

In the first place, when that line was warranted, in my opinion it was proposed to start it from the wrong end. In the second place, I do not think it is warranted, but it is still to start from the wrong end; therefore, I have much pleasure in opposing that railway wherever it starts. I have no more to say except that, having seen what an extremely false prophet the right honourable gentleman has been, I refuse to place any more reliance in the prophecies he has indulged in to-night.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie) : I regret that there is a certain amount of evidence of lack of willing speakers at present. I must candidly confess that I did hope and trust the debate would finish to-night, but I rise to ask the Premier whether after his important financial statement this evening, and the information which he has given us that we should have had days ago, at any rate, whatever information he has given us, also whatever definite announcement he has made as to his policy on the fiscal question, whether he thinks it important to adjourn the debate until to-morrow, and go on with other business, so that we may inquire into the truth of his financial statement or otherwise. I move the adjournment of the debate.

THE SPEAKER : We cannot go on with any other business.

MR. MORAN : Then I formally move the adjournment of the debate.

MR. DOHERTY : What is the matter ?

MR. MORAN : We want to reply to the important figures which the Premier has placed before us.

THE PREMIER : Somebody else may want to speak. I thought you wanted to get on with the business.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : They are all going to speak, I understand.

MR. GEORGE : We want to know what the Premier said. We cannot remember it all.

MR. MORAN : Yes; we want to see what he said, when it is in "cold print."

THE PREMIER : You do not represent the Opposition.

MR. MORAN : You do not seem to represent anything just now. I ask the Premier if he will consent to an adjournment. I want to see the figures in print.

THE SPEAKER : Did the hon. member move that the debate be adjourned ?

MR. MORAN : Yes.

THE PREMIER : I really have no objection, if the House wants to adjourn.

MR. MORAN : I think it is a very important thing that we should see the speech which has been delivered to-night.

THE PREMIER (to Mr. Illingworth) : Do you want to adjourn ?

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I do not care. I cannot speak again, you know.

THE SPEAKER : Neither the mover nor the seconder can speak again on the main question.

THE PREMIER : Do you want to adjourn ?

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I want to get done.

THE SPEAKER : I had better put the question, and let the House decide.

Motion for adjournment put, and passed on the voices.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10 minutes to 9 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 5th September, 1900.

Papers Presented—Urgency : Mail Steamer at Fremantle—Question : Warden's Residence, Phillips River—Address-in-reply, debate (general), seventh day (passed)—Cottesloe, etc., Electric Lighting and Power Bill (private), first reading; referred to Select Committee—Federation : Correspondence with Secretary of State, papers presented, motion for further papers (negatived)—Motion : Kalgoorlie Goldfields, Report of Government Geologist—Papers : Dismissal of Mr. L. Milligan (motion withdrawn)—Return : Financial Position of the colony—Return : Assistant Returning Officers, Referendum—Papers : Perth Ice Company, Frauds on the Railway—Return : Duties affected by Free-trade—Return : Paris Exhibition, Expenditure—Return : Insurance Premiums paid by Government—Notice of Motion (postponement) : Federation, to defer New Public Works, Division—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, Report of Governors of High School (1899-1900); 2, Report on Fishing Industry (1899); 3, Meteorological Observations (1899); 4, Report of Commissioner of Police (1899-1900); 5, Report of Aborigines Department (1899-1900).

Ordered to lie on the table.

[Correspondence, Secretary of State: see under separate head.]

Return (asked for by Mr. Gregory) showing the Indebtedness of the Colony, also laid on the table by the PREMIER.

URGENCY—MAIL STEAMER AT FREMANTLE.

MR. SOLOMON (South Fremantle): I would like to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of making a few remarks in reference to the fact that the mail steamer, the "Australia," did not come into the port of Fremantle. I think the Premier should make every endeavour to do away with any erroneous impression which may have arisen in consequence of it. I call attention to this matter, because under the circumstances, this being the second steamer of the P. & O. Company to arrive, it is highly necessary that any wrong impression which has gone abroad should be at once removed. I therefore ask the right hon. gentleman to do all he possibly can to remove that impression which, in some quarters at any rate, has arisen. I formally move the adjournment of the House.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I propose making inquiries, but I really think that the less said about the matter the better. It is nothing unusual for a ship not to come inside a harbour when on its arrival there is a low barometer. Even at Albany ships sometimes stay outside, and I do not think there is any signification in the fact that the captain of the "Australia," who had very little cargo to take on board and very few passengers, preferred not to come in, this being his first visit to the port of Fremantle. I am inclined to think that when the captain comes again he will know more about the place, and will enter the harbour. From my own observation, I should say there was no reason whatever why the ship should not have come in on that day, because the sea

was not rough, nor was the wind high. There is no doubt the barometer was low, and I think it was inclined to fall about the time the captain of the ship anchored. Doubtless he had in view the quick dispatch of the steamer. Night was coming on, and perhaps he thought the wind would gain strength, and that if it did so he might be unwilling to go out if a storm arose. I really think it is not worth while to give any prominence to the matter, because it was the first visit of the particular captain to this port, and at the time the barometer was certainly very low.

MR. J. F. T. HASSELL (Albany): With regard to what has fallen from the Premier, who made a remark about steamers lying outside Albany harbour, I beg to differ from the right hon. gentleman. The reason why steamers sometimes do not come into Albany harbour, and the reason why that ship would not have entered Albany harbour in such weather, was that there is not sufficient water to bring the ship in. I have been agent for the company getting on for the last 20 years, and it is not owing to wind, weather, tide, or anything of that sort, that a ship stops outside at Albany. The reason is, I say, that we have not sufficient depth of water there to bring those ships in.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There is a matter of some importance that has been overlooked. Some telegrams have been sent to the other colonies and published in the Melbourne newspapers, at any rate, that the steamer "Omrah" went aground at Fremantle. I think it is worthy of the attention of the Government to give a contradiction to a statement of that kind. As to the other matter, I agree with the Premier as to not giving prominence to it. But it is a matter for consideration whether some official contradiction should not be given to the statement that the "Omrah" went aground.

Question put and negatived.

QUESTION—WARDEN'S RESIDENCE, PHILLIPS RIVER.

MR. A. Y. HASSELL asked the Premier, Why the tenders for the warden's residence at Phillips River were not advertised.

THE PREMIER replied: In order to save time, tenders were not publicly advertised in the newspapers, as the urgency of the requisition from the department concerned warranted the departure from the usual custom.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

DEBATE (GENERAL), SEVENTH DAY.

Debate resumed from previous day, on the motion for adoption of Address-in-reply to the opening Speech of the Administrator.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I think hon. members will agree with me that this has been the most extraordinary debate on the Address-in-reply we have ever had in the House. There have been strange evolutions in parties; there have been strange remarks about; there have been strange assertions of absolute freedom on the part of the Government supporters to do as they liked, barring one thing. We have had two speeches from the Premier, in the first of which he confined his attention solely to what in my mind was like an intimidation of members, daring them in any way to interfere with the Government proposals, because public money was to be spent in their districts. That may be fairplay, but it is not in keeping with the high ideal which the Premier sometimes speaks about, that we should consider the country first and the constituency second. We had another speech last night heralded forth before tea of what the Premier was going to do, telling us he was going to knock members' figures into a cocked hat. We had an hour and a half of the Premier, who worked himself up into such a great state that, luckily for himself and his physical health, you very kindly intervened, Mr. Speaker, and left the Chair five minutes before the explosion. The Premier joined with the rest of us in having a good dinner, and under the influence of the good dinner the attack was forgotten, but the Premier came back like a giant refreshed and renewed his attack on members, and in a few bold strokes, in keeping with his bold and progressive policy of the past, he disposed of the financial statement. He wiped off the public debt of Western Australia in three fell swoops. He wiped off seven

millions in one lash. Then he slaughtered two more millions, leaving them a complete wreck. He galloped on joyously and gaily, and arrived at the conclusion that when everything is completed, when all the public works are finished which are now proposed, we should owe two millions of money, and our indebtedness would be to the extent of five shillings per head per annum of the population. That is the financial position of Western Australia from its most responsible Minister—a debt of two millions, making a charge per head on each person in Western Australia of five shillings.

THE PREMIER: I said seven shillings.

MR. MORAN: Did you get as far as seven shillings? That must be when the new works are completed. Anyhow the Premier wiped off ten or twelve millions from the public debt of Western Australia. Looking back over that speech of the Premier's, I am inclined to think, and hon. members will think too, that the Premier made no attempt to meet the situation as set before the House by some hon. members who have taken the trouble to look into the figures. The only occasion on which he attempted to touch on the total indebtedness of Western Australia was when his proposals are completed in two years' time, and when he said we should really owe 14 millions; and the Premier remarked "What is that? Supposing we do owe 14 millions: what are 14 millions?" Well, I am pleased indeed with the result of this discussion, be it no more than to have gained from the Premier that his proposals are going to involve the country in two years' time in a debt of 14½ millions of money. The Premier never thought to add any figures together for himself, but he took our figures. I intend to bring some more figures to bear on the question before the House this afternoon, and to deal more closely with the Premier's remarks; to look into his assertions and the way he wiped off the public debt of Western Australia, with a view of seeing how much in reality, on the same method adopted by the Premier, the public debt of Western Australia actually is. I may in passing briefly mention one matter that was referred by the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes), who is perfectly well able to deal with his own figures. The amount of £22,000 debt,

which the Premier said had been incurred up to date for the South Africa Contingents, should be something like £42,000.

THE PREMIER: We paid something like £16,000 last year.

MR. MORAN: Is the £22,000 going to cover the whole thing?

THE PREMIER: That was the expenditure last year?

MR. MORAN: What is this £22,000 paid down for.

THE PREMIER: Money that has been paid and not allocated by vote.

MR. MORAN: It is paid?

THE PREMIER: The money has gone out and has not been allocated by votes.

MR. MORAN: I say the only amount you should credit yourself with is £13,000 which you are to get back again. The allocation of the money does not reduce the debt. What strikes me more forcibly than anything else is the absolute truth of my assertion when I spoke on this matter before, in regard to the tactics to be adopted by the Premier as to the disaffection of his party. I said the Premier was going to give his own party a free hand; he would tell them that they should have a free hand, but he would not let them have a free hand when the separate items came on for consideration. How true is that when the Premier took all the works proposed and traversed them last night. He spoke of the merits and demerits of those works. He did everything he could to bring before the people of each constituency the advantages to be gained in the way of this money expenditure if he was allowed to continue in his place and to continue in his policy of borrow and spend. There are six or seven, probably eight, members of his party who object to more loan authorisations. If they object they must object to something, and if they object to the whole they must object to each item. Then why single out item after item to intimidate each member? Why does the Premier pin members down to this, that, or the other? I will pin myself to this: I want to put a stop to the reckless extravagance which is going on now, the bad financing that is going on—coming down to the House for new authorisations, not new works: that is what I am going to pin the Premier down to. He does not intend to build these new works: he wants new authorisations to keep things

going, to float more Treasury bills to carry on the old works. Yet he tells me that I am opposed to new works, whereas he wants more money with which to carry on old works. The Premier is deceiving the country in telling the people that he means to go on with new public works and that he will complete certain public works in two years. The authorisations he has in hand are not sufficient to complete the works which have been commenced, and new authorisations must be made to carry on the old works. That is the position exactly.

THE PREMIER: The revenue does not owe anything.

MR. MORAN: The Premier, in mentioning a motion of which I have given notice, but which I do not wish to discuss but merely to follow the example of the Premier, charged me with endeavouring to stop all public works expenditure in Western Australia; that is what the Premier said, but it is absolutely untrue. There is not a scintilla of evidence in the motion itself about stopping public works. My object and aim is to stop the commencement or proposed commencement of new works, and not to begin new works, also works not already in hand. Take the Goomalling railway line, which the Premier said I wished to stop the construction of. My motion talks about works not in hand, and the Premier, in speaking on the Address-in-reply, said the Goomalling line was already in hand; that £5,000 has already been spent on it. The right hon. gentleman forgets his own speech. How can any movement to stop works not in hand stop works already in hand.

THE PREMIER: But the money will not carry it far.

MR. MORAN: What money? The money you have not got, but ought to have?

THE PREMIER: The money voted last year on the Loan Act—£20,000.

MR. MORAN: Did you wish to say that I would stop appropriations for works in hand—necessary works? The Premier should deal with the matter fairly. Do I wish to stop appropriations for the Coolgardie Water Scheme? Do I wish to stop appropriations for the Fremantle Harbour Works, or the duplication of the railway lines? Do I wish to stop the purchase of rolling-stock, for

which we gave power last year, but which has not been done? How much did the Premier appropriate for the Leonora line last year? Does he remember? Probably he does not. He appropriated, I believe—I have the Loan Act here—item 201 on the Loan Act is “Menzies to Leonora (first instalment), construction £60,000.” Yet the Premier comes to the House and tells me I want to stop the Leonora railway line. Last year the Premier was authorised to spend thirty thousand pounds on this line, and what has he spent on the work?

MR. GEORGE: About five thousand pounds.

MR. MORAN: Has the Premier spent anything on the line? If he has spent anything and bought the rails, my motion will not stop the construction of the line, seeing that it is a work in hand.

THE PREMIER: You are climbing down.

MR. MORAN: Am I climbing down?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. MORAN: I will make you climb down, and will show the people how unfair you are in wishing to have it bruited abroad that I and others seek to stop every public work, and, as the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) said, throw every working man on the streets without a day's work. No action taken by this House up to date would have deprived one single man of work; and the motion of which I have given notice would, if carried, simply mean that the Government would have to tell us the honest truth and say they do not want new appropriations, but that they are short of one million pounds for old appropriations, and unless money be granted the works must be stopped.

THE PREMIER: Those works are not the works you mean. What do you mean?

MR. MORAN: I am dealing with each particular work as I go on. The Premier can read English, and if he can tell us of any work authorised and not in hand, I am against that work.

THE PREMIER: These have all been authorised except the Norseman line.

MR. MORAN: And are already in hand?

THE PREMIER: Rails have been bought or surveys made, or something done.

MR. MORAN: Are the rails bought for the Nannine railway?

THE PREMIER: No; I do not think they are.

MR. MORAN: Then I am against that work, and I am against the Coolgardie-Norseman line, and against discussing any water scheme for Perth—which last is a bit of bluff, as the Premier admits—and I am against the consideration of the construction of a dry dock at Fremantle. I do not object to the latter work as one who disbelieves in such a dock, but I know the Premier will have to spend a quarter of a million on the harbour works to prevent them from running into the sea.

THE PREMIER: I find we have ordered the rails for the Nannine line.

MR. MORAN: Then make the best use you can of that fact.

THE PREMIER: Your motion means nothing.

MR. MORAN: Let the Premier do what he can, but he must stick to the truth, or as near to it as possible. To “return to our muttons,” at the Fremantle Harbour Works, as we saw only yesterday, about fifty feet have been blown off the mole, and every day money must be spent there to keep the works from crumbling away. I suppose something will have to be done at the bridges at Fremantle to prevent the sand from drifting away from the piles; and every necessary work must be carried out either by this Government or another.

THE PREMIER: Then we are actually in accord.

MR. MORAN: Works in hand I have never attempted to stop.

THE PREMIER: What do you want to stop?

MR. MORAN: I want to stop the Premier, principally.

THE PREMIER: You cannot say, after all your talk, what works you want to stop.

MR. MORAN: The Premier will have to choose other methods if he hopes to bluff me, because I will not be bluffed. I will pin him to his figures, and stick them before members of this House and under his nose on every possible occasion when public works proposals are before us. I will let the people see that to-day we are in a bad state financially, inasmuch as we do not exactly know what items are

charged to what votes, or what reappropriations we have made; though, what is more, we know that the Premier cannot go on with the works in hand for the amount which has been authorised, added to the amount in the Treasury to-day. When the Premier talks of new works, he only talks in order to get reappropriations afterwards, and for the purpose of borrowing money to make good the shortage; and the Treasurer who comes after him will find himself under an obligation to carry out these new works without having any money for the purpose. We were told that £20,000 had been authorised for the Goomalling railway, about £5,000 having been spent, and as we passed an extra vote to the latter amount, the work should go on. And then there are the Boulder line duplication and other matters. What has been done? How much money has been expended, and how much is chargeable for each of these necessary works? I represent the Boulder constituency, and I, with other members, know all about the traffic on the line there, but I need not say much on the subject now. While I cannot blame the Commissioner in the slightest for the condition of the line between Kalgoorlie and the Boulder, I have often told the Government the line is a disgrace to Western Australia. It is a disgrace that we should be losing revenue there, and the appointments of the line are a scandal. When I go between Fremantle and Midland Junction I see, at every "tin-pot" station, buildings, overhead bridges, double stations, and platforms; and what for? Because someone has an estate there, or because there are people who hope that population will spring up around the stations; and thus railway requirements precede population. But on the Boulder line what do I see? At Hannan Street, where tens of thousands of people are swarming in and out of the railway carriages like bees, there is no platform, and there is no shed or place in which you would put a decent turkey.

