of the British Empire put together. The far-famed Transvaal raised in 1894 only between seven and eight millions sterling of gold; and here, by means of this water scheme—if the gold is there, and everyone who has been there tells us it is; indeed, I have seen it for myself, and believe the auriferous deposits extend over an immense area of that country—besides the two million gallons for domestic consumption, this supply will keep all these batteries going, and if they put through only half-ounce stuff the output from these goldfields alone would be seven millions worth of gold per annum. Each battery would only have to pay £525 for the three million gallons of water used each year, which would probably be not more than 1 per cent., certainly not more than 2 per cent., of the value of the gold obtained. Surely these are startling facts, which ought to make the people of this colony and the members of this House think for a moment in regard to what this scheme is capable of doing. Can any results such as these be placed before hon. members in regard to any other scheme? If they can be, then I hope the hon. member for Nannine, or someone else, will place them before us, and let us have the advantage of considering them and judging of them. These moderate figures I have placed before you should dissipate all doubt as to the wisdom of this great project, and should surely raise enthusiasm in hon. members. I should say, also, that it should raise enthusiasm among the people of the country.

THE COUNTRY BETWEEN NORTHAM AND
COOLGARDIE WILL BE ALL OCCUPIED.

Now, besides all the benefits and advantages I have already referred to, there is another advantage in this scheme, and I am sure I will not appeal in vain to those hon. members of this House who have travelled through the interior of this colony, and have had some experience of the dryness of the country through which they have passed. This scheme will transform

the country between Northam and Coolgardie, and will really add a new province to this colony. What is that country now? As soon as you leave Northam you pass through a favored spot—the Meckering area—so often mentioned by my hon. friend the member for Northam; but after passing that place, with the exception of one or two small spots near Moranopping, what do you see? A wilderness; an unoccupied waste all the way from Meckering to Coolgardie, to Menzies, to Niagara—indeed, as far as you go what do you find? A waterless waste. But if this scheme is carried out, some portion of that country will be occupied in a short time. The best portions of that country will be ringbarked and occupied by graziers, and in some instances probably by farmers. The water will be a boon wherever it goes. [AN HON. MEMBER: What about irrigation?] I said nothing about irrigation. I said the country would be stocked, and would probably to some extent be farmed in good seasons. It would be all improved, and water would be supplied to the people settled on it. Nothing more would be required to supply that water than a meter, a trough, and a tap. That country is capable of growing grass and keeping stock, if water is made available, but in its present state it is absolutely worthless. There are also the Southern Cross mines, which would be supplied with this water; and what a terrible experience we have had there, for no fresh water has been found there during the last seven years! I know of one mine that has scarcely worked for years because of the want of water. We would supply all those mines with water; the country would be occupied, so that Southern Cross would become one of our busy mining centres. We would be able to supply water by this scheme to the towns of Newcastle, York, and Northam by gravitation from Mount Baker, which is much higher than those towns are; and from it they could be supplied with water for domestic purposes.

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

I now come to another point that I wish to place before hon. members,

and that is the question of private enterprise. I have told you that, unless this project is to be carried out as a Government work, the alternative is that we must hand it over to private enterprise, because the work must be done. We have heard a great deal in this House at one time or another about private enterprise. The hon. member for Nannine when he first came into the House was an advocate for private enterprise. He wanted a railway built to Cue by private enterprise, also a railway to Coolgardie by private enterprise. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: You won't find that in *Hansard*.] If my memory does not lead me astray, I heard the hon. member say in this House that private persons should be allowed to build those railways. I refer the hon. member to his speech in *Hansard* on the Loan Bill 1894, and he will find that I am absolutely correct. The hon. member for Geraldton, during this session, has told us that this work of supplying the goldfields with water should be left to private enterprise, and that he knew of good men who were willing to take this matter up. I stand here to-night opposed to private enterprise in regard to this great work. I am opposed to handing over this great enterprise—for it is a great enterprise—to private persons; even to those good men who seem to be specially represented by the hon. member for Geraldton. I am not, however, opposed to minor works being undertaken by private enterprise, but I am opposed to a great project like this, which would mean the necessities, the conveniences, and even the lives of people on these goldfields being handed over to private control. I am opposed to that altogether. The hon. member for Geraldton referred the other evening to the Government having made promises to people to do this work, and then coming forward and cutting the ground from under their feet by undertaking the work themselves after such promise had been given. I deny such statement altogether. We made no promise to anyone; and to show that this is so, I will read the only letter written on the subject, which was a letter to Mr. S. R. Wilson. On the 3rd June he was written to by the Under-Secretary as follows:—

"Under-Secretary,

"To S. R. WILSON, Esq.,

"Weld Club,

"Perth.

