

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 24th July, 1902.

Question: Agricultural Areas, Victoria District—
Question: Railway Bridge, Perth—Address-in-reply,
fourth day, conclusion—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL AREAS,
VICTORIA DISTRICT.

HON. J. M. DREW asked the Minister for Lands: 1, If any date has been fixed for the hearing of the arbitration cases between the Government and the former occupants of the pastoral leases in the Victoria district resumed as agricultural areas? 2, What has been the cause of past delay in the matter? 3, Who has been appointed to act as arbitrator for the Government?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, No. 2, Negotiations have been proceeding continuously between the parties, and there has been no unnecessary delay. 3, Mr. Sydney Hosken.

QUESTION—RAILWAY BRIDGE, PERTH.

HON. G. RANDELL asked the Minister for Lands: If he can inform this House when the contemplated bridge over the railway at the William street crossing, Perth, will be commenced.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: Plans are well advanced, and it is hoped that the Government will be in a position to call for tenders in about one month from date.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

FOURTH DAY OF DEBATE.

Resumed from the previous day.

HON. R. LAURIE (West): It is not my intention to take up the time of the House at great length. I desire to indorse what all the previous speakers have said in regard to that which is contained in paragraphs 1, 2, and 5. With respect to paragraph 6, I should like to say I am exceedingly pleased to know that Mr. Walter James has become Premier of the State. I feel satisfied

that any action or measure which Mr. James may introduce in connection with the administration of the affairs of the country will be brought forward with honesty of purpose. In regard to paragraphs 8 and 9, I can only say that I exceedingly regret to see that Mr. James, on entering upon the Premiership of the State, has had to approve of the appointment of Mr. William J. George as Commissioner of Railways of Western Australia. I also take exception to the appointment from the fact that, if it was thought any change was necessary, that change ought not to have taken place until Parliament had had an opportunity of passing a measure for the appointment of a board of commissioners. I say this with a deep grasp of the trouble that may be occasioned by the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner, because it means that in the event of Parliament not passing a measure for the appointment of a board of commissioners, there can only be one position for Mr. George to take up, that of General Manager of Railways for Western Australia. The appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner before a measure is passed providing for a board, means that Mr. George will be chairman of that body if a board of commissioners is decided upon. I had some experience on the board which was appointed to inquire into certain charges in connection with the late manager of the railways, and I am perfectly satisfied, if a Bill be passed providing that Parliament have power to control the rates and to deal with all questions involving the interests of the railway servants of the State, if that is taken away from the Commissioners of Railways and left to Parliament, it can only result in the same chaos which existed previously, and which led to the charges being laid against Mr. John Davies. The charges which were laid against Mr. John Davies could not be fairly or honestly brought against him, because whenever a question of railway management, or a question whether the General Manager ought to be called into question or should be dealt with arose, it was found that the General Manager could not deal with the question, because the Minister was the person who ought to have been charged, and not Mr. John Davies. Again when charges were laid

against Mr. Davies, as Traffic Manager, Mr. Short should have been the officer charged. Consequently the Commission could not give that finality to the proceedings which they would or could have given if the general management of the railways had not been connected with the Commissioner. I say fearlessly, if the Government in the measure they bring forward provide that Parliament shall control the rates, then it is only a farce to appoint three Commissioners, because no man can control any business, if anyone else can step in and say that what he has done is not right. How can the Commissioners who are going to deal with the largest asset of the State control affairs if Parliament can interfere with them? I say this is the largest asset of the State, because six years ago the railway revenue amounted to £653,000, while to the 30th June this year the railway revenue was £1,500,000. I ask the question of any hon. member, or of any commercial man outside the House, is it fair that a 'prentice hand should be put to control any business, and particularly one of such magnitude, to learn that business at the expense of the State? I say emphatically, no. There has been too much of that kind of thing. Let us go a little farther. Mr. George is appointed. I am aware that Mr. George is a good business man, that he is a pushing business man, or a strong business man, as it is termed. [MEMBER: Very strong.] At the same time, I have my own opinion as to Mr. George's tact in the conduct of business. I have had experience of Mr. George's conduct of business. Hon. members know that it is the tactful man, as a rule, who gets along best in business; not the blustering man. When a person comes into his office with a grievance, the business man makes that person leave feeling that he, the business man himself, is the one aggrieved. The man who tries to bluster and bluff is not, as a rule, successful. We are all Britishers; and when a man begins to bluster, we respond; and business consequently does not result. I have not a word to say against Mr. George; but I do maintain if the Government wanted a railway manager, they should have got a railway manager. If they wanted a pushing business man as Commissioner to assist the manager,

then Mr. George might have come in. But the Government should have appointed even such a Commissioner only after Parliament had consented to the appointment. As a member of the John Davies Inquiry Board, I can assure the House the main difficulty we had to contend with lay in the circumstance that we could not separate the General Manager from the Commissioner. And here I may point out that the Commissioner at any time may be the Commissioner of a month. His case may be like that of my friend Mr. Moss, who was Colonial Secretary for a month.

HON. M. L. MOSS: Oh, don't rub it in!