MR. VOSPER: And the line is dangerous too.

MR. MORAN: Then at the Boulder, which is a big city with a population, within a mile radius, of 10,000 —

MR. PIESSE: Whom do you blame for this?

MR. MORAN: I am blaming nobody; but all these are necessary works, and, if anybody, the Government and the House are to blame for these railway conveniences not being in a better state.

THE PREMIER: But you say we must not go on with any new work.

MR. MORAN: Do for heaven's sake finish the old works, and do not bluff the country about new ones. There is another reason for carrying out the work to which I am referring. Economists tell us, and I believe the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) reckons, that the life of a man is worth something like £200 to the State; but on the Boulder line there is no doubt a large value in human life may be destroyed at the rate of £200 worth per week. There are no fences or protection of any kind; and the sight there on Saturday nights is enough to make the goldfields people rise up against the whole lot of us and tell us we are not doing our duty. I have not harried the Premier or the Government about this; but the late Commissioner knows that I have gone to him many times on the subject, and I know he was seized of the importance of the position, and was doing all he could; but the finances of the country are in such a state that he never knew what vote he had to draw against, or what money he had in hand. I never insinuated that we should stop these works, and a third reason why they should go on is that the amount of revenue lost is enormous.

THE PREMIER: You object to our doing the works.

MR. MORAN: If the Premier wants to do the works, I shall not stop him.

THE PREMIER: What do you want to stop?

MR. MORAN: I want to stop you interjecting for a moment, if I can.

THE PREMIER: I am not interjecting so much as this morning's newspapers show you to have done.

MR. MORAN: We voted a certain amount of money last session for the Fremantle dock and slip, but what has been done in these works I do not know. Then we passed a vote of some £15,000 for the Bunbury Harbour, but we do not know what state the works are in, or whether the votes have been used up, and I am now seeking after information.

THE PREMIER: You should get the information before you speak.

MR. MORAN: For dredges and barges we passed an item of some £20,000. Where is that money, and what has been done with it? And then there are the Fremantle Harbour Works, for which a big vote was passed, and lighthouses and other works; and we should like to be informed what condition these works are in. How much has been saved on each, or how much overdrawn? All these works are in hand, and have to be completed, and I do not intend to interfere with them. But how about the great work already in hand, the Coolgardie Water Scheme, which is sufficient to keep the Government going for a year or two? We were told in a financial statement of last month that on the Coolgardie Water Scheme there has been spent only half a million.

THE PREMIER: More than that.

MR. MORAN: Five hundred and thirty thousand odd pounds, roughly speaking; do not hang me for a penny or two. Practically there are two millions left to spend on this work; and what motion has been tabled, or what word has fallen from any hon. member in favour of stopping the carrying out of this scheme? None whatever. This work, which is to cost two millions more, is very much in hand, and it is a pity it is not out of hand by this time, because it should have been finished and the water flowing on to the goldfields by now. We were told this work would be paying sinking fund by now, but the years are rolling by, the gold is decreasing and the people living on, while on the money borrowed, no interest is being paid, nor sinking fund being put by.

THE PREMIER: The Act provides that shall be done in a certain time.

MR. MORAN: Yes, but your figures showed that the sinking fund would have been in process of being provided for by now.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. MORAN: I beg your pardon: I do not want to refer the Premier to his speeches, but he said that three years from the date at which he was speaking, the work would be paying sinking fund. I started by saying that the Premier was trying to represent to hon. members that if the Opposition policy were pursued,

men would be thrown out of work, but I say that no motion and no word mentioned in this House, would place one man in the country out of work.

THE PREMIER: What are the works you want to stop? What are you complaining about?

MR. MORAN: I maintain that the Premier, in his endeavour to lay these charges at my feet and at the feet of hon. members, is wilfully deceiving the country.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And the Premier knows that.

MR. MORAN: The Premier knows we never intended anything of the sort, and when he says we did, he cannot have read our speeches—I know he sometimes does not listen to them—or he would have known from the motion that nobody intended stopping works in hand.

THE PREMIER: What works do you want to stop? You cannot say, because you do not know.

MR. MORAN: My motion still leaves to the Government, public works to carry out to the value of at least two and a half millions of money.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Quite enough.

MR. MORAN: The Government have in hand without borrowing, so the Premier tells us, one million. Can the Government spend that one million pounds before we have a general election? It is all right if the Government can spend that amount, but I will give hon. members more figures. According to the Premier last night, the Government have £1,200,000 in hand and in the Savings Bank, to which, no doubt, he has the key.

THE PREMIER: That is not the amount.

MR. MORAN: The amount is £1,200,000. I hope to show that from the Premier's own lips we have it that there is only £900,000 odd of the General Loan Fund, or cash in hand £1,200,000.

THE PREMIER: That is not the amount.

MR. MORAN: How much?

THE PREMIER: It was over a million, I am certain.

MR. MORAN: Shall we lump it at a million? If I am not mistaken, the Premier is going to lump some revenue with loan, but he has got no more than £970,000 of loan moneys in hand. If so, where does he get the rest? I have the figures here as well as he has.

THE PREMIER: Why not read them out?

MR. MORAN: I read them out the other day, and hon. members know perfectly well I am sticking as closely as possible to the Premier's own figures. How much of loan money is there shown in the balance-sheet this month? The *Gazette* of July shows to General Loan Fund £979,000, and these are the figures I have always quoted, and, though I have turned them in every possible way I can, I cannot find more money.

THE PREMIER: The cash is £1,204,874 0s. 2d.

A MEMBER: Does that include everything?

THE PREMIER: That is everything.

MR. MORAN: Revenue?

THE PREMIER: All cash in hand.

MR. MORAN: How can the Premier allocate the revenue of the colony to works which have been authorised to be done by loan money? The Premier knows he is deceiving us again, because he has only £979,000 of loan money for loan works, and all the works I mention are loan works. How do I know what balance of Treasury funds there may be, or what charges there are against it? If the Premier asked for authority to allocate money to the relief of loan funds, that might be done with safety; but I take the balance-sheet and say he has a million in hand of loan funds. What does the million consist of? According to the very same balance-sheet, there is £337,000 of "stock and stores" to come out of his cash.

MR. GEORGE: Stock and stores?

MR. MORAN: Stock and stores. The Premier will not deny that there is £330,000 worth of stores included in that £900,000.

THE PREMIER: A great deal of it belongs to current account; quite half of it, at any rate. Much belongs to the railways.

MR. MORAN: Is that balance £970,000 cash?

THE PREMIER: £300,000 of it does not belong to loan only: it belongs to working railways and current account.

MR. MORAN: How much of it represents stores as distinguished from loan account? The House ought to know that. Here is the Premier telling us he has a million of cash in hand: now he

tells us some of that balance is stores—how much, he does not know.

THE PREMIER: Why do you not deal with the financial position of the country?

MR. MORAN: That is exactly what I am dealing with.

THE PREMIER: You are dealing with current account. That has nothing to do with the argument.

MR. MORAN: We shall go on a step further. I will tell the Premier he has a million in hand to go on with.

THE PREMIER: I can borrow another million when I want it.

MR. MORAN: That is just what I wanted you to say.

THE PREMIER: What is the good of your dealing with current account?

MR. MORAN: I shall continue to deal with it as long as I can, for by so doing we are getting at the truth. The Premier has in hand a million of loan funds: give him the stores in, and call it a million. Let us say that sum is now in the Treasury, available for expenditure. Between this time and the end of the next financial year on June 30th he will have, according to his own hopes and anticipations, a revenue of £2,800,000 to spend, in absolute cash. The Premier, if he remain in power till June next, will have, including the present balance in hand, the handling of £3,800,000 between this and next June; and yet he tells us we wish to lock up the country altogether. Why, we cannot prevent his spending that sum; we cannot prevent his spending the revenue of the colony if he remain in power; for on his own showing he will have at his disposal £3,800,000 without any further authorisations, if he likes to spend the money. Is not that enough? Would not that be enough for Western Australia to spend in one year? Or is it not enough for 180,000 people to spend £3,800,000 in nine months? And yet the Premier, as I said, tells us that he must come down for more authorisations; and he refers to myself and those who think with me as "do-nothing croakers." It appears to me we are prepared to do a lot, if we are willing to authorise him to spend £3,800,000 at the present juncture of the country's history. If we are willing to do that, it appears to me we, as well as the Premier, are a bit too liberal. But this is not all. Besides

the balance he has in hand, hon. members well know that in 1896 we authorised the Premier to borrow £7,100,000—the extra £1,100,000 being for the purpose of buying the Great Southern Railway. And here let me remark, as was said about the charge at Balaclava, “Some one has blundered”; for we should have had that railway for a quarter of a million less had the purchase been made to-day. We knew we were pushing forward with the Fremantle Harbour Works, to bring the mail steamers to that port; and certainly we were all short-sighted—every one of us; for if we believed those steamers were coming to Fremantle inside a reasonable time, and yet bought that railway, taking it over at a loss, then all we can say is, “Someone has blundered”—perhaps the lot of us. However, we raised that £1,100,000; and what else have we raised? We authorised the borrowing of £3,500,000 for the General Loan Fund. The Premier has borrowed, by direct loan, £3,000,000 against that authorisation, in separate items of £1,000,000 each. We authorised him to borrow £2,500,000 for the Coolgardie Water Scheme: these sums making altogether £7,100,000. He has raised by Treasury bills £1,800,000 outstanding now against him, and he has to borrow to pay them off on the 1st of next year.

THE PREMIER: The 1st of next year?

MR. MORAN: In June, 1901—anyhow, before the time your public works will be finished, or inside the time, two years, which I gave you to complete your works. Against that authorisation of £7,100,000 you have raised everything barring a balance of about £200,000. Is not that so? We have an authority left of £200,000; but now I want to knock that £200,000 down a bit. On page 2764 of this *Government Gazette*—and I want the Premier to answer this question—

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member must not, while he is speaking, call upon any member to answer a question.

MR. MORAN: I do not wish the Premier to answer the question now, sir.

THE SPEAKER: He will not have an opportunity of speaking again.

MR. MORAN: We will give him an opportunity of moving an amendment if he wishes to do so. I will ask the Premier, if he has an opportunity, to answer this question: On June 30th, as

a charge against general loan, we have “Proceeds sale of local inscribed stock, £70,000.” That is extra, besides the £1,800,000. Where did the Premier get that £70,000? Because, if it is against the general loan, he has only £130,000 left of the £7,100,000 authorisation. These are the figures as I make them: hon. members can check them for themselves. Now, besides that £130,000, we passed last year a loan authorisation of £680,000; therefore the Premier has an authority to go to the London market to-morrow, if he wants to try it on—we cannot stop him—to-day or to-morrow, or so long as he is in power, we cannot stop the Premier from borrowing another £680,000 and £130,000: that is, roughly, £800,000. Besides the million he has in the Treasury, besides the £2,800,000 representing the ordinary revenue which he will receive next year, the Premier has an authority to borrow another £800,000—£3,800,000 and £800,000 more, are £4,600,000; and yet the Premier tells us that this House wishes to stop every public work in Western Australia.

THE PREMIER: You want to stop those new works authorised last year.

MR. MORAN: No. I want to stop the Premier from pretending to the country that he is going to construct them, as he did in the case of the Leonora railway. He said last year he would build that line; I said he would not build a foot of it last year; nor has he done so. What has he done with the Goomalling railway? He has spent a few paltry thousands upon it. What has he done with the Nannine railway? Nothing at all. And just now, on the eve of a general election, he is about to pledge the country to some more authorisations for the purpose of building works which he will be unable to construct. Where is the common sense of this? He has plenty of money to go ahead. What does he want to do? His action resembles the old scheme of the man who bought a house and mortgaged it, bought another and mortgaged it, and bought a third and mortgaged that; and so on. I have seen many cases of that sort in Brisbane and Melbourne. I have known a man who owned a couple of hundred houses in that way; and finally came the crash. It is the case of the five men hanging on to the bridge to get the cheese—one

holding up the other till the one at the top lets go, and down come "the whole boiling." The American phrase, "bull-dozing the country," is the best expression to use. There is a glamour about the whole thing. The Premier wraps himself up in a mystic veil of figures. He is like the "veiled prophet of Khorassan": you cannot see him for figures and authorisations and conglomerations; then there are the reappropriations; and, after that, what comes but damnation for the man who follows him? Because that man will have the works in hand, and no money with which to carry them on. The Premier wraps himself up in a veil of figures, and his own direct supporters, apparently, never ask him for the truth about the figures; and those members who do ask him for the truth, he will not satisfy. We never know exactly where we are in reference to our financial position. Why do I take this action now? Because, as I say, conditions are changed. I do not care who the man may be, federalist or anti-federalist: he will be a wise man if he can tell me what we shall get from customs in the future. It may all come right; but surely, when we are going into a gigantic change like this, we might pause and consider. That subject was not mentioned in the Premier's speech. He never, by one figure or one word, dealt with the probable revenue of Western Australia under the changed conditions brought about by federation.

THE PREMIER: What has the revenue to do with the question of whether new railways will pay?

MR. MORAN: Oh, I will come to that also. That is a splendid argument. Here, *apropos* of that interjection of the Premier—here is something from *Coghlan*.

MR. A. FORREST: I think you had better hand over the colony to the Official Receiver.

MR. MORAN: Well, it is in the hands of the official deceiver now; so the sooner we make a change the better. If the Premier will kindly listen to me, with his usual courtesy, I will read him an extract from *Coghlan* about these paying railways of his:

In 1881 the New South Wales Railways yielded 5·31 per cent.—a higher rate of interest on the capital cost than was ever reached before or since. In the same year the Victorian lines yielded a return of 4·04 per cent.; and in the year 1886 the Victorian

Railways yielded interest at the rate of 4·18 per cent.