"Sir,—1. I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letters of "the 26th and 29th of May, asking for "an assurance from the Government that "any Bill you might introduce into Parliament, having for its object the conservation of water for the Coolgardie "goldfields, would receive the favorable "consideration of the Government.

"2. In reply, I am directed to inform you "that the data which you have so far "submitted are insufficient to enable "any accurate opinion to be formed "as to the success of the undertaking, "especially in regard to the supply being "certain and adequate, and that until "much more complete data are obtained "the Government must decline to make "itself in any way a party to the scheme, "by any covenant or promise of any "kind.

"3. The Government has, however, no "wish to oppose any private Bill being "introduced by you or any other person "or company for the purpose above-named, "provided no monopoly is granted, and "that it contains the safeguards which "the Government may consider necessary "in a work of the character contemplated.

"4. I am directed, however, to distinctly remind you that the Government has in contemplation a scheme for "supplying water for the whole of the "requirements of the Coolgardie goldfields by pumping from reservoirs to "be constructed in the Darling Ranges, "and that any works that you may construct cannot be allowed to interfere "with any project which the Government may now or hereafter consider "to be desirable in the public interest.

"I have the honor, etc.,

"(Sd.) OCT. BURT,

"Under-Secretary."

Is there any promise of any kind in that letter? Is there any misleading of anyone in that letter? The hon. member, in saying we made a promise, has got his facts wrong, as usual. I am not prepared, and I do not believe the people of this colony, are prepared to place in the hands of private persons a great project like this in order that the

hon. member for Geraldton, or any of his friends, may carry out schemes of their own for making a profit. In the last session, on the 10th October, 1895, my friend the hon. member for Beverley, moved a resolution in this House, which I will read to hon. members. It shows clearly the trend of his thoughts at that time, and although the motion was not carried, it had this effect, that whereas in the Bill we brought forward there was a provision for granting a licence to anyone for supplying water to the goldfields, which licence was to be permissive in every respect, the Bill was amended in Committee so as to limit the licence to projects of a minor character on the goldfields. The hon. member for Beverley's motion was as follows:—

“That in the opinion of this House the question of a water supply for the eastern goldfields is one of extreme importance, and that the interests involved are so enormous that the Government should at once examine into the feasibility of pumping water from the most accessible spot, and prepare all estimates of cost and working expenses of the same, with a view of its being undertaken by the State.”

That was the hon. member's proposition, which, as I said, had the effect he intended. The feeling of this House at that time was distinctly against handing over the water supply for the Coolgardie goldfields to private speculators, and the Bill was made clear on that point. While, therefore, the Government is carrying out its own views in regard to this matter, it is also carrying out exactly the views expressed in this House, for the House practically decided, last session, not to allow private enterprise to have the control of this scheme. The House declined to hand over this great national work to a private company. I will ask this House again, and will ask the people of this colony, whether this great auriferous country that we have to the eastward shall be handed over to private speculators, to provide a water supply; whether we shall hand over that great work to a pack of speculators, who cannot manage it as well or as cheaply as we can. Have we not had enough of these promoters offering to do our public works yet in this