Here are the returns for to-day. There is not a single railway system in Australasia that is paying to-day, except the railways of Western Australia. Here are the figures of to-day—this is the Nemesis! [**A MEMBER:** The New South Wales railways pay.] I deny that the New South Wales railways pay; because *Coghlan* is taking the returns on the theory that New South Wales got £100 every time she borrowed or became liable for £100; but *Coghlan* proves that colony got only £96 per £100 for which she became liable; and, taking it upon the actual cash realised, her railways are not paying interest. They have to pay interest on £100 every time; but if we take the £96 she got for her loans, the debt is £100, although the realisation was only £96. Here are the figures: there is no paying railway system in Australia; and yet we are told that the railway system of Western Australia, with the greatest number of miles in the world per head of population, is always going to pay as it is paying now. This is what I call, not bold finance: I call this a reckless mortgaging of the future of Western Australia. Surely to goodness, Western Australia is not much better than all the other colonies that she is going to escape a decline in her railway revenue! New South Wales is a rich and great colony; Victoria, though a small colony, has many more people per mile of railway line than we; yet their railways do not pay, and those of Queensland do not pay. Here are the figures for Australia, made up a year ago, when this report was prepared; and they have not changed much since. New South Wales loses 0·07 per cent. on her system, Victoria 1·26, Queensland 1·23, South Australia 0·93, the Northern Territory—more like our interior country than anything else in Australia—4·02 per cent. Western Australia gains 5·43 per cent. on her railways at the present day, like Victoria and also like New South Wales used to do when they were spending millions in public loans policy and their traffic was inflated. Then they had their big returns as we have our big returns. Tasmania loses 2·72 per cent., New Zealand 0·73. In the face of the history of Australia, and in the face of the fact that the railways are not expected

to pay, the Premier is relying on the railway revenue to pay the debt and interest in this country. Is that bold; is that judicious; or is it reckless? I maintain that, looking at the history of Australia and at the intermittent prosperity of every goldfield and the likelihood of every goldfield rising and falling, the Premier is acting in the noon-day of success, and is not providing for the night of distress. He is living up to the maximum, when he should be living up to the minimum only. I maintain that the Premier's arguments about seven millions being wiped off the public debt of Western Australia are shallow and unworthy of him. The seven millions of debt still remain; the expense is there always; but how can he guarantee the revenue? I come to some other financing by the Premier. Here are some more of the Premier's remarks. I am going carefully through his remarks, because I think they are very important. Here are some methods of dealing with the debt of this colony. He referred to £85,000 Agricultural Bank money. He said he left out that £85,000. It was gone. We owed it to someone else; but we were secured against that debt by some household, some farm, some holding, some little infinitesimal part of Western Australia. Is not every pound of our general loan secured by every acre in Western Australia; is not the general debt secured by the whole of this colony? I ask the Premier, who knows something about mathematics, how can the part be greater than the whole; how can that little farm be greater security for the debt than the whole of the land of Western Australia? Every pound we owe to the British investor and every pound we owe here on local scrip is a charge against Western Australia as a whole. It avails little to speak of this man's farm or that man's farm, because if the farm gets burned down it is gone, but the debt still remains. The Premier said there was £44,000 for land purchase. [At this stage the Premier left the Chamber.] I thought I would shift him, he could not stand it any longer. He speaks of £44,000 for land purchase, and says we cannot call that a debt. Probably the sheep farm, or whatever it is, is a good investment to a good business man; but whether it is a good business invest-

ment or a bad business investment does not alter the fact that the debt is a charge against Western Australia. If that security does not realise the amount, is the mortgage a limited one? Will lawyers tell me that we are not liable, because a man's farm gets burnt out? There is, I say, an unlimited mortgage against Western Australia; and to speak in the free-and-easy manner in which the right hon. gentleman referred to these things is not worthy of the Premier of the colony. But here is the prime of the lot. I think this just about takes the damper. He says he wants to take out of the debts of Western Australia £300,000 of the £1,100,000 paid to the former owners of the Great Southern Railway. He says that £300,000, which was paid for some land down there, is no debt at all. While £300,000 has been paid for some land down there, how many million acres of land have we in Western Australia?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We are giving land away, too.

MR. MORAN: I think there are a million square miles in Western Australia, so there must be 640 millions of acres in this colony. Let us knock 540 millions out of that, and take the remaining 100 million acres as being valuable. I maintain that we can borrow 50 millions of money and then be solvent, on the method of calculation adopted by the Premier. If that £300,000 be no debt because he has estimated the value of the land at 10s. per acre, naturally when I get into power I am going to borrow 50 millions of pounds on the same argument, namely that I have 100 million of acres of land, the security being at the rate of 10s. per acre. Indeed, I do not know what we could not borrow on that system. It is perfectly certain that we can spend it. The party on the Government side can spend it, anyhow. We are waiting and anxious to know what other number of men can come here and so coolly and calmly and with so little consideration spend a few millions as we have done in the past. I want to know what party can do that. That is the argument of the Premier. He contends that the £300,000 should not be included in the debt, because, forsooth, he has that piece of land; which he always had because the whole of the land of Western Australia is taxable as the property of the State.

Why is that land more valuable to the State, because we have bought it back, than the land which we have never sold? It is too absurd. The Premier threatened this House that he was going to show the country who the "croakers" were, and was going to expose those financial geniuses who had never travelled and knew nothing about the matter. It is unworthy of the Premier to treat a matter of the kind in the way he did. We know that the £300,000 is a public debt of the colony, and he cannot remove that debt without paying the bonds.

A MEMBER: There are the Perth Water Works.

MR. MORAN: Yes; there are the Perth Water Works, another security. If it be a security, we are going to take a little of the security away from it, anyhow, by having a rival scheme of another £350,000.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Savings Bank money.

MR. MORAN: Here again the Premier says he has the Savings Bank money in hand. "It is there in the Treasury," he says. "What matter if I borrow the savings of the people of Australia and spend them broadcast; the money is going back to their pockets again." The unfortunate thing is that the Johnny who gets the money back is not the one who put it into the bank. The man who deposits it loses it perhaps, and if he does not lose it, the amount is just as much a public debt of Western Australia as if the money were borrowed in London. Will any man tell me we ought to be less careful of the funds, the hard-earned money of our own people, than we ought to be of the funds of the British investor? The Premier glibly talks about having this money in the Savings Bank. We are ten times more liable to the man at home than we are to the man in the old country, because the man in the old country is a business man who lends to the colony money out of his hoarded wealth. But in the other case, in the case of those who deposit money in the Government Savings Bank, the man does not lend the money to the Government, but deposits it with those in power as a benevolent Government. He comes to you as a Parliament, and as honourable men, and he comes to the Treasurer of the colony and the Govern-

ment, and trusts you confidently. A man says, "Mind for me my savings and my hoardings; hold this precious all I have, in safe keeping." We are trustees in the one case, and we ought to be a thousand times more careful how we utilise the funds of the Savings Bank. We ought never to allow this colony to be unable to put down a sovereign whenever a depositor in the Savings Bank calls upon it for the amount. We must not glibly talk about funds we have in the Government Savings Bank. This is the great giant, this is the political giant referred to by my friend the Minister of Mines, at whom we must not throw stones, and whom certainly it would be very hard to hit just now, seeing that he believes in the old adage, "He who fights and runs away, lives to fight another day." I say it would be very hard to throw stones at him where he is at present. He is not a fair fighter.

A MEMBER: The Minister of Mines?

MR. MORAN: I have nothing to say against the Minister of Mines. I have no want of confidence in that gentleman.

A MEMBER: You said the Minister of Mines.

MR. MORAN: I was attacking the Premier, and I assert that I have no want of confidence in the Minister of Mines, who has administered his department with distinction and decided success. That gentleman has the confidence of this House, and I know for a fact that he has the goodwill and sympathy of the whole of the goldfields people. I do not want to be misrepresented. I have no want of confidence whatever in the Minister of Mines; I am finding no fault at all with him. May we always have a man of his high honour and probity to administer the Mines Department of the colony. I have no want of confidence in the Attorney General of this country, and I listened with considerable pleasure the other evening to his explanation with regard to the Ice Works transaction. I am very sorry he did not give this information before. It was a lucid and legal explanation, which I noticed met with the approval of the legal members of this House. The only fault was that he did not speak soon enough. I have no want of confidence in the Commissioner of Lands, and I do not know that we can

improve upon him. I repeat that I do not want to be misrepresented. The position in which I find myself is this: I am totally opposed to, and I have no confidence whatever in, the financial proposals of the head of the Government. That is the position I take up. What action I have taken was not to put the Government out of office nor to bring about a dissolution, causing the Government to go to the country. For even if I look at it in a personal light, I do not think it is ten to one on my coming back again. Certainly it is not ten to one on me. I have a recollection of a public meeting at the Boulder some time ago, and I can assure you that my nerves and my liver must be gigantically strong, because they went through that severe test and I am still alive. I do not want that more than once in fifty years: it is quite enough to have one such experience. It will be seen that I am not anxious to put the Government out for the sake of a dissolution. All the same, I say that had my action or anything I could do meant their downfall, I should not have studied the fact that I was not likely to come back myself. I should not have studied the great respect, belief, and confidence I have at the present moment in some other departments of the Ministry. I would not have allowed them to stand in my way, because I recollect that now is the time for every man in Western Australia to do his duty. At the present time the duty of those in this "corner" who have done great work for the country, and those of us who do not believe in the Premier's financial proposals, is not to let these matters stand in our way. The solvency of this country is the most important thing. The solvency of Western Australia affects every man in the colony, and most of all it affects the working men, the men of the labour party. If the Government stopped public works for one day, I might hang on for a week or two; some of us might be able to do it; we may have a little money. But how about the thousands and thousands of men in Western Australia who are living from hand to mouth—where would they be? If this colony got into financial trouble, the first to fall would be the people who are working for their daily bread. I do not wish to throw the Government out

on to the wayside hedge, but I say, be careful and do not rush into millions and millions of expenditure in the next two years, heaping up a great crowd of the labouring classes, spending every pound you can beg, borrow, or steal, winding up the works suddenly, finishing the public works policy, and coming to that stage reached by every Australian colony. Victoria came to it, New South Wales came to it; and perhaps worst of all, owing to the loan policy of Sir Samuel Griffith involving an amount of £10,000,000, Queensland came to it. The same thing was repeated in South Australia. Even if there were to be no change in the constitutional life of Western Australia, why should we try to push on all these public works together? Is it more important that we should build a railway from Coolgardie to Norseman to serve a few people and an output of two or three thousand ounces of gold, or maintain the solvency of Western Australia and the steady employment of 200,000 people which we are told will be here in two or three years time? We know we have not the men or the money to do the work. We know we are in debt one million on past works. What is the use of coming down to the House for authority to construct new works when it is only to cover up the authorisations which have already been made? I asked the Premier last evening to tell me where he is going to get his revenue from next year. He will lose sooner or later £300,000 in duties on intercolonial goods, £15,000 on the Great Southern Railway line, and, taking the opinion of good men, I estimate that at least the Government are getting £50,000 a year for the railways by the public works which are being carried out, in the shape of the carriage of goods, the traffic of the men and women who live about those works, the thousands of people living on the Coolgardie Water Works, and on other public works that are being carried out. This railway revenue is fictitious inasmuch as it is not of steady growth. It is inevitable that on the completion of the public works policy of any country there is always a shrinkage in the revenue of the colony. There are people who live on public works in Australia: they go about from colony to colony following the public works; and these are losses which must

be inevitable. We shall lose about £300,000, which loss we shall have to face in a year or two. Let us come to the increased charges on the revenue of the country, items that we cannot get out of. We are paying interest on twelve millions of money, and we have to borrow two or three millions to finish the works which are to be completed in two years. After we have borrowed those three millions we have to pay interest at the rate of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on the money, and $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. on an extra three millions which we must raise in two or three years is £105,000. Can we get out of that? It is to be a permanent charge on the people of the country. We have to pay $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. for the money required for the Coolgardie Water Works—two and a-half millions. Then there is the sinking fund for the Coolgardie Water Scheme, which means £75,000, also £10,000 sinking fund on one million at one per cent. In addition to that there is £170,000 which is set down as the permanent cost of pumping the water in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme, making a total increased expenditure of £360,000. Can any one explain to me how we are going to get out of this increased expenditure? If we add to this £360,000 the amount of the losses £365,000, which is on the debit side, we have £725,000 debit balance. I ask members of my own party, I ask every member in the House, did the Premier touch on any of these figures? Not one word or figure did he use to attempt to show where he was going to get his revenue from in the future. Why does the Premier allow me to make these assertions twice on the floor of this House? I am a traitor to the country if my statements are false. They are damaging to the country in the highest extent if they are true. Yet the Premier sits there and lets me make the statements. I do not want to belittle the country I belong to and must remain in. Why does the Premier burk these statements? Why go out of the House? My answer is only one answer. His own following will not insist on having an answer and we cannot get him to answer. Supposing the Coolgardie water scheme is absolutely self-supporting in everything; then we will take £240,000 off that charge. Still

there is £480,000 on the wrong side of the ledger to account for. Follow my calculations further. If the water scheme is self-supporting, there is £480,000 to be accounted for. Our revenue is £2,800,000. Add to that and the increased expenditure which is inevitable, not £480,000, but the increased expenditure, which will bring the amount up to £3,160,000 of revenue which the Premier must get in the future. Am I right or am I wrong? I am getting as near the truth as possible. I want to ask the Premier where is this £3,160,000 coming from in the future? How are the Government to get it from 180,000 people? Still, will it be believed that the Treasurer of the colony never by a figure touched the question at all last night. Not a scintilla, not a word have we extracted from the Premier as to how he is going to pay his way. We are driven to the belief that he does not mean to pay his way; that he is going to spend the money and let the next man pay. According to the Premier Western Australia will grow, but the amount of expenditure will grow too. If it takes £2,800,000 to govern 180,000 people, it will take more thousands to govern 200,000 people—let my friends the civil servants listen to this—or else he is going to cut something down that he is paying. Whom is he going to cut down? I let the country answer the question for themselves. I ask the civil servants and the people of the country, and I ask the House, are the Government going to pare off gradually the £15 odd per head per annum which has to be raised from the people of the country. Queensland, which has the highest public debt in Australia with the exception of Western Australia, has to pay £7 10s. per head, whereas we have to pay double that amount. While the importation of dutiable goods into the country continues, while the navvies eat dutiable goods, while the people on the goldfields continue to consume dutiable goods, we may be able to extract this revenue from the people; but can we go on extracting this money when there are no dutiable goods? Can we go on paying this £15 per head of the population? Am I to be told that I am posing as the farmer's friend? Perhaps I might have posed a little bit earlier. Let me tell the Premier, the farming community and their representa-

tives in this House what Mr. Coghlan and every political economist tells us, that as a country grows older the duties, either with or without federation, go down. I have an extract from Mr. Coghlan somewhere here, and will read it:

Speaking generally, it may be said that the customs revenue is declining, and is likely to decline. Apart from the specific causes mentioned above, other effective if less obtrusive influences are at work. Year by year the industries of the colonies are being developed, and the local producer is acquiring a firm hold upon the domestic markets.

Instead of our duties having to decline, they must go up to keep pace with the times. What is the most popular form of taxation, after customs? What is coming for Western Australia? How are we going to get taxation? How is the champion of Western Australia going to get taxation out of the people of the country? He cannot get it by duties, because they are gone; he cannot get it from oversea duties, because as the population grows manufactures grow. How is he going to pay the interest on this fourteen and a-half millions of money? Who is your friend? The man who gets up in the House and tells you to go slow. The farmer, the man who is settled in the country, will be here, but the man who is working on the railways, the man who is working on the public works of the country may not be here at all. The people on the goldfields may be a fleeting quantity, but I believe the population of the goldfields will rise and increase. Still the history of all the old goldfields in the other colonies shows that the goldfields populations decline. The population of the goldfields in other countries has gone down. Do you think the man in England will say, "I will let you off your interest?" That is not what the man in England will do. The man in England will want the interest, and we shall have to pay the principal too, by renewing the loan or paying the interest on it. As sure as the sun will rise to-morrow, we are going to have a land and income tax in Western Australia.

MR. HIGHAM: Quite right too.

MR. MORAN: As long as my friend is satisfied, so am I; but if there was a Bill before the House to-night to impose a land and income tax the hon. member would not say, "quite right, too." If the hon. member did not vote against

the Bill, he would find that he was urgently wanted outside. The country cannot hope to get revenue out of customs, and we shall have to get it somewhere else. A land and income tax swoops down on town and country lands alike. I was in favour of a land tax on a small graduated scale, but I say now, on the eve of a general election, that a universal land tax in this country would be wrong: it would be against all our past policy. An absentee land tax, an unimproved land tax, will come; but the Premier is going to bring forward a land tax on every inch of land unimproved in the country. Our constitution is made up from the bi-cameral system. The time has come, perhaps, for a reconstruction of the constitution of Western Australia altogether; and I fail to see what use one branch of the Legislature to Western Australia is at all. However, here is a warning, and in my opinion this reckless borrowing and spending policy is hurling the agricultural classes into debt, for a permanent charge on the lands of the colony.

MR. MOORHEAD: How can you charge alienated lands?

MR. MORAN: I do not know whether the hon. member's politics are as good as his law: if so, I shall not argue with him; but I do not think his politics are as good as his law. Alienated land is land sold by the Crown to John Jones; but the Crown always maintains the right to tax the land, and every "bean" we borrow and every penny of interest are charged against every man's land.

MR. MOORHEAD: It is not land but people who are taxed.

MR. MORAN: When we say "the Crown," we mean the responsible Government of Western Australia.

MR. MOORHEAD: The Government are the people.

MR. MORAN: No doubt, but every act the people do has to be sanctioned by the Crown. Taxation is in the hands of the people, but can the people pass any Act without the consent of the Crown, or the responsible officers of the Crown? These, however, are mere quibbles, because taxes have to be paid in any case. In conclusion I would ask what are the prospects in the next two years of a revenue of £2,800,000? I have said the Premier wants more new authorisations

for old works, and I want to prove my statement. The Premier has a balance from the loan of 1896 of £130,000, and he is authorised to use £680,000 from the 1899 loan : that means he has loan money amounting to £810,000. He has in hand £1,000,000, which gives us £1,810,000 of total authorisations in hand. In one word I ask the House, am I misstating facts when I say the Premier wants new authorisations for old works? Am I misstating when I tell hon. members what they already know, that the whole of the money and authorisations to come would not finish the Coolgardie scheme, which is yet to cost £2,000,000? That £2,000,000 the Premier has not got; and why does he tell us he wants new authorisations for new works? What does the Premier say about the rolling-stock, the Goomalling line, the Leonora line, the harbour works, the Junction workshops, the improvements to opened lines and the wharf sheds at Fremantle? Where do these works come in, seeing that he has only £1,810,000? That amount would not provide for the water scheme alone, for which he is £200,000 short of the estimate, and there are other works to carry out. If the Premier has the money, will he tell me where it is? The fact is he has no money for old authorisations, and he wants new authorisations to cover up old reappropriations or deficiencies. Can anything be more plain than that the Premier is sadly behind, and mixed in his finances, and is mortgaging every vote a year ahead. What is his game? A fresh loan? His game is clearly to continue with the same glamour to the end of his term, and then we do not know whether he is going to remain or who will "carry the baby" afterwards. Look at our necessities in the way of loans, and see what we have to borrow in the next two years. There is £1,800,000 which must be borrowed for Treasury bills, and we have to raise three millions more to finish the works proposed, making a total of £4,800,000. But the Premier has in hand £1,000,000 of cash, and that leaves £3,800,000 for which, if we allow him to go ahead, he will have to go to the London market. What prospect is there in our present position, and in view of the discount rate and the state of the money market of the world, together

with the troubled political atmosphere at home, of any success for us with a loan in London in the near future? Yet with all these things ahead, the Premier shows no change or cessation of his policy. The fact is not denied that our national debt will be fourteen and a half millions when the projected public works are finished; and if the population increase in the next two years at the rate of ten thousand each year, giving an increase of twenty thousand at the end of the two years, our debt when they are finished will be £73 10s. per head, or nearly £5 higher than the highest public debt in Australia, namely that of Queensland, although the interests of this country are, after all, not so great as those of Queensland, nor are our resources so varied. And our industries are small compared with those of Queensland, excepting our one industry, which is not always regarded as a good basis on which to calculate a certainty. With all these things ahead the Premier wants us, even with the increased population, to be £4 or £5 a head more in debt than the people of the colony which has the highest debt, and the colony which has borrowed and spent most extravagantly; and, as I said before, the Premier seems to be making a bid to be called in the future Sir John "Vogel" Forrest. Where are these twenty thousand people to come from? Who will guarantee that they are coming? The Premier wants us to guarantee the money to spend, whilst he will take the chance of the people coming. To sum up, the works proposed commit us to an indebtedness of fourteen and a half millions: to do these works we shall have to raise two millions in the next two years, and to pay our Treasury bills we must raise £1,800,000, making a total loan of £3,800,000. Our revenue must then be £3,200,000, in round figures. We shall probably lose at least £350,000 from present sources, and will have to make good over £600,000. Where is that money coming from, and why has the Premier of the colony not taken these matters into consideration in the earnest straightforward manner he should have done? Why should we in this House have to rise twice in our places and repeat the same questions and figures, saving and excepting for one purpose alone? I maintain that Western Australia expects

that every man, in this session at least, will do his duty.

Question—that the Address-in-reply be adopted—put, and passed on the voices.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I had proposed to take up the time of the House for a few moments, but I am afraid the Speaker did not see me rise.

THE SPEAKER: I did not see the hon. member, and the question was put before he rose.

MR. GEORGE: If I am in order, I would not like the debate to close without sacrificing myself.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order, because the question has been decided.

MR. GEORGE: Then I must sit down?

THE SPEAKER: Yes. If it be convenient to His Excellency the Administrator, I propose to go to Government House to-morrow at quarter to five o'clock, to present the Address-in-reply.

COTTESLOE, ETC., ELECTRIC LIGHTING AND POWER BILL (PRIVATE).

Introduced by MR. MOORHEAD, and read a first time; also, referred to a Select Committee—consisting of Mr. George, Mr. Holmes, Mr. James, Mr. Solomon, and the mover (Mr. Moorhead)—to report on the 19th instant.

FEDERATION—CORRESPONDENCE WITH SECRETARY OF STATE.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

THE PREMIER moved for leave to lay on the table correspondence between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Administrator of Western Australia. This return, he said, was asked for by the member for the Murray.

MR. GEORGE: Would he be in order now in going on with a motion on the Notice Paper dealing with this same matter? Correspondence between the Administrator and Mr. Chamberlain had not been asked for; but he had asked for the correspondence between Sir John Forrest and Mr. Chamberlain, which was another matter altogether.

THE PREMIER: There was no such correspondence.

THE SPEAKER: The motion of the member for the Murray (Mr. George) would come on in due course, when he could speak to it.

Question put and passed, and the correspondence ordered to lie on the table.

[At a later stage, the same matter was dealt with as follows.]

At 6:30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

MOTION FOR CORRESPONDENCE.

MR. GEORGE (Murray) moved:

That there be laid upon the table of the House the whole of the correspondence, cables, etc., which have passed during the last 12 months between the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain and the Right Hon. Sir John Forrest, with reference to Federation.

He said: The Premier has laid upon the table this evening a batch of correspondence between His Excellency the Administrator and the Secretary for State for the Colonies. I do not know whether it was the intention of the right hon. gentleman to give that correspondence as a reply to my motion; but, if so, I must say that, to myself and a number of people who think with me, this is not the reply we feel we are entitled to. I have no right in this House to make any remark upon messages which may have passed between His Excellency the Administrator and the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. If I were to do so, I should be trenching very closely on what is called "treason"; and far be it from me in any shape or form to come within that. I asked the Premier a plain, straightforward question, but for some reason or other that question has been turned into a motion. I ask that the right hon. gentleman shall lay upon the table the material upon which he led the people of this colony to believe, during the late federation struggle, that there was some sort of veiled threat that, if Western Australia did not enter into federation, the Secretary of State would do something the Premier did not disclose. I suppose the answer of the Premier will be that nothing has passed between himself and the Right Hon. Joseph Chamberlain. If that should be his reply, then I ask him to explain why he so deliberately misled the people of this colony. If he tries to say that it is private correspondence, which he is privileged to withhold from the people of this colony, I would respectfully submit that the time for privacy has passed.

Federation has been adopted, and the aim of the right hon. gentleman and those who followed him in his turncoat policy has been achieved. We know there has been one more traitor who does not belong to this Chamber, and it is a jolly good job that he does not. We know there is one honourable traitor—

THE PREMIER: The hon. member should not call a member of the other House a traitor.

MR. GEORGE: I beg to submit that I was not referring to any hon. member of the other House. I referred to an honourable traitor.

THE PREMIER: The word "traitor" is out of order.

MR. GEORGE: I think that you, Mr. Speaker, are the best judge as to how far members should be curbed in their language. You have had more experience than the Premier. However, I will say not "honourable traitor" but "dishonourable traitor." He is known very well down Bunbury way—that dishonourable traitor who was associated with the Premier in his turncoat policy. I notice from this correspondence—I can refer to that, I believe, without any disrespect—that the first telegram received by His Excellency the Administrator was that expressing a desire for a summary of the views of the leading newspapers of the colony as to Clause 74. I speak with all respect, but I do not suppose the Administrator would reply to that communication, but would be used (again I speak with respect) as a figurehead for conveying the views of the Premier as to which are the leading newspapers. There is the *West Australian*—I cannot say much about that, because I respect my hon. friend on my left (Mr. Harper) too much to speak about it. Then there is the *Morning Herald*. But are there no other newspapers? What about the *Kalgoorlie Miner*? Surely the Premier recognises that as a newspaper. That paper is not abusing him, but blathering him up nicely. What about the *Kalgoorlie Sun*?—another newspaper which, by its action, has saved this colony nearly £3,000 in exposing the recent frauds committed in connection with a company that I will not name, because I do not wish to hurt the feelings of anybody, shareholders or otherwise.

THE SPEAKER: Will the hon. member confine himself to the motion?

MR. GEORGE: I believe this comes within the motion?

THE SPEAKER: I cannot see how it does.

MR. GEORGE: I know I am a little away from the subject, but I am trying to get the return. I wish to see this correspondence, and I want to see why these leading newspapers have not been referred to. For instance, there is the *Sunday Times*, which is a leading newspaper, and which held some very strong views on the question of federation. The Premier has tried to meet my motion not in the way he knows was desired, not in a way which would remove from the people of this colony any doubt with regard to his actions in this matter, but he has tried to shield himself in correspondence passing between two persons, only one of whom I have named. If it is a matter of State policy that the correspondence I asked for should not be laid on the table, the Premier should say so; but let us have a straightforward answer with regard to the subject.

MR. A. FORREST: Give him a chance to reply.

MR. GEORGE: Certainly; it is only common fairness that I should give him such chance. I think the hon. member (Mr. A. Forrest) had only one who supported him on the question of federation, and that was a bullock. I ask the Premier to give me a categorical reply—that is a good word—to my motion. I ask him also to lay these papers on the table and let us see what passed, and what warrant he had to tell the people of this colony that something terrible was going to happen through the agency of the Secretary of State, if we did not enter federation.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): All the correspondence between Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies and this Government has been laid on the table of the House. There is one letter, a semi-official letter, I wrote to the Secretary of State, and I received a reply to it. That letter and the reply I do not propose to lay upon the table of the House, but I am most willing to show them both to any member who likes to come to my office and peruse them. There is nothing in the matter. The

letter was written directly, as a semi-official letter, to Mr. Chamberlain, and was not intended for publication. It was written at the time Mr. Parker went to London as a delegate from the Government, to urge upon the Secretary of State that the better terms, as they have been called, desired by myself and many others in the colony should be granted. The letter dealt with that subject exclusively, urging the Secretary of State to assist the people of Western Australia to have the Bill so amended. To that letter I received a reply, also of a semi-official character. That is absolutely the only communication I have had from the Secretary of State, except the communication that you see contained in the former paper, namely No. 1 of last session and this. I may say that although these communications passed through the Administrator, I am responsible for every one of those telegrams, as they were written by me and sent to His Excellency to be forwarded on behalf of the Government. My reply is that the whole of the correspondence which has passed between the Secretary of State and this Government is on the table, with the exception of one letter, which I consider of a quasi-private nature, and the reply; both of which I shall be very pleased to show to any hon. member of the House who is interested enough to come to my office to see them.

MR. GEORGE (in reply): I would submit respectfully that there is no correspondence that the Premier receives and sends in his position as Premier that can be fairly held to be private and kept from the Parliament of the country.

THE PREMIER: What, a confidential document?

MR. GEORGE: Who gives you authority to send confidential documents? Who gives the Premier the right to "bulldoze" the people by holding out threats that the Secretary of State is going to do certain things? I say distinctly that any correspondence dealing with the matter that has influenced the Premier in the way he has been influenced, and the dishonourable traitor that was associated with him, the people of the country have a right to see. To say that the Premier would submit the letters to any hon. member is not right. This is the place to submit the documents, not at his office. If I take the Premier at his word and go

to his office and see this correspondence, no doubt he will hold me down not to say anything about it.

THE PREMIER: You may talk about it as much as you like, as long as you do not take a copy of it.

MR. GEORGE: I believe *Hansard* has taken a correct note of what the Premier has said, that I am to see this letter, do what I like about it, and talk about it as much as I please. I promise the Premier to keep him to his promise and take him at his word.

THE PREMIER: I do not mind the motion being passed. I cannot produce any documents.

THE SPEAKER: I thought the hon. member would withdraw the motion.

MR. GEORGE: I am willing to withdraw it. I have got the Premier's promise, and I shall keep him at his word.

THE SPEAKER: The Premier has informed the hon. member that there is no correspondence. I do not know that the hon. member can get what does not exist.

MR. GEORGE: The Premier has told us he sent a letter and received a reply. I am not well educated, but I believe that is correspondence.

THE SPEAKER: He has no official correspondence.

Question put and negatived.

MOTION—KALGOORLIE GOLDFIELDS, REPORT OF GOVERNMENT GEOLOGIST.

MR. MONGER (York) moved:

That, in the opinion of this House, it is advisable, in the best interests of the Eastern Goldfields and those interested in them, that the Government should place on the table of this House, at the earliest opportunity, the report of Mr. Maitland on the Kalgoorlie Goldfields.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: There is no objection to the report being produced.

Question put and passed.

PAPERS—DISMISSAL OF MR. L. MILLIGAN.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison), for Mr. Ewing, moved:

That all papers connected with the dismissal of L. Milligan, of Northam, railway official, be laid on the table.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather): The reply that had

been furnished with reference to this motion was in the following terms:— "After consulting Mr. Jackson, of the Crown Solicitor's office, it is suggested that Mr. Ewing be informed that Mr. Milligan has commenced an action against the department, and it is not expedient that the papers should be placed upon the table until the case has been disposed of."

MR. EWING (having returned to his seat): On leaving the House before tea, he did not think his motion would be reached so soon. The motion was brought forward merely to see whether the person had been justifiably dismissed or not. He was not aware, until the Minister mentioned it, that an action was pending against the Government, and he took it that it must be an action for wrongful dismissal. That fact had not been brought to his notice at all; but he failed to see why the fact of an action pending against the Government should influence the House in any particular, because if it was just and fair to place the papers on the table of the House, showing why the individual in question was dismissed, without any action pending, and it was justifiable at the present time. Could it be suggested how the papers and correspondence that had taken place could prejudice the right of the Government to defend the action in any way? The person interested in the action had a right to inspect the papers by means of a writ for discovery; therefore he failed to see why the Government should object to place the papers on the table. He moved the motion in order that the person should know why he was dismissed from the Government service. If the papers would throw any light on the question, if they would justify the action of the Government, the probability was that the action commenced would be dropped. Therefore it would assist the Government by bringing the matter properly under the notice of the persons in charge of the action. If there was anything in the papers which would justify the Government, no doubt it would have a very satisfactory result from their point of view. He failed to see how the fact that an action was pending prejudiced the Government; therefore he pressed for the production of the papers.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): This was a new doctrine laid down by the hon. member. He (the Premier) had never heard any legal gentleman hold the view the hon. member seemed to hold on this point. When an action was pending, said the hon. member, the Government should give all the information to the House and the public, in order that the other side could see whether the Government had a good case or not. He thought the a-b-c of parliamentary procedure was that the House was never asked for papers, or never insisted on papers being produced, when a matter was *sub judice* in the courts. This action, he was informed, had been taken against the department.

MR. EWING: Had a writ been issued?

THE PREMIER: The document which the Attorney General had read said that Mr. Milligan had commenced an action against the department. He did not know anything about the case: he never heard of the man or his case in any way.

MR. GEORGE: As Commissioner of Railways, the Premier ought to know.

THE PREMIER: The matter never came under his notice. The man was going into court, and would get justice by going to the highest tribunal in the land to settle the dispute; therefore one did not see why this correspondence should be published. As to a writ for discovery being obtainable, he very much doubted if the plaintiff would get a writ authorising him to see documents and papers which contained the opinions of the legal advisers of the Government.

MR. EWING said he had nothing to do with the case.

THE PREMIER did not insinuate that he had. If a writ for discovery was asked for, he (the Premier) did not think the plaintiff would be able to get confidential papers containing the opinion of the law officers. The principle on which we had always gone was that when an action was pending, no papers were asked for or placed on the table of the House. He hoped the hon. member would not press the motion, as a very dangerous precedent would be established if it were carried.

MR. PIESSE (Williams): The matter of producing the papers arose prior to his relinquishing the position of Commis-

sioner of Railways and Director of Public Works; and the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) was communicated with when the notice of motion was given, and was told there would be no objection to the papers being shown to him if he would call and see them. There was nothing really to withhold, and the only reason why the Government had decided in this instance to withhold the papers was in consequence of an action having been commenced. Outside of that there was no objection to produce them, and if the hon. member had taken the opportunity of seeing the papers, probably he would not have gone on with the motion.