country? [MR. SIMPSON: No.] The experience I have had with such persons has all been unsatisfactory. I never had any good experience in connection with their projects. There is one that we will perhaps have to deal with in a few days; one of these projects which has been carried out by private enterprise, and which the Government will now be asked to buy up in the interests of the people. That is what it comes to in the end. The Midland Railway, also the Great Southern Railway, are not giving that satisfaction which the people of this colony were led to expect; and do you want more of these private projects? These promoters make plenty of promises when they come before you. They profess they will do anything, and sometimes they do make a start; but after making a start they often get into difficulties and have to come to the Government for assistance. Delay ensues. There is then perhaps a reconstruction, then obstruction, then threats to injure the credit of the colony, and the last act of the play is that we have to buy them out. [MR. GEORGE: Who makes the agreement?] I do not care who makes the agreement. Agreements are of no avail in such cases. You were told by the hon. member for Geraldton that some mining experts—and he named one friend of mine—had expressed opinions adverse to the Government scheme; but what do they propose in place of it? Nothing. They propose to wait upon Providence, trusting to the rainfall. They propose to trust to boring in the earth, and to many other things; but I have an idea that those gentlemen as a rule are interested in or have a little project of their own to carry out, which this scheme of the Government will interfere with. Well, if they have, I cannot help it, and do not care a straw what they say. I am not here as an advocate of private enterprise for a great project like this. I am here not only as the advocate for the people of Coolgardie, but for the people of the whole colony. We had a curious spectacle during the debate on the Address-in-Reply. We had the hon. member for Nannine and the hon. member for Geraldton—the so-called friends of the goldfields and of the working

man — opposing this great work. I am not much surprised. I think they have generally been in this House the advocates of the private speculator, as well as the opponents of the Government.

SOME REMARKS ON PRESENT TAXATION.

We have heard a good deal about high prices, and the cost of living in this colony, and especially on the goldfields. We have been told that taxation must be reduced, in order that people may be able to live in comfort. But what does all this taxation amount to? To £6 a head only; and what is that as compared with the taxation that people on the goldfields have to pay for water? At present, a man has to pay £10 to £20 a year for three gallons of water a day, whereas under this scheme he will have to pay for the same quantity only about 3s. 6d. That is the position of affairs—3s. 6d. will then buy as much water as £10 to £20 will buy under existing circumstances.

REASON WHY MEN HAVING FAMILIES DO NOT BRING THEM HERE.

There is another important point I want to touch upon, and that is the reason why men hesitate, and rightly so, to bring their families from the land they have left to the land they have come to. It is said this is because the cost of living is so high here. Well, if that be the reason, what makes the cost of living on the goldfields so great but the cost of water? How is it that men are leaving their wives and families in other parts of Australia, and are living lonely, comfortless lives on the goldfields? As I have said, if they brought their families here, they could not afford to supply them with water on the goldfields, and they would have to keep them there in dirt, instead of in comfort.

POST-OFFICE ORDERS SENT TO EASTERN COLONIES.

There is another very serious question in regard to the large number of people who are here seeking their fortunes, and trying to build up this great colony, and are living lonely and comfortless lives on the goldfields. For the last four months the average amount sent to the Australian

colonies from persons in this colony, through the post-office, has been £56,000 a month, and the amount is increasing. The amount for June last was £62,143, or something like at the rate of three-quarters of a million a year sent away, mainly, no doubt, for the support of the wives and the families of men who have come to this colony. This large amount, I may mention, is exclusive of sums that are sent through the banks, no doubt by persons in a better financial position. Is this not a matter of moment? Is it not a matter that requires the attention of every member of this House, of every one who takes an interest in this country? Should we not try our best to devise some means of altering this state of things? I hope that hon. members will take especial notice of this very important fact, one which I regret very much to have to mention, but it seems to me that it is my duty to do so.

PROPOSALS WILL GIVE ENCOURAGEMENT TO INVESTORS.

In bringing this question before the House, I would like to ask hon. members what will be the result of this policy to those who have invested and taken an interest in our mines? Will it not give fresh hope and confidence to the investors and show that the people of this colony, and the Government, and the Parliament of this country, are alive to the pressing necessity of providing water for the Coolgardie goldfields? Will it not show we have faith in the mines ourselves, and that while they invest their capital we also are willing to invest the money of the country in providing a permanent water supply?

EXPORT OF GOLD.