MR. EWING: The communication now referred to did not reach him.

MR. PIESSE: It was sent to the hon. member's office.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): The principle that papers should not be laid on the table of the House while an action was pending was a salutary one, therefore perhaps the contention of the Government was quite right. At the same time he did not altogether sympathise with the objection raised by the Premier, because the Premier assumed the Government stood in the same position as a private individual and was entitled by the law of self-preservation to keep his secrets to himself, and put the plaintiff to all the trouble it was possible. But the Government defended an action as the trustees of the people of whom the plaintiff was one, and if the Government were really not justified in defending the action it was not their duty to defend it, although it might cause some loss to the public exchequer. If there was any justification for the action being taken by Mr. Milligan it would be contained in the papers, and therefore destroyed the justification for withholding the papers. In matters of this sort, if the Government were perfectly sure of a case, and if there was no chance of an injustice being committed, the papers should be submitted to the House.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: It was only on the principle.

MR. VOSPER: On the principle, he was with the Government.

MR. EWING (in reply): As previously stated, he was quite unaware an action had been commenced by this gentleman, who in his last communication said

nothing about his intention of suing the Government. The Government, no doubt, were placed in a peculiar position, and the matter now having entered into the jurisdiction of the Courts, the object of Mr. Milligan could be achieved just as rapidly by an order for discovery, if the Judges thought fit to grant such an order. At the same time, the Government had acted unwisely in this matter, and he (Mr. Ewing) had no hesitation in saying that when a person was dismissed from a Government department or from any private employment, an employer should not be afraid to give a reason. Justice should be meted out by the department over which the member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse) lately presided as it would be meted out by a private individual.

MR. PIESSE: Private individuals did not disclose their case.

MR. EWING: Private individuals, as a rule, gave their reasons when they dismissed a man, stating in what the man had failed to perform his duty. He would ask leave to withdraw this motion, solely because he was informed by the Attorney General that Mr. Milligan had commenced proceedings against the Government; but a strong protest should be made against the action of the Government in refusing to tell Mr. Milligan, or the person acting on Mr. Milligan's behalf, the reason he was dismissed, because if the Government had a good reason, surely they need never fear stating it.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

RETURN—FINANCIAL POSITION OF THE COLONY.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie) moved:

That a return be laid upon the table of the House, showing: 1, The present indebtedness of Western Australia. 2, The amount available from Loans and Treasury Bills for the completion of works authorised by Parliament. 3, The amount which, it is estimated, will be required to complete these works. 4, The amount which has been reappropriated from existing authorisations. 5, The manner in which the Government proposes to recoup these moneys thus reappropriated.

It was hardly necessary to proceed with the motion, as he understood the papers had been laid on the table to-night.

MR. VOSPER: Twenty-four hours too late.

MR. GREGORY: He would, however, proceed with the motion, to which he thought hon. members would agree, in order to have the answers to the questions published in the Press. At the same time he could assure the Premier that a proper reply to the questions was not anticipated.

THE PREMIER: The papers were put on the table this afternoon, and if the hon. member was not satisfied he could ask the Government further questions.

MR. GREGORY: The papers were anything but satisfactory, and hon. members were just as much in the dark now as they were after hearing the Premier's wonderful speech last night about the finances of the country.

Question put and passed.

RETURN—ASSISTANT RETURNING OFFICERS, REFERENDUM.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie) moved:

That a return be laid upon the table showing, in detail, with names and all particulars, all claims that have been made for expenses and remuneration by Assistant Returning Officers and Issuers of Voters' Certificates in connection with the Federal Referendum.

There was no necessity to discuss a motion which simply asked for information. The reason for asking for the information was that he had been the recipient of complaints from various assistant returning officers and certificate issuers, as to their having been inadequately paid. One man wrote from the South-Western district saying he had received £2 15s. for what he called a month's work. On the other hand, he (Mr. Vosper) knew as a fact that in some of the larger centres of population extremely extravagant claims had been sent in by assistant returning officers. That being so, it would be advisable and advantageous to the public if the House were allowed to know what claims of the nature had been sent in, and what the Government had done respecting them. The claims of some people whose names would appear in the list would show them as fit and eligible for future employment, while, as to others, it would be just as well to know about them, in order that they might be avoided.

Question put and passed.

PAPERS—PERTH ICE COMPANY, FRAUDS ON THE RAILWAY.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie) moved:

That all papers, documents, accounts, minutes of evidence, and correspondence, of whatsoever nature, relating to the recent frauds perpetrated by the Perth Ice Company or its servants, be laid on the table of the House.

He had no desire to go exhaustively into this painful subject again, because he recognised it must be by this time rather wearisome to hon. members to hear it talked of so much and so frequently. At the same time, he could not disguise from himself nor from hon. members the fact that the statements put in circulation with regard to the proceedings of the Perth Ice Company had left a very unpleasant flavour in the mouths of electors in the colony. Hon. members had recently heard the explanation given by the Attorney General, and he (Mr. Vosper) did not propose to traverse that explanation, which, from the Attorney General's point of view, was no doubt of a satisfactory character; but it would be beneficial to the people and to the reputation of the colony if the whole of the papers in connection with the case were laid on the table. He was aware certain correspondence was published in the Press the day before Parliament assembled, but he took it that correspondence did not include the whole of the results of the investigation; and there was another matter in the background it was desirable the public should be acquainted with. In reference to what had been said in the House on this unsavoury subject, his conduct had been called in question, it having been alleged he advocated that the shareholders of the company should be prosecuted. He did not think he had gone so far as to advocate that, because he knew the position of shareholders in a company of this kind. The point he found fault with in the conduct of the shareholders and directors of the company was that they and the Government had made a scapegoat of one individual—a man named Hancock, who was manager of the company at the time these frauds were perpetrated, and still held the position. While the directors had shown every desire to clear them from the charge of being mixed up with this piece of rascality, and while disclaiming

all knowledge of these nefarious proceedings, they liberally bestowed the blame on Hancock, and it was a remarkable fact, requiring explanation, that they did not dismiss this manager.

MR. A. FORREST: The whole company is wound up, and the assets have been sold.

MR. VOSPER: The member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) was a shareholder in the company, and better able to speak of the facts; but the latest information of a reliable character as to the financial position of the company was that a bill of sale had been executed to one James Briscoe, of Sydney, by means of which transaction money had been raised to pay the penalty due to the Government, and, further, that the company owed to a bank here a sum of £15,000.

MR. A. FORREST: The whole concern has been sold to Briscoe, who was managing it now.

MR. VOSPER: What the company had done was to give a bill of sale in Mr. Briscoe's favour.

MR. A. FORREST: Mr. Briscoe had practically bought the whole concern, and all the debts would be paid in full.

MR. VOSPER: That might or might not acquit the company of blame, but the fact remained that within a day or two ago the company had power of dismissing this manager, and did not do so. If Hancock was maintained in his position, and the company knew him to be guilty—and they asserted him to be the person solely responsible—then the company were practically his accomplices, because those who supported and encouraged persons guilty of fraud, whether the former derived benefit or not, were morally if not legally accomplices.

MR. A. FORREST: There were no directors now, except Mr. Briscoe. The company had dissolved and was in liquidation.

MR. VOSPER: Had any member of the House seen any order of the court for the winding-up of the company?

MR. A. FORREST: The company was paying all debts in full without an order of the court.

MR. VOSPER: There was no proof of any voluntary winding-up, and he knew enough of the Companies Act to know that a winding-up required a certain

amount of publicity and special resolutions of the shareholders.

MR. A. FORREST: The shareholders passed resolutions.

MR. VOSPER: The member for West Kimberley might be challenged to say that a voluntary winding-up had taken place, and a liquidator been appointed. The company were as much in existence now as they were last week or the week before.

MR. A. FORREST: Not the same directors, anyway.

MR. VOSPER said he did not care a button about the directors. He wanted to know why the directors of the company, if they were the high and honourable men they pretended to be, and anxious to maintain the good name of themselves and the company, so openly aided and abetted this man in defrauding the Government, and why no punishment was meted out to him as soon as the frauds were discovered.

MR. GEORGE: The directors were ignorant of the frauds.

MR. VOSPER: That was not denied, but when once they discovered the frauds the directors should have got rid of the offending party; and the absence of any censure on the manager showed that they rather supported his action as a smart piece of business: at any rate, that was the interpretation put on the matter by the public. There was another aspect of the question. The manager of the company could not have carried on these frauds single-handed, but must have had accomplices, helpers, and assistants, most of whom must have been connected with the railway service. When the *Kalgoorlie Sun* exposed these frauds, that newspaper not only accused Hancock and accused the company of being his accomplices, but went further and asserted—and the assertion had not been contradicted—that the frauds were perpetrated by corrupting and bribing certain officials of the Railway Department. Whether that was true or not, the fact remained that one of two things must have happened: either the railway officials concerned must have been guilty of complicity in the frauds, and possibly derived benefit from them, or, on the other hand, they must have been guilty of gross negligence. In either case the matter required investigation.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member should move for a select committee.

MR. A. FORREST: I will help all I can.

MR. VOSPER: That was what was required, because in the interests of the good name of the colony an investigation should take place. The motion called for papers, but if the member for West Kimberley, or anyone else, would move an amendment in favour of the appointment of a select committee, he (Mr. Vosper) would support it.

THE PREMIER: Some of the hon. member's friends on the Opposition side might move such amendment.

MR. VOSPER: Perhaps that was so. He did not want to raise any scandal around the bones of the defunct Perth Ice Company. All he desired was to find out the persons in the department responsible for the state of things which had arisen, because justice had not been done, and he desired it should be.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member (Mr. Vosper) and many other persons had made a great deal of this very, regrettable business, though the hon. member's speech seemed to be directed not so much against the Government as against the company and its manager, over whom the Government had no control. When these transactions were brought under the notice of the Government, they had to consider whether a fraud had been committed; if so, by whom; also, whether there had been a conspiracy to defraud, and whether a prosecution would lie. In dealing with the matter they were guided by the advice of the law officers of the Crown. The state of affairs revealed by the inquiry was most extraordinary. Inaccurate invoices had undoubtedly for a long time—perhaps not continuously—been issued in respect of goods contained in vans despatched by the company to the goldfields. The strangest feature of the matter was that those who had been the means of providing these inaccurate invoices had not derived any benefit from their action, nor did there appear to be any reasonable motive for the manager or his clerks making out such invoices.

MR. GEORGE: They wanted to show a good profit.

THE PREMIER: That was certainly a reason, but scarcely a good reason for a man's committing a fraud which might

land him in gaol. Any servant of a company might desire to make a profit for the shareholders; but it was rather far-fetched to think he would, for that purpose, render himself liable to prosecution and loss of liberty by his own action, unless with a view to secure some great personal profit. The Railway Department asserted that they discovered frauds perpetrated by means of these invoices, before their attention was called to them from outside. That, however, was by the way. No doubt a great deal more had been made of this matter than would have been heard of it in other circumstances, owing to the fact that amongst the directors and shareholders of the company were many people who were very influential in the colony. It was a case of *noblesse oblige*: those who had position had responsibility also. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] Like "the fierce light that beats upon a throne," so the light of criticism was more fierce when those criticised were highly placed. He (the Premier) had held some shares in this company. It was supposed to be a business that would return a good profit, besides doing a great deal of good to the colony; though it did not prove so, because there were, if his memory served him, very few dividends, and for the last year or two—perhaps longer—there had been none whatever. To himself and to many others—and especially to the directors, who were men of the highest standing in the colony, and above suspicion—[Several MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—it came as a great shock to find themselves connected with a company which had been carrying on such transactions, and they determined to have an investigation. The investigation by the Railway Department took up a long time; the transactions were very intricate; and while hoping the result was accurate, he admitted it might not be quite correct, owing to there having been so many and such detailed transactions, and to the difficulty of finding the charges for the carriage of chickens, hams, bacon, and such goods in railway vans, in respect of accounts extending over two or three years. However, after a long and intricate inquiry, the shortage was arrived at. The Crown Law Officers took the matter in hand, and the Attorney General, who had the right to put in motion the criminal law, was

unable to advise that there had been any conspiracy to defraud or any ground on which to ask a jury to convict; and the Government were advised that they were not even in a position to inflict a fine. At all events, the matter was settled by the company making up all deficiencies, as the directors had voluntarily promised to do from the beginning, and they further submitted themselves to any fine that could be imposed. Though the Government were advised that a fine could not be enforced, the directors, without prejudice, offered £100, which sum was regretfully accepted. That was the whole history of the case. Of course it was splendid "copy," the discovery that a lot of influential people in the colony were shareholders in a company which carried on transactions which, on the face of them, appeared to be fraudulent; and the hon. member opposite (Mr. Vosper) and others connected with the Press were not slow to take an opportunity of utilising the disclosure, nor could they well be blamed particularly for so doing. But people, if honestly minded, instead of blaming the shareholders and the directors of the company, would sympathise with them; for not only had their names been bandied about the country in an unjustifiable manner, seeing that they were absolutely innocent, but in addition they had lost their property. The shares had been worth £2 in the market; in fact, he (the Premier) sold his own shares for £2, because people ran after him to buy them, even when this matter was made public; and he had thought, "Well, if you are willing to buy them, I will get rid of them"; because he did not like being mixed up in such a transaction. All the other shareholders, however, were glad to get away from the concern: they were so tired and disgusted with the transaction that they let their shares go for 10s. each, so that the shareholders lost 30s. per share, and were glad to unload at that. Whatever might be said of those who had committed these offences—and he did not know who they were, though he had heard their names—sympathy should be extended to those innocent shareholders and directors, of whom it had been stated that they were practically parties to the transactions or to the frauds. That such a thing should have been said or insinuated was a dis-

graceful proceeding; therefore he would welcome a select committee, so that the matter might be thoroughly threshed out, for he well knew the directors of the company and those shareholders whom the Press seemed so eager to name because they were highly placed in the community, were absolutely innocent. Those men occupied the highest and most honourable positions in the colony; and it was low indeed that those who knew better should, for their own purposes, libel such people, as they were accustomed to do every week—that they should try to throw discredit upon honourable and high-minded men, whom they knew to be absolutely free from blame. If anyone opposite would move for a select committee, he would welcome the proposal, because there was nothing to hide, and he said this on behalf of the few shareholders whose names had been mentioned. He knew those shareholders were as absolutely innocent of the matter as he (the Premier) or the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest); and he believed his (the Premier's) name had also been bandied about; and in having to suffer those aspersions, the directors and shareholders affected deserved the sympathy of all right-thinking people throughout the country.

Mr. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): Before the matter went to a select committee, as he hoped it would, he was justified in saying a few words as to his part in this transaction. He had been connected with the company for only a few months. He might say he had been pitchforked into the chairmanship of the company owing to the absence of Mr. Hooley, and neither at that time nor before had the company been in too strong a position. He believed no dividend had been paid for two years, although the shares maintained a nominal value of £2. The goods despatched to the goldfields were sent in the ordinary course of business; the accounts were placed before the directors every week for payment; all payments were made in cash, and the railway freights were paid on the accounts furnished by the department. The company were carrying on a fair business, turning over £100,000 a year; and on the publication of the article in the *Sun* newspaper, the manager of the company came to him

—he (Mr. Forrest) being then acting chairman—and showed him this article. He expressed his astonishment, and told the manager to commence proceedings at once against the paper, and to get the best legal advice procurable. Messrs. Parker and Parker were the company's solicitors, and they advised that it was a case for criminal prosecution, for civil action, or for any proceeding that was thought proper, provided the statements made in the article were untrue. On the day the copy of the newspaper came to hand, the Traffic Manager called at the company's office when the board was sitting, and the directors one and all handed over to him the whole of the company's books—[MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear]—and it was decided that if the accounts were incorrect, the manager should be instantly dismissed.

MR. VOSPER said that was what he had published in the *Sunday Times*.

MR. A. FORREST: The department took six weeks or two months to investigate the accounts. The directors gave the Commissioner of Railways an assurance that if any freight were short paid, or if anything were wrong with the accounts, the directors would be personally responsible for a refund, though they had nothing to do with the frauds. On a certain date the railway officials submitted their accounts; the directors approached their bankers to request that the amount be paid; and the bank refused to advance the money except on the directors' personal guarantee. The directors had already become guarantors to the bank for a large amount. At that time the largest shareholder in the company was a Mr. Briscoe, a partner in one of the largest firms in Melbourne. He bought up every share in the company except those belonging to the directors, who refused to sell their shares while this cloud was over them. With the concurrence of the directors he (Mr. Forrest) dismissed the company's manager, but said he would keep him in the company's employment for two days to enable the directors to communicate with Mr. Briscoe, who, as the largest shareholder, was the person most interested, and it was therefore desirable to find out what he intended to do. Mr. Briscoe replied by wiring: "Do nothing if you possibly can. I leave in a day or two, and will

arrive in Perth and fix all matters up." Mr. Briscoe arrived, found things were not quite as he expected; and he bought up the scrip for 10s. a share, or purchased the option to buy the shares at 10s. Mr. Briscoe retained Mr. Hancock, the manager, in his employment. The whole of the old directors had retired from the company, and Mr. Briscoe's nominees were now carrying it on. Such were the facts of the case, and hon. members would admit that he and the other directors, who were fairly prominent in the country, had done everything in their power to bring these frauds to light. The railway officials—the Traffic Manager, the General Manager, and the ex-Commissioner (Mr. Piesse)—would assure hon. members that no stone had been left unturned on the part of the directors to probe the matter to the bottom; and the directors were prepared to face a select committee, and to give every information in their power, so as to have the question settled on such a basis that it would drop out of sight for ever. The question that arose in the minds of the directors, when this matter first came to light, was: What benefit had the manager or the clerk obtained by the falsification of way-bills for the produce sent by the Ice Company to Kalgoorlie? He (Mr. Forrest) could swear that the directors only paid the railway accounts that were presented to them; and the only way he could look at it was that, the company not having been able to pay dividends for a long time, the manager, in order to keep his position, made a show of profit that was not warranted. That was the only conclusion he could come to. As to collusion between the Railway Department and the Ice Company, he did not believe a word of it, because it could not be carried out. The manager could not pay the officers; and he had no direct benefit himself. He held a small interest in the company, having 100 shares; and his salary was £600 a year, with no commission on profits. These were the strict facts, and the time had arrived now when a select committee should be appointed to see who was to blame. If the directors went to blame, it was because they only went to the establishment perhaps for an hour a week, and that was to see that the financial part between the bank and the

company was correct, and to sign cheques and bills. It was not possible for the directors to see that the way-bill for every ton of ice or a dozen pots of butter was right, and he did not believe any sane man would consider the directors should do that. The directors trusted to their manager, who was an old servant of the company; and he (Mr. Forrest) might say, in conclusion, that since he became a director he never had any confidence in that man.

MR. EWING (Swan): The amendment about to be moved would meet with the approval of every member of the House. We ought to withhold both our condemnation and our sympathy until we found what the facts of this particular case really were. That the directors were responsible criminally for the actions of their servants seemed to him altogether a proposition without foundation; and there was one person to whom he would like to express a little sympathy, that being the Attorney General, owing to the manner in which he had been abused, not only with regard to this matter, but many others in which, to his (Mr. Ewing's) mind, that gentleman had taken a perfectly straightforward and fair course. The abuse hurled at the Attorney General from outside this House, and also by members inside the Chamber, had been a disgrace to the persons who used those expressions. He failed to understand what could have prompted such paltry hurling of abuse at the hon. gentleman. It must be a paltry motive, for he failed to see that anything the Attorney General had done either in this case or many others in regard to which he had been charged, in any way justified the abuse which had been hurled at his head. There must have been something seriously wrong not only in the administration of the company, but in the Railway Department itself, for it was difficult to understand how for years and years frauds of an open character such as this must have been, and which with reasonable and fair investigation must have been discovered, could have been continued so long. He could not see how persons in charge of the Railway Department if they had done their duty to the country had failed to discover the errors which so long existed.

MR. PIESSE: When the select committee were appointed, the hon. member would know all about it.

MR. EWING said he would be glad to know all about it, as would other members; and they would be glad to fix the blame where it was due, and remove it from the shoulders of those on whom at the present time it impliedly rested. Knowing some of the directors, he could not for a moment think that they had been guilty of frauds of this kind. It was only fair to give those gentlemen an opportunity of justifying themselves in the eyes of the community. But the parties he would like to see justify themselves were the Railway Department of the colony. How that department could have been hoodwinked, fooled, and swindled so long, in a comparatively open manner, he absolutely failed to understand. He, therefore, had much pleasure in moving, as an amendment, that all the words in the motion after "that" be struck out, with a view of substituting the following: "A select committee be appointed to inquire into the recent frauds perpetrated by the Perth Ice Company or its servants." If the House passed the amendment, they would only be doing justice to the directors of the company and to the members of the community, who had a right to know why those frauds had been perpetrated so long upon them, with responsible railway officials in charge of affairs. If those officials did not know and had not the means of finding out the frauds that were being perpetrated, certainly they should have had.

MR. VOSPER (in reply as mover): It would afford him great pleasure as the mover of the motion to accept the amendment proposed by the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing). In doing so, he might take the opportunity of replying to a few remarks made by the Premier and by the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest). It was one of the constitutional infirmities of the right hon. gentleman, the head of the Government, that he seemed never able to discuss a matter of this kind without lashing himself into a rage about a certain section of the Press. The Premier referred to himself (Mr. Vosper), for example, as one of a class of persons who earned a livelihood by libelling better men than themselves.

He (Mr. Vosper) gave that an emphatic denial; and further, he wanted to say that the reason the paper he had was obnoxious to the right hon. gentleman was not because of the libels it circulated, but because of the truths it told. At a time when the right hon. gentleman was anxious to get up anti-federal pabulum, he sent for the *Sunday Times*.

THE PREMIER said he did not think so.

MR. VOSPER: Communications sent by the right hon. gentleman were in his possession.

THE PREMIER: No communication from him.

MR. VOSPER: Yes. There were times when so humble and obscure a sheet as the *Sunday Times* became useful to so great a man as the Premier.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was misinformed, as far as he was concerned.

MR. VOSPER: If the Premier read it, it might have a salutary effect on him. However, he (Mr. Vosper) desired to repudiate most emphatically the assertion made by the right hon. gentleman that he and others obtained a livelihood by means of libels. With regard to what had been said by the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), he desired to say he had not acted unfairly towards either that hon. member or his fellow directors. On the contrary, it would be within recollection that three distinct articles appeared in the *Kalgoorlie Sun* in reference to this matter before any of these articles appeared in Perth, the reason being that the statements looked incredible on the face of them, and so risky to publish that he (Mr. Vosper) hesitated as to whether they should be published. Finally the assertions were discovered to be correct. At the time, it was announced in a footnote to one of the articles that the directors had honourably offered to hand over the books and papers for the purpose of investigation. That showed that the writers of the articles were perfectly fair, and approached this question without malice. They desired that the truth should be known, and that the revenue should not be swindled out of large sums of money.

MR. PIESSE: The matter was being investigated before the article appeared in the *Sun*.

MR. VOSPER: One of the reasons that caused odium to be cast upon the

directors of this unfortunate company and the Attorney General was simply this, that while on the one side the Attorney General could not see his way to prosecute these influential gentlemen, the very moment another firm committed the same sort of offence the officials were down on that firm like an avalanche, the firm being brought before the court. In that case the amount was only five-pence. Through some misadventure those parties defrauded the Government of fivepence, and were immediately haled before the court, an attempt being made to obtain a penalty from them; while in the case of the Perth Ice Company, in which £3,000 was involved, no prosecution followed. The reasons might be cogent enough and good enough, but unfortunately the public could not see below the surface, and looking at the surface it appeared as if influential persons were escaping, whilst those who had no influence were prosecuted. That was the aspect. He was not saying that such was the case, but only that it was the way in which the matter presented itself to the man in the street. The member for West Kimberley said just now that it was quite impossible for the directors of the company to ascertain if a few pounds of butter or a couple of chickens had been sent to Kalgoorlie under the name of "ice." A company was supposed to have a board of directors and a secretary, also an accountant, to examine the books. It was, moreover, compelled to have an audit once in six months or once in twelve months.

MR. A. FORREST: The Perth Ice Company had a resident auditor.

MR. VOSPER: That only helped to bring out his point. There was an auditor on the premises, and that officer audited the books every night, according to what the hon. member said.

MR. GEORGE: That was for cash, not goods.

MR. VOSPER: The member for the Murray was a shrewd commercial man, and would, he was sure, see his point, if he would allow one to bring it out. The freight on ice was comparatively low, and the freight on other goods sent by the Ice Company was comparatively high. There was a great discrepancy between the two, and that was what made the fraud probable. A certain quantity of

ice was manufactured, and a certain quantity of fowls, butter, and so forth was imported from the Eastern colonies or elsewhere, and sent to Kalgoorlie. On the one side the railway waybills described what was sent to Kalgoorlie as consisting entirely of ice, and that was the nature of the fraud, as it did not show in any shape or form that fowls, eggs, butter, or anything of that kind were forwarded. Consequently the invoices must have differed from the waybills. If the auditor had done his duty he must have discovered the discrepancy, because upon taking a record of the stock it would be seen that a certain quantity of poultry, eggs, or butter, as the case might be, was debited to certain firms. If auditors did not go into those details, that would account for the inefficiency of auditors. Certain firms had to be debited with certain goods, and according to the company's waybills a description of the goods was not shown.

MR. A. FORREST: The goods were sent to a branch.

MR. VOSPER: Then the branch was debited. If in an invoice goods were debited and on the waybills ice was debited, there must have been a discrepancy.

MR. MONGER: That was how the fraud was found out.

MR. VOSPER: There must have been carelessness on the part of the directors, secretary, or auditor, as the case might be; and the necessity for investigation was shown by not only one but several inaccuracies having gone on for the last two years. And these invoices were made out by several persons. It was not necessary that Mr. Hancock should have made out every one.

MR. A. FORREST: He only filled up one.

MR. VOSPER: The member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse) said that the Railway Department discovered the fraud three months before the *Sun* published the articles. It was publicly charged in the *Kalgoorlie Sun* that an offence of the same kind, in relation to the same company, was discovered nine months prior to the present discovery, and that beyond a warning being sent to the company that the same should not occur again, no action was taken.

MR. A. FORREST: It never came before the directors.

MR. VOSPER: That was the allegation made against the Railway Department, that nine months before the department had deliberately condoned an offence of the same description, which illustrated the necessity for an investigation, therefore the necessity for the motion. As pointed out by the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing), it was the Railway Department that wanted investigating, not the directors of the Ice Company: hon. members were satisfied as to their position.

THE PREMIER: The newspapers placarded the names of the shareholders and directors all over the country. What had the shareholders to do with it?

MR. VOSPER: A list of shareholders was lodged at the Supreme Court for the information of the public.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member published it too.

MR. VOSPER: Yes. Why should not the list of shareholders be published? It was filed in the Supreme Court for the information of the public.

THE PREMIER: It was published to sell the newspaper: that was the reason.

MR. VOSPER: Why not push the sale of a newspaper by legitimate means?

THE PREMIER: But not by this means.

MR. VOSPER: The *Kalgoorlie Sun* published the information first. He wished he had had the opportunity of publishing it before the *Sun*, but he only came in second.

THE PREMIER: This list insinuated that the shareholders had participated in the fraud.

MR. VOSPER: What was the position of the Press at that time? How was the Press to know who was to blame?

THE PREMIER: It was good "copy."

MR. VOSPER: The Railway Department knew that the frauds had extended over two years, and the department had condoned an offence previously. This showed inefficiency and incapability on the part of the department. The rational conclusion to arrive at was that the Railway Department was incapable of dealing with this matter. He maintained that there had been culpable negligence or a fraud on the part of some of the railway servants. That was the reason why he was anxious to withdraw his motion in favour of the amendment.

moved by the member for the Swan, whose proposal was the best way out of the difficulty. He supported the appointment of a select committee.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray) : It was not the duty of an auditor of a company to do more, unless specially instructed, than to check matters relating to the cash. It was the duty of an auditor in any colony or in any of the British Isles, so far as he understood the rules that governed the Chartered Society of Accountants, to trace up every item of cash. If that were not so, and if it was the duty of an accountant to look into every other matter, then instead of an auditor getting through his audit in a reasonable time, he would be sitting in the place year in and year out. Knowing nothing of the auditors of this company, he (Mr. George) looked at it from a common sense point of view, that the auditors went through the books to see that the amount of goods charged against the customers was properly charged and accounted for. The auditors did not go through the books for the purpose of identifying every chicken, or every feather of a chicken, or every egg laid, or every egg that ought to have been laid, or every block of ice that had melted, but they went through to check the cash and see that it was accounted for. He had any amount of sympathy for the shareholders and directors of the company; and instead of the Press bringing the matter before the public and intimating that there was a possibility that the directors and shareholders were mixed up in the fraud, the Press might have assumed that they were honourable men and that the fraud might have been committed in entire ignorance of the directors and shareholders. But the Press started from the jump with the idea that the shareholders of the company and the directors were knowing parties and participators in the fraud. That was what he thought was the real *gravamen* of the charge against the Press in this matter. The Press only allowed the basest motives to enter into their consideration. Acts were often committed by oneself in mistake, and a person might just as well be charged with being a party to a fraud because something had been done which had been done intentionally. With regard to some of the names connected with the share

list, he read them with a considerable amount of pain. The Press might just as well have charged the hon. gentleman who had now joined the great majority with being a participator in this fraud. The member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) spoke about the railway authorities being to blame; and apparently the railway authorities were to blame, judging from the meagre details which hon. members had of the case. A truck was placed at the disposal of the manager of the Ice Company—how he got it no one knew—and he loaded it and declared what was in it. As soon as the directors were spoken to about the matter, they saw the manager and asked if such a fraud could have occurred; and the company gave every assistance to the Railway Department to see that the matter was traced to the end. In these matters, until the whole question was threshed out and explained or understood by both parties, it was unfair and unmanly for the Press to pillory people in the way the shareholders and directors had been dealt with. The only idea expressed was that the directors had been participating in the fraud and taking the profits; that the fraud had been committed for their benefit. Whoever wrote those articles in the newspapers must have known that the directors and shareholders could not be cognisant of all the matters done by their servants. The conductors of the journals referred to were in private life as honourable as other men, and they should have consideration for other people placed in such a position as the directors of the Ice Company were. When the select committee brought in its report, he would expect to see the matter sheeted home to certain railway officials, because he thought that some of these officials must have been to blame. The Press should have respect for people in the community, and not jump to conclusions from the very start.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather) : The other evening he sufficiently explained, he thought, why there was no case to proceed against the directors, and he pointed out as the reason why no prosecution was instituted that no evidence had been submitted to show that these directors were in any way privy to the fraud. He regretted to say that the hon. member (Mr. Vosper) who was the

cause of his speaking on that occasion had again repeated the statements. The hon. member (Mr. Vosper) stated that the public could not understand why it was that a small trader was prosecuted and punished, and a large company with directors allowed to go unpunished. Surely after his (the Attorney General's) explanation the other evening—because he took the trouble on that occasion to read the language of the section—it should not be necessary to again ask for this information. The section of the Act showed that unless the Crown or the Railway Department were able to prove an intent to commit fraud, there could be no proceeding to recover penalties. In the case to which the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie referred, in which a small tradesman was proceeded against in the Police Court for penalties, it was shown without doubt that the tradesman himself committed the fraud, not any deputy or servant of his, and it was shown in the evidence that he himself perpetrated the fraud; and therefore he brought himself within the language of the section, and was liable not only for the difference in the freight but a penalty. In this case no one had the slightest idea that the directors were privy to the fraud. The hon. member must have known that, yet with that knowledge in his mind the hon. member had repeated the statement. It was not only positively unfair, but it was not right conduct for the hon. member, no matter how anxious he was to make capital out of it, to do this kind of thing. He should be just and honourable, and one felt sure no member in the Chamber would support the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie in again repeating insinuations against the company. He (the Attorney General) thanked the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) for the graceful compliment paid to him. From these attacks he had suffered repeatedly, as hon. members knew, and had never had an opportunity of defending himself. Therefore he was pleased to find that members of this Chamber would not allow these attacks to be made against a person who was not in a position to defend himself.