There is another fact that I think I ought to bring before hon. members. It is an important one, and must be told, that the output of gold for the last twelve months is slightly less than it was for the twelve months preceding. There is no doubt that this is due to the falling-off in the quantity of alluvial gold obtained, but people in other places will not look behind the fact that the gold exported up to the 30th June, 1896, was of the value of £895,135, as against £910,456 for the year before. [Mr. MORAN: The battery gold has much increased.] It is satisfactory that, dur-

ing the last month, the returns have increased. It is of course well known to us in this colony that the batteries are only just beginning to work, but how will the people in London and the foreign investors look at it? What did the hon. member for West Kimberley write to me in regard to the effect the reduced returns for the month of April had in London? He said it had a very adverse influence upon the London market. I am glad to say that the returns for June are more satisfactory, but there is still the fact that we did not produce quite as much gold last year as we did the year before. I am sure that it is only the want of water that is keeping back the output of gold from the Coolgardie goldfields. Instead of there being an export of gold to the value of a million for the whole of Western Australia, if the fields had plenty of water, I should not be surprised if five millions of gold were exported, or even seven, as I said before; from the Coolgardie fields alone

**MORE REASONS WHY THIS WORK SHOULD
BE UNDERTAKEN.**

The permanent supply of water would also give confidence to British and foreign investors in our mines. Now is our chance; will we take it or will we cast it aside? There is cheap money, there never was a time when money was so cheap. No other Australian colony has been able to raise money at as cheap a rate as we have done. We have cheap money, good credit, and, what is more, the eyes of the world are upon us. Are we to sit here and do nothing under these favorable circumstances? It would be unwise when we have the opportunity to throw it away, when we have the opportunity of providing the goldfields with the one thing needful to make them still more prosperous. And we should always remember that the project which I am placing before you will not only do all this good, but will pay from the day the work is constructed. It will pay not only the interest, but it will provide a sinking fund and the cost of maintenance. Why, then, should we hesitate? It will also drive away sickness, I am sure. When we see so much sickness, so many valuable lives lost on the fields, I believe that it is due mainly to the want

of water, and it is our duty to make things better for them. A plentiful and permanent water supply will drive away sickness—it will make Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie like other cities of the world, which they can never be unless such a scheme as this is carried out. As I said before, the scheme will bring the land under subjection from Northam to Coolgardie. I do not suppose that it will ever be very thickly populated, the rainfall is so uncertain, but the land is good in many places. It can be utilised for stock, and in good seasons to some extent for farming. At any rate, the land will be capable of carrying stock when water is provided for them, and a new area of occupation will thus be added to the colony.

SOME OPPONENTS OF THE SCHEME.

I think I said the chief opponents were those who have a little water scheme of their own to promote. However that may be, there are other opponents, there are other good honest men in this country who are opponents. They are timid and afraid. They have not been accustomed to great projects. I find no fault with these people, as I know them to be honorably inclined, but it seems to me that if they had had their way during the last six years, since the introduction of Responsible Government, the colony would not be in the position it is in to-day. To these good men who are my friends, I say we are not afraid. The members of the Government and the supporters of the Government are not adventurers, we have something to lose, and we believe that this is a great and urgent work, and we also believe that it will pay. I will ask hon. members whether they have found us very much in the wrong during the six years we have been working together for the good of the colony. And if we have not been wrong in the past, is it not probable that we shall be right in this matter, as we have been in many other projects that we have had difficulty in carrying through this House? I wish hon. members to remember that the expansion of the revenue and the increase in the value of land, which is enormous, especially in the city of Perth—the good

market for the producers—and I appeal to producers especially and ask all those who have producing interests in the colony to rally round the Government and support this scheme, because we are going to provide markets in the interior, which will be sufficient for all you can supply for a very long time—and the general prosperity of the colony are all very largely due to the goldfields. Besides these things we have been able to build railways, construct the Fremantle harbor works, and we propose to establish a deep sewerage scheme in Perth and Fremantle, all of which are works you so much desire, but none of them could have been carried out before the discovery of gold in this colony. Let us all remember these things in dealing with this question, and help that industry which has been helping every other industry in the colony. What is there to be afraid of? I suppose I am more intimately associated with the finances of this colony than anyone else. I have to look after them from year to year, and know their details, and I am not afraid of this scheme, which will be a self-supporting one and will assist the agricultural and every other industry in the colony. I think that when hon. members come to reflect upon this matter and consider it in the way I have considered it they will be convinced that there is no alternative. There is really no alternative but to adopt it. The proposal for conserving rainfall as a permanent supply for the fields is in my opinion quite out of the question.

CONCLUDING REMARKS.