MR. WILSON (Canning): The Attorney General might rest assured there was no member in the House who would infer that the slightest blame was attribut-

able to him in the action he had taken in regard to these frauds. Indeed, after the Attorney General's explanation the other night and his further explanation this evening, it might be said at once that he could have taken no other course than that he did take. He (Mr. Wilson) was, however, inclined to think that the Attorney General to some extent misunderstood the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper). When the member for North-East Coolgardie said the public could not understand why action had been taken against an individual and no action taken against the directors of this company, he did not mean to infer blame to the Attorney General, but simply stated the fact that the public not understanding the legal position—as, indeed, hon. members did not understand it two or three days ago—could not, of course, see the distinction. Now that the Attorney General had explained the position, there could be no idea of blame attached to him; and he (Mr. Wilson) was pleased to hear the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) give the explanation of his connection with this unfortunate company. The member for West Kimberley might rest assured that members on the Opposition side, and also on the Government side of the House, held him entirely guiltless of any blame; and the same might be said in regard to the Premier, to whom no knowledge whatever of such a fraud could be imputed. The position appeared to be that for something like two years ice had been booked on the railway by this company, and instead of ice, produce of different kinds had been forwarded. So far as he understood it, the vans were unloaded in daylight at their destination.

MR. PIESSE: The vans were unloaded in the private siding of the Ice Company's works.

MR. GREGORY: Had the company a private siding at Menzies?

MR. PIESSE: It was principally of Kalgoorlie he was speaking. He knew nothing about the company at Menzies.

MR. WILSON: The produce of the company, he understood, had been consigned to different parts of the gold-fields, and to Kalgoorlie amongst others, and at some of these places the vans appeared to have been discharged in sight of the railway officials. Surely that state

of things could not possibly go on under supervision for such a length of time, without being noticed by someone responsible! This point ought to be inquired into, and for that reason alone he was pleased to understand a select committee was to be appointed to investigate this fraud, which he could not characterise as a petty fraud, as the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) had done. On the contrary, the fraud was, to his mind, a gigantic one, and a very serious matter indeed, seeing that it reflected on hon. members in the House who were shareholders in the company. He welcomed the inquiry, which he was sure would result in exonerating all shareholders from any knowledge whatever of the fraud; and he hoped further that the inquiry would bring to book any official of the Railway Department guilty of gross negligence in connection with this unfortunate business.

MR. PIESSE (Williams): If the House agreed to the appointment of a select committee, he took it the object would be principally to deal with the question so far as it affected the Railway Department. Hon. members had already heard sufficient to justify the House in exonerating the directors of the company from any blame. Charges had been made against these directors, and the question was brought before the House in June last on a motion tabled by Mr. Vosper. In reply to that hon. member's remarks on that occasion he (Mr. Piesse), as Commissioner of Railways, dealt with the question, stating that as the case was then *sub judice*, it would be preferable to delay the presenting the papers then asked for. He (Mr. Piesse) stated at that time that it was the intention of the Government to make rigid inquiry into the matter, and that the directors had offered every assistance to enable the Government to arrive at some conclusion. In every way the directors did assist the Government, and, as had been pointed out to-night, the Government took it that the directors were entirely free from blame. Blame was to be attributed to officers of the company, and probably to some negligence on the part of the Railway Department; and when this matter was before the House in June he (Mr. Piesse) said that if the department were to blame, and

on inquiry the Government were able to sheet home the charge to any of the officers, it was certainly necessary punishment should follow. Up to the present it had taken the department all the time to deal with the question of adjustment as between the company and the Government; but inquiries had been made, and were now being made, as to who was to blame for the fraud. The member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) stated that it was difficult to understand how such frauds could be carried on.

MR. EWING: For so long.

MR. PIESSE: No doubt a good deal might be said against the department, but the inquiry it was proposed to hold—and he thought the House would agree to the appointment of a select committee—would no doubt bring about such disclosures as might, perhaps, put a different complexion on the case in regard to the Railway Department. The Perth Ice Company had a private siding at Perth, also a private siding at Kalgoorlie, and in these sidings the vans were unloaded and loaded. Believing that the company and its servants would deal with the Railway Department in an honourable manner, there was probably not the check exercised over the goods there should have been. The consignments sent to Kalgoorlie were, as he had said, unloaded in the private siding of the company, and the check exercised did not seem to have been of the character which probably was necessary; but the course of checking consignments was not followed in every instance. As a rule, the department depended on the honesty of the customers, and found very few frauds were perpetrated, though from time to time misstatements might be made, no doubt with the intention of defrauding the department, bills being made out in such a way as to bring about that result. Goods were consigned and described as of a lower class than that to which they properly belonged, and as these things went on from day to day, the department had taken every precaution in the way of issuing and repeating regulations with a view to preventing occurrences of this character. The department found, for instance, that in regard to consignments of timber on the South-Western and

other lines there had been difficulty in tracing accounts, under-estimates having been made out, and consequently the department had sometimes to recover from timber companies and other people payment for consignments. As soon as such things were found out, rigid checks were instituted, and the department endeavoured to prevent their occurrence as far as possible. In some cases there might not have been any intention of defrauding the department, but rather that certain prices had been accepted before, and probably a little more put on the trucks than should have been. If the proposed inquiry by a select committee were held, the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing) and others interested in the matter would find out how these things did occur, and that, after all the department were not so much to blame as they appeared to be to-day. In regard to the inefficiency of the department, so much had been heard about it that those responsible for the work were quite accustomed to the strictures. He was glad inquiries were about to be made, and he was satisfied after his four and a half years' connection with the department, and knowing the transactions as well as he did, that the officials would be well able to clear themselves of these charges of inefficiency. It would be to the advantage of the department to have an inquiry for the purpose of putting its conditions of working before the public in such a light as to show that blame was not to be attached to the extent which some sections of the Press and the public seemed to believe. He hoped there would not only be this inquiry, but another inquiry later on, because it was quite time the whole question of the working of the Railway Department was inquired into. Abuse had been levelled against officers who had tried to do their duty, and were now doing it honestly and well to the advantage of the country; and it was most detrimental, as he said the other evening, to the discipline and control of the service that chief officials should be held up to contempt by a certain section of the Press in association with charges which were entirely unfounded. He hoped good results would follow from the inquiry about to be held.

Amendment put and passed, and the motion as amended agreed to.

A ballot having been taken, the following members were elected: Mr. Gregory, Mr. Monger, Mr. Quinlan, Mr. Wilson, and the mover (Mr. Ewing); to report on the 19th instant; also, the committee to have power to give leave for publication of the evidence in the Press.

RETURN—FEDERATION, EFFECT OF FREE-TRADE ON DUTIES.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie) moved:

That a return be prepared at once and laid upon the table of the House, showing the actual duties collected during the last financial year on imports into Western Australia from the remainder of the proposed Commonwealth, and showing the amount which would be lost to the revenue of the colony by this introduction of free-trade with the remainder of the Commonwealth.

This important subject did not appear to be a source of such trouble to the Premier as it was to him.

THE PREMIER: That was because the hon. member had so much greater interest in the country.

MR. MORAN: No; but because he took a different way of showing his interest. He desired a return to be compiled showing how much of the revenue on which we were now living would be lost to us under federation, either by the gradual reduction of duties under the sliding scale, or by the total abolition of intercolonial duties next year, or whenever absolute free-trade with the Eastern colonies became an accomplished fact. The Premier, having declared that he would go to the country as a protectionist, would not reduce the food duties. He (Mr. Moran) was pleased to notice the Premier would not give the people the benefit of a free breakfast table, that the right hon. gentleman would take his chance of increased taxation under federation, and would also leave the present cost of living untouched. Though it was something to have bound the Premier to that pledge, it was further necessary to be able to tell the country, at the next general election in January or February, what the colony would lose in the way of duties.

THE PREMIER: When?

MR. MORAN: As soon as those duties could not be collected at the Customs they would be lost.

THE PREMIER: There was Section 95.

MR. MORAN: None could tell when the colony would lose those duties. Section 95 was entirely permissive, and in no way compelled Western Australia to continue the imposition of duties on Eastern produce, but merely gave us the right to collect duties in a ridiculous manner, by dropping 20 per cent. every year. If it were decided to retain the duty on meat, which was now $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per lb., one-fifth of this sum must be taken off the first year, and so on.

THE PREMIER: That would be easy.

MR. MORAN: Oh, magnificently easy. Both protectionists and free-traders desired to know the position of Western Australia under the sliding scale, and the same information must be required by any careful Treasurer.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Owen, the Government Statistician, had already reported on the matter.

MR. MORAN: Though one had read Mr. Owen's report, it was nevertheless a fact that the Customs kept no record of dutiable imports of Australian manufacture as distinguished from extra-Australian goods; and it was the former only which would be affected by the sliding scale. What portion of our duties would be affected by the federal tariff or by the sliding scale, accordingly as the country at the next general election adopted immediate free-trade with the Eastern colonies or took advantage of Section 95? It would then be for politicians to decide how the loss of revenue should be made up. It was evident from Mr. Owen's report, compiled for the Premier's use at the late conference of Premiers, that the Government Statist would be able to give a very close idea of how much the colony would lose in duties. He (Mr. Moran) estimated the loss at considerably over £250,000. That was a considerable sum now, and would be more considerable in the future.

THE PREMIER: Provided we threw over Section 95.

MR. MORAN: If that section were thrown over, the whole sum would be lost in one lump. The Premier having declared himself a protectionist, and as being prepared to take the chances of the increased cost of living under the federal tariff, the man who had voted for federation in the hope of getting cheaper living would be disillusioned.

THE PREMIER: Under the Commonwealth Act, the duties would be gradually extinguished.

MR. MORAN: What was meant by "gradually?"

THE PREMIER: Under Section 95.

MR. MORAN: Would the tariff question be discussed by the Federal Parliament next year?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. MORAN: Many people said "no." He hoped it would not be discussed, for our industries would then be protected a little longer; but the feeling throughout Australia among protectionists and free-traders alike was getting very strong, and uniform duties might be established throughout Australia at the end of next session. We should then have only twelve months in which our present duties could continue, after which must come a reduction. If, however, the Federal Parliament did not deal with the tariff in its first session, eighteen months must elapse before the establishment of uniform duties in the Eastern colonies, which meant two and a half years' full protection for the industries of Western Australia, after which the federal tariff might of course be high or low. That was a problem of the future; but to enable the people to vote intelligently at the next general election, and to enable this Parliament to vote on the question of immediate or gradually introduced free-trade, it was necessary to know how much revenue we should lose or should retain, and what protection would be given by Section 95, for he said unhesitatingly the present tariff would never lend itself to the sliding-scale. We must arrange the tariff in a scientific manner, so that the reduction by fifths might be easily carried out. There might also be some things which we could alter with advantage, including raw material, but the revenue must be made up in some other way. The whole question had to be considered, and we wanted this information. Every member of the House would like to know how much revenue was at present obtainable from Australian imports, and how much of that revenue would come under the 95th Section or under the intercolonial free-trade. He hoped that the return would be got out carefully and with as much dispatch as possible.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): There was no objection to the motion, and he would ask Mr. Owen to prepare the return. Doubtless Mr. Owen would prepare it as quickly as possible. The information was, however, practically in that report which was furnished some time ago.

MR. MORAN: The amount could not be so much now.

THE PREMIER: Quite as much, he thought. We should have all the information possible. He did not know whether, when we got the return, it would be of very much use to us at the present time.

MR. MORAN: We would make use of it.

THE PREMIER: There was, he believed, a consensus of opinion, or at all events he hoped so, that we should do our best to promote the operation of Section 95, which was included in the Commonwealth Act for the very purpose of trying to assist the interests of Western Australia. When the matter was placed before them carefully and fairly, a great many people would see that we would be acting rightly in letting that section work itself out. The hon. member (Mr. Moran) seemed very desirous of having a little tilt at him whenever he got the opportunity, and now wanted to show that he (the Premier), being in favour of protection of the industries of the colony for a time at any rate ----

MR. MORAN said he was very glad to hear it. He did not know it before.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member said a complimentary thing one moment, but the next moment he said something else which destroyed it. The hon. member spoke of the free breakfast table and the reductions in price which people were longing for. He would like to tell the hon. member that the removal of the duties would not affect the price of articles very much. The revenue would lose the duty and the consumer would not get the benefit. In a very few days we would have removed the duties from live stock and frozen meat, but the consumers would get none of the benefit. The butchers and the men who imported the cattle would get the whole of the advantage.

MR. D. FORREST: There was no question about that.

THE PREMIER: That cry about the duties on meat would be gone, and the

poor consumer would have to pay just the same price. With 15s. off every bullock, 1s. 3d. off every sheep, and $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per pound off frozen meat, we should see how much cheaper meat would be. He did not know whether frozen meat would stand a little reduction in price, but there could be no reduction whatever in regard to fresh meat, for we did not deal in an eighth of a penny or two-eighths of a penny—nothing less than a halfpenny entering into our calculation. He hoped that now we had federation, all those connected with the political life of the country would do their best to respect, as far as possible, the provisions of the Commonwealth Act. Section 95 was placed in the Act because it was felt that in the early days of federation the Act would, unless something was done for Western Australia, interfere with our finances. When the hon. member, who posed as a friend to the farmer and was, he believed, a friend of the farmer, made disparaging remarks in regard to the section, he was not doing what we might have expected of him. He was not instilling into the minds of the people the value of that section, but, on the contrary, said it was useless.

MR. MORAN: Such a thing had never been said by him in his life.

MR. HARPER: The Premier had said it.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member said it was of no use.

MR. MORAN: Not at all. What he said was that the section was an abortion.

THE PREMIER: It was a valuable section for the farmer, but not so good for the merchant and importer. Doubtless it was rather awkward for the merchant and the importer, but he believed that it would be of some good to them. The task of making the reduction of one-fifth of the duty each year was not so great as some members would have us believe. If we respected this section the farmers would, under federation, have the advantage of those duties for a considerably longer time than they would have if we had defeated federation.

MR. MORAN: What nonsense!

THE PREMIER: If federation had been defeated the other day, those duties would not have lasted another six months.

MR. MORAN: They could be reimposed.

THE PREMIER said he ought to call the attention of the Speaker to the interruptions of the hon. member. The newspaper this morning showed that the hon. member interjected a number of times whilst he (the Premier) last evening was engaged in an important duty to the country, explaining many things that required attention. Really he thought the hon. member ought to be turned out of the House. At any rate, he ought to take some heed of the Standing Orders.

THE SPEAKER said he thought the interjections were a great deal too numerous, and they had been so during this debate.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member was the sinner.

THE SPEAKER: Then the hon. member must be asked not to interject.

THE PREMIER: This 95th Section would be invaluable to the producers and the farmers, and he was going to do all he could to see that good faith was kept with them. He would be very glad to have the return moved for supplied as quickly as possible, and doubtless it would be very interesting, although he could not see that we had anything to do with it during the present session. The information would be valuable and useful, but he did not know that federation would in any way affect the revenue of the colony during this financial year. It certainly could not do so. In fact, if good faith was kept with the producers of the country, federation could not interfere with our financial position for the next two or three years at any rate. He had much pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. HIGHAM (Fremantle): If the real intent of the motion were carried out, he would be very pleased; but he was afraid that under the system by which our customs returns were kept at the present time the information would be very wide of the mark. So far as the actual Australian produce was concerned, at present the colonies of Australia got the credit of a good many exports to this colony which really were due to New Zealand, and would be outside the scope of the return in the future. Apart from that, the returns on many items, such as machinery, clothing, and preserves of many kinds which were not of Australian manufacture, might be

included and credited in this statement. As to the sliding scale, the fate of it depended entirely on the fiscal policy of the Federal Parliament. If the fiscal policy of the Federal Parliament was likely to be a protectionist one, then we should be liable to pay duty on many goods we now imported at a low duty or absolutely free. He was afraid that the data which Mr. Owen would have at command would be thoroughly inaccurate and unreliable.

MR. MORAN (in reply): It was a most remarkable thing that we were collecting duties on imports in this colony, and could not arrive at anything like an approximate idea as to where those duties came from. Why should it be very hard to get an approximate idea of those duties? If it were so hard, how did the Premier and Treasurer make his estimates every year? Surely it could not be hazardous: the Premier must have some sort of idea where the goods were coming from, and what duties were paid, otherwise his estimate was a guess. One would be very sorry to think the report we should get from Mr. Owen would not be fairly accurate: not such a one as would enable every one going before the country to give an idea of what trade would be displaced by the sliding scale. As to the Premier saying that the return would not be of use this session, its production this session was the very thing he (Mr. Moran) deemed most important about the return. The object of the return was to enable members going before the country to supply the electors with facts and figures as to the probable revenue and the duty upon goods. Every member wanted such information. Of what earthly use would the return be next session, after the Parliament was elected pledged to certain lines? Certainly it was not much good to him, because he had not considered the matter, nor would he have mentioned one word of what he was going to do for the farmer, had it not been dragged out of him in two speeches in this House. The country could not charge him (Mr. Moran) with having changed his views. He had on the goldfields advocated the free breakfast-table policy; but the farmer had yet to lay at his door a charge that he had deserted him in the hour of need. The Premier was satisfied in his own mind of

having pursued a consistent course; but really the Premier was suffering from hallucinations. What had the Premier said about the sliding scale? That had he known what it meant while he was at the Convention, he would not have agreed to it. The sliding scale was a disgrace to the Constitution: there was nothing like it ever seen in a constitutional measure before; but we must make the best of it. It would be an absolute inconvenience to every man who sold a pound of sugar.

THE PREMIER There was no duty on sugar.

MR. MORAN: It would be absolute inconvenience to the grocer and to every man in trade—that was what he meant. There would be a disruption of trade every year. His trouble was to protect the younger industries of Western Australia, and to protect the farmer as much as he could. But he had not studied the retailer or consumer who brought about federation. His compact had been to protect the producer under the sliding scale, also to protect small manufacturers for the time being. He hoped and trusted Parliament would meet early enough next year to put trade on a proper basis, and adopt the sliding scale with as little disruption to business as possible.

Question put and passed.

RETURN—PARIS EXHIBITION, EXPENDITURE.

MR. HARPER (Beverly) moved:

That there be laid upon the table of the House a Return showing in detail the expenditure incurred in connection with the Paris Exhibition, and an estimate of the probable further expenditure to the close of the Exhibition.

A few reports had been received with regard to the appearance of the products of the colony at the Paris Exhibition; but some hon. members feared that the cost of showing the exhibits might be rather heavy, and they would like to get a return from the Treasurer of the details of expenditure in regard to the same and some estimate as to the future cost.

Question put and passed.

RETURN—INSURANCE PREMIUMS PAID BY GOVERNMENT.

MR. WOOD (West Perth), for **Mr. Higham,** moved:

That a return be laid on the table of this House, showing the total amount of premiums

last year paid by the various Government departments for fire, marine, guarantee, or other insurance, together with the total amount and the rates paid thereon. Also, the average amount of acknowledged claims paid by the insurance companies to the Government during the past three years.

Question put and passed.

MOTION (POSTPONEMENT)—FEDERATION, NO NEW PUBLIC WORKS.

Order of the Day read: **MR. MORAN** to move.

That in view of the great alteration about to take place in the constitutional life of this colony, affecting as it will most materially the financial condition and resources of the colony, this House is of opinion that no new public work should be authorised this session, and that no work already authorised and not in progress shall be commenced before the electors of the colony have had an opportunity of expressing their will in this connection.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I do not think the House wants a three-hours address on the financial position to-night. If the Premier requires it, he can have it. I move that the motion be postponed until this day week.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I do not think that I shall oppose the postponement, except on constitutional grounds. This is a vote of no confidence in the Government, if ever there was one.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If that be so, you should adjourn the House.

THE PREMIER: There is no necessity to adjourn the House. I am prepared to go on with the motion, and the hon. member should be prepared to go on with it. He has had a long time to prepare for it. The hon. member knows very well that a motion that says federation is to materially affect the financial position and resources of the colony, that no new public works should be authorised this session, and that any work already authorised and not in progress should not be commenced until a general election, means taking the control of the business of the country out of the hands of the Government: in fact, taking the business completely out of our hands. Is it likely that any Government would submit to a motion of this sort? I should say not.

MR. GEORGE: Then we shall have to fight.

THE PREMIER: I am prepared to adjourn the House until to-morrow, so that the hon. member can then go on with his motion.

MR. MORAN: Adjourn for a week.

THE PREMIER: I cannot do that.

MR. MORAN: Adjourn the motion for a week.

THE PREMIER: We cannot do that: we cannot go on with the business of the country in the meantime. We can adjourn until to-morrow, deal with the question and go on with it until it is disposed of, or adjourn the House for a longer time; but we cannot go on with the business of the country with a vote of no-confidence hanging over our heads. Therefore I appeal to the hon. member to make up his mind what he is going to do. If he wants to move his motion I will adjourn the House until to-morrow, and then we can go on with it. For my own part I think we have had enough of want of confidence, and we have had a trial of strength. I do not know why the hon. member wants another trial of strength. This is a similar motion to that moved by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) the other day. The motion of the hon. member for Central Murchison said that hon. members had no confidence in the Ministers; this motion says "We will take the business out of the hands of the Ministry."

MR. MORAN: Is the motion for adjournment debatable at length?

THE SPEAKER: The Premier is going to oppose the adjournment.

MR. MORAN: Is the motion for adjournment debatable?

THE SPEAKER: The motion made is that the motion be adjourned.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Moran has moved that the motion be adjourned until this day week.

MR. MORAN: Is that debatable?

THE SPEAKER: Yes; the hon. member has moved that the motion be adjourned, not the debate.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member is asking for a most unreasonable thing. I should be only too glad to oblige him in any way I could, but I cannot see how it is possible to do this. We cannot do any business with an adverse motion hanging over our heads, no matter what the terms of the motion are. If it be a motion to take out of the hands of the

Government the control of the business, it is a vote of want of confidence. Never was a motion that did it better than this one does. That being so, there is only one course open to the Government if this motion is carried, and that is to hand over the reins of government to someone else. I should be very sorry indeed if the hon. member thought I was taking advantage of him, for I want to act in as generous a manner as possible. But there is no help for it. I am obliged to take this course unless the hon. member is prepared to go on with his motion to-morrow, which I think he ought to do. This is a subject that is thoroughly at the hon. member's finger-ends. He has spoken twice on it already; therefore he can have no ground for saying he wants more time to consider the matter. I appeal to members to be serious about the business of the session. Let us go on with the work; the year is nearly at an end, and perhaps some hon. members want to go away soon; they cannot sit here and do no work. Therefore I hope the hon. member will proceed with his motion or withdraw it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I regret to have to say that parliamentary experience and parliamentary practice are altogether of no avail in this House. One never knows whether the Government intend to act by rule or to act by the powers they possess. If the Government are prepared to say at this stage that they are going to treat a motion of which notice was given by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) as one of want of confidence, as soon as ever notice was given we know that the Premier, by all parliamentary practice, should immediately have risen and moved the adjournment of the House. This is a piece of gross inconsistency, so far as parliamentary practice is concerned.

THE PREMIER: The member for East Coolgardie is not a leader of any party in the House, but only a private member.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Then we come to another phase. When in the ordinary course of the business of the House I, as leader of the Opposition, dealing with the Governor's Speech, moved an amendment which could immediately have been proceeded with, because there was no constitutional reason why the debate should not have been continued right on,

the Premier rose and adjourned the House for a week.

THE PREMIER: After consultation with you.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course, it was my duty as leader of the Opposition and so far responsible for the conduct of business in the House, to put myself in the hands of the leader of the House; but, as a fact, I asked the Premier to go on with the debate the next day. There was no parliamentary necessity why the Premier should have adjourned at all in my case, but there is every reason, when such a notice of motion is tabled, that the Premier should at once adjourn the House if the Government intend to treat the motion as one of want of confidence. But the Government allowed this motion of want of confidence to hang over them until I moved another and more direct motion of want of confidence. They have allowed this notice of motion to remain day after day while they have conducted the business of the country.

THE PREMIER: The member for East Coolgardie is not the leader of any party in the House.

MR. GEORGE: But the hon. member represents an opinion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Premier has just told the House he will not allow this motion to be adjourned, because he will treat it as one of want of confidence.

THE PREMIER: No. I want it adjourned until to-morrow.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We cannot have this blowing hot and cold. The Premier must be fully aware—he has been too long connected with politics and he is too well acquainted with parliamentary practice not to know—that when this motion was tabled, if it was the intention of the Government to treat it as one of want of confidence, there was only one course open, namely not to transact any business until the motion had been dealt with. Instead of that, the Premier has allowed this motion to be tabled without taking any action. Of course I assume, and every hon. member who knows anything about parliamentary practice must assume, that the Premier did not intend to treat this as a motion of want of confidence. Now, however, he comes in at this stage and says he will so treat the motion. If he had intended to

so treat it, there was no necessity for me to submit my motion; and the Premier having adjourned the House, we should now be dealing with the motion of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran). I must absolutely protest against this complete upset of all parliamentary practice. Of course, we know the Government are strong enough to do as they please, but still parliamentary practice ought to guide them, however strong they may be. How can the Government say this is a motion of no-confidence, when they have been doing business all to-night and for days past? If the Government can come in at any stage of the business and say "We will treat this as a vote of want of confidence," what ground can there be for such action except that the Government, having discovered by the motion previously tabled and dealt with that they have a majority in the House—amongst whom are members who some of them have declared they have no confidence in the Government, but are still prepared to vote to maintain them in office—they will make every adverse and disagreeable vote one of want of confidence.

THE PREMIER: This is a vote of want of confidence.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I know it is.

THE PREMIER: Then that is all right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Then why not adjourn the House, if the Premier regards this as a want of confidence? And if he intended to treat it as such, why did he not follow parliamentary practice and immediately adjourn the House when notice of motion was given.

THE PREMIER: The member for East Coolgardie has only asked that the motion be adjourned for a week.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But notice of motion was given before my motion was submitted.

THE PREMIER: But the motion was never moved.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is very convenient to forget things. What is parliamentary practice, and what is the meaning of an adjournment? Notice is given that it is the intention of some person to move a vote of want of confidence in the Government, and while that motion is hanging over them the Government can do no business. That is the reason for the adjournment. If an hon.

member rises and moves a vote of want of confidence, the business can go on; but because time has to elapse before there can be a discussion, an adjournment is absolutely necessary: consequently it is parliamentary practice to adjourn. When a motion is moved there is no necessity to adjourn, as there was no necessity in my case.

THE PREMIER: The Government were not ready, in your case.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course in deference to the Government it was my duty—

THE PREMIER: Why talk about that adjournment, when you agreed to it?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is most inconvenient to have hon. members speaking in this kind of way. The Premier knows exactly what I am at, and that I am perfectly right.

MR. WOOD: You are perfectly wrong.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We all know what the member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) knows about parliamentary practice. I can appeal to the Speaker, whom surely the House will respect, to support me in the statement that the only reason for an adjournment is that notice of motion of want of confidence in a Government should be the next thing dealt with, and no other business done until it is dealt with. I claim that notice of motion was given before any business was done, before the Address-in-reply, and that it was the duty of the Government, if they intended to treat it as a motion of want of confidence, to at once adjourn the House. I shall appeal to the Speaker as to whether I am not right, and there leave the matter.

THE PREMIER: No; you are not right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I say, yes; I am.

THE PREMIER: If you had given notice of this motion, the case would have been different.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It does not make a bit of difference who gives the notice of motion.

THE PREMIER: If you had moved it as an amendment to the Address-in-reply, it would have been different.

MR. MORAN: But the Premier is treating this as a want-of-confidence motion, and where is the difference?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Premier is perfectly at liberty to refuse to accept

a motion of want of confidence from a private member, and I assume he was claiming that right when he did not adjourn the House on notice being given. What I protest against is that having declared to the House and the country that he did not intend to treat this as a want-of-confidence motion, he now proposes to treat it as such. I am aware that if I had submitted this notice of motion, the hon. member could not very well have refused to accept it as a motion of want of confidence; but it having been moved by a private member, and the Government having elected to treat it as a private motion and not as one of want of confidence, the Premier is guilty of a complete breach of parliamentary practice, and of good faith with the House and the country.

THE PREMIER: If the motion were carried, what would you say then?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We should have nothing to say: it would be for you to say. I understand the Premier has already given a pledge to his supporters that he would not treat any motion of this kind as one of want of confidence.

THE PREMIER: No.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: A statement to that effect was published in the Press.

MR. MORAN: The Government supporters were promised an absolutely free hand on every item.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was so understood, at any rate, from a notice in the Press.

[Several interjections.]

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Premier appealed to you, Mr. Speaker, for order a little while ago when a member was interrupting; but since I got on my feet, the Premier has interrupted more than the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) did last night. It seems to be perfectly right for the Premier to interrupt as often as he pleases, and that the rules of the House have no application to any member who sits on the Treasury benches, unless it is convenient to the Premier, and then he appeals to the Speaker for order. Of course it is for the Government to say whether they will treat this as a motion of want of confidence, at this stage: they are powerful enough to do so, and to override all parliamentary practice. In pointing this out to the House, I have

done my duty, and I protest against this being treated as a motion of want of confidence at all.

MR. MORAN: Have I the right to reply on this motion to-night, sir?

THE SPEAKER: Yes.

MR. MORAN (in reply): I notice the forces are gathering. The dead arise and walk; the blind see.

MR. GEORGE: The blind do not see on that (Government) side.

MR. D. FORREST: I shall clear out.

MR. MORAN: This motion is in keeping with the arrangement between the Premier and his party, the only difference between us being that his advice to us was to throw out the separate items of public works as they came before us.

THE PREMIER: That was not my advice.

MR. MORAN: The advice was to choose the lesser of two evils by dealing with the separate items, and therefore I thought the Premier did not intend to take this as a motion of want of confidence. He took no notice of the motion when it was tabled. It is inconvenient for me and for the House to proceed with this motion to-night; though do not let the Premier imagine that I will not go on with it if necessary; and if I did go on to-night, I should most certainly go very fully into this question, because I could not too often repeat the figures I have given already. However, I ask the Premier, since he has made this a motion of want of confidence, to adjourn its discussion till Tuesday or Wednesday next, whichever he likes, or till Thursday.

THE PREMIER: To-morrow will do. We want to do some work.

MR. MORAN: I want the adjournment till Tuesday, if possible.

THE PREMIER: We cannot consent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Do you intend to treat this as a motion of want of confidence?

THE PREMIER: Certainly.

MR. MORAN: I do not see how the Premier can lose much by one day's delay; and he may gain a lot. I ask for one day. The loss of one day over this question, the most important question before the colony just now, cannot matter much.

THE PREMIER: You have had the whole question threshed out already. It is a pure waste of time.

MR. MORAN: It is a question of the solvency or insolvency of this State.

THE PREMIER: Ridiculous!

MR. MORAN: I see the Premier is bluffing the House.

THE SPEAKER: The question is that this notice of motion be postponed till Wednesday next.

THE PREMIER: I beg to move, as an amendment, that it be adjourned till to-morrow.

Amendment put, and a division being called for by Mr. Moran, it was taken with the following result:—

Ayes	19
Noes	12

Majority for ... 7

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Darlôt	Mr. Ewing
Sir John Forrest	Mr. George
Mr. A. Forrest	Mr. Harper
Mr. D. Forrest	Mr. A. Y. Hassell
Mr. Hall	Mr. J. F. T. Hassell
Mr. Higham	Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Hubble	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Moran
Mr. Locke	Mr. Solomon
Mr. Mitchell	Mr. Vosper
Mr. Monger	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Morgans	Mr. Gregory (Teller).
Mr. Pennefather	
Mr. Phillips	
Mr. Piessé	
Mr. Rason	
Mr. Throssell	
Mr. Wood	
Mr. Quinlan (Teller).	

Amendment thus passed, and the Order of the Day postponed till the next sitting.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eighteen minutes past 10 o'clock until the next day.