I have nearly come to the end of what I have to say. I feel sure that I must have wearied hon. members, but it is too great and important a question to be dealt with in a few words. I will now finish the observations I have to make, and would like to say to hon. members and to the people of the country that, during the six years that the Attorney-General and myself have sat on this bench and have been introducing measures into this House, the same members have as a rule opposed those measures. There are not many of the hon. members to whom I refer, but some have opposed us on almost every great and good work

we have brought forward in this House. I would ask has the Government ever led hon. members of this House or, the people of this country into any difficulty? Have we been reckless in our policy, or have we not, notwithstanding the great works we have carried out, the railways we have built, the public works we have instituted—have we not at the same time in some degree—although I do not wish to make a boast of it, but it is worth mentioning—at the same time reduced taxation? And we hope to do a little more this year. Have we not some little reason to look at the record behind us, and to ask hon. members and the people of the colony, from one end of it to the other to rally round us and trust us? Most of all, I think this Government can lay some claim to the support of the representatives of those parts of the colony which are benefiting so much by the Coolgardie goldfields, and if there is one place more than another in this colony which is being benefited, which is being changed, being rebuilt, and becoming another place altogether, it is the city of Perth. I think, sir, in the remarks I have made that I have proved that this colony is in a position to undertake this work. I have not the slightest fear myself. We can build this work and will never feel it. We will never feel this expenditure any more than we feel a burden the three millions or more we have borrowed during the time I have been in office. Are we not in a better position to-day to pay the interest on the debt of four and a half millions than we were when the Government took office, and when we had to pay only the interest on a million and a half? We are in a very much better position. It is no trouble whatever for us to pay the interest on our debt at the present time. The interest on our public debt, even with the proposed expenditure on this water works scheme, I say again, will never be felt by this colony, unless the goldfields of Coolgardie collapse. I do not think anyone will use the argument that the gold is not there; and that is the only argument you can use against the feasibility and practicability of this measure. I have proved that the work will pay; I have proved that it will do good, and I have proved that it will reclaim the wilderness to a great

extent, and spread comfort and plenty along its course. In conclusion, I would like to emphasise this point, that not only are the mines languishing for the want of water, and the output of gold is being retarded, but our fellow-colonists who are trying to build up this country are also languishing—living in discomfort, without even the necessities of life in regard to water. And when we remember that dirt and disease are fostered by the want of water, where health and cleanliness should prevail, surely a strong case is made out in favor of this scheme. I say, sir, the scheme which I have had the pleasure and honor of placing before the members of this House, and before my fellow-colonists, is a project worthy of an enterprising people. I believe, if we carry out this great work, not only will the gold-fields flourish, and not only shall we be relieved from our present anxiety in regard to the water question, but we shall also be repaid a hundred fold. Future generations, I am quite certain, will think of us and bless us for our far-seeing patriotism, and it will be said of us as Isaiah said of old: "They made a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert."

ADJOURNMENT OF THE DEBATE.

MR. SIMPSON: I think that, in view of the importance of the speech the Premier has made, it would be as well for the debate to be adjourned for a fortnight in order that we may assimilate the information he has placed before us. I beg to move that the debate be adjourned till this day fortnight. [THE PREMIER: No, no.] The Government have been familiar for months with the details of this measure, and I think we should be allowed time to go carefully through it.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. Sept. Burt): Of course the Government will be ready to accede to the wish of the House in regard to the date of the adjournment, but I would suggest that, if it is intended to refer this Bill to a Select Committee, it would be a waste of time to defer the debate for a fortnight. Therefore, I would ask the House to consider whether it is desirable to refer the matter to a Select Committee. If so, I should think that the adjournment of

the debate for a week would be sufficient, but if it is not intended to have a Select Committee I do not think that a fortnight is too much to ask for.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I hope that the House does not intend to have a Select Committee on this Bill. [Hear, hear.] I know of no instance in which a Select Committee has done any really practical work in dealing with a Bill, and certainly I should oppose a Select Committee. I hope that the Government will grant the adjournment that is desired.

THE SPEAKER: It is against the Standing Orders for any discussion to take place upon a motion for the adjournment of a debate.

Question—That the debate be adjourned to this day fortnight—put and passed.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 6.55 o'clock, p.m., until next day.