HON. R. LAURIE: I am not rubbing it in. That is the position. The proposal is that the biggest asset of the State shall henceforth be handled in a manner different from that which has obtained so far. But I do not see how any Commissioner or Board of Commissioners can be held responsible for the management of the railways, if such matters as the fixing of the rates and the organisation of the men are to remain with Parliament. As to the organisation of the men, all of us who have had to handle labour, and large bodies of labour, year in and year out, know that the working man has the greatest respect for the employer who can tell him what he ought to do. Mr. George now holds the position of Commissioner of Railways, and he will have to make the railways pay. Therefore, in the first place he will have to fix rates. I am told by some of my friends, in this connection, that Mr. George will have under him officers who will assist him; but we know that when a man is newly appointed to the management of a business, the officers under him in that business do not necessarily entertain a feeling of personal loyalty to him. They think to themselves that they are paid only for doing certain parts of the work, and they regard themselves as only a part of the machine. Consequently, the new manager has to learn the business practically unassisted. To turn now to a financial aspect of the appointment, we all know that in no part of the world, and particularly not in America or England, would £1,000 be stinted to procure a good man for the management of a big business. To manage an undertaking which handles a

revenue of £1,500,000 annually, the best man obtainable ought to have been got—the best man, not a 'prentice hand, not a man who would find himself called on to control something he had not controlled before. With all due respect to Mr. George, I maintain that while he may have managed the Rockingham railway, and while he may have superintended the construction of the Portland-Warham-bol and other Victorian lines, his duties amounted only to the charge of certain gangs of men. In his present position, however, he is called on to control rates and make the railways pay. Moreover, the railway management is now faced with the question of an eight-hours day. At the same time, I say, however—and I say it advisedly—that while the water supply to the railway costs £90,000 last year, in this ensuing year, with the advent of the Coolgardie Water Scheme, it will not cost £10,000. The facilitation of water supply means also that the trucks which we have seen going backwards and forwards along the Eastern Goldfields line, carrying tanks, will be released; the engines hauling those trucks will likewise be released; and there is not the slightest doubt that now the question is simply one of working the railways in such a manner as to make them pay. The traffic is increasing; yet I have no hesitation in saying that to-day and yesterday there were hundreds of trucks lying idle at Fremantle. When the railway sheds asked for by the Fremantle people, who knew something of the subject, were at last built—after we had patiently waited four or five years for them—the opening of those sheds released at least 500 trucks for traffic on the railways. Had the sheds been built when the people who had a knowledge of the matter asked for them, those 500 trucks would have been available for traffic years ago.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The department built the sheds, but kept them shut up.

HON. A. LAURIE: I shall deal with that matter presently. I now turn to the question of organising the men. To my mind, if the railways of Western Australia ever wanted an organiser, it is at the present time. We all know that the railway employees from one end of the service to the other say they do not know where they stand, they do not know how

they are. There is not among the railway servants that *esprit de corps* which ought to exist. The men simply get their eight hours in. I do not deny, of course, that there are plenty of good men in our railway service; but there is no organisation. No railway servant knows where he will be to-day or to-morrow: at any moment he may find a man jumping over his head, without his knowing the reason why. There is no grading, no organisation, and consequently there is no desire on the part of the men to do well to-day because they may hope to be advanced to-morrow. Moreover, if a railway servant tells the truth about an accident in the service, he is liable to be fined two days' or perhaps a week's pay, or even to be discharged. I have personal knowledge of cases where accidents happened at Fremantle, resulting possibly in a few pounds' loss to the department: something may have fallen off a truck, or over the side. Accidents in which my own business was concerned have occurred, and I have made a claim for the amount of the loss, since, if I did not recover it from the Railway Department, I should have had to pay it out of my own pocket. When in such cases a railway employee was honest enough to admit that an accident did occur, the man has been fined a week's pay; indeed, a man was dismissed altogether, in one instance. What can the public expect when such a state of affairs exists? I have said repeatedly, I say now, and I shall say repeatedly, that when a servant is honest enough to own up to an accident, he is not to be blamed, and certainly not to be discharged, but rather is to be commended for his honesty. We know that accidents will happen, and, as business men, we allow a certain percentage for losses caused by accidents. Viewing the circumstances of the Railway Department at the present time, I maintain that the man needed to control the department is one who has risen from the ranks and has had a thoroughly good training in all branches of railway service. However, an appointment has been made, and I can only trust and believe that Mr. George—there is no doubt he will hear what has been said by members of both Houses regarding his appointment—will use every endeavour to fill the office to which he has been appointed.

I do not propose to touch on every paragraph of His Excellency's Speech; but I must deal with one paragraph which, while it affects Fremantle in particular, treats of a matter of national importance. I refer to paragraph 13:—

The Fremantle Harbour Works are now advanced to such a stage that the business management of the completed portions should be placed in the hands of a harbour board, and a Bill will be introduced with that object. Similar arrangements are contemplated as early as practicable for Albany, Geraldton, and Bunbury.

Many members of this House probably do not know what are the functions of a harbour board. When I went to school—a good many years ago—on the River Clyde, whence I come, one could almost walk across the top of that river. To-day, under the management of a trust, the largest ships afloat can pass up and down that river. It is managed by a trust from its upper reaches right down to Greenock. The river has been made navigable for all classes of vessels, and every kind of accommodation is provided. I should explain that accommodation is provided not only for shipping, but also for the public, who can travel backwards and forwards in penny steamers owned by the harbour trust and plying from the upper to the lower reaches. Perhaps I may be pardoned if I take up a little of the time of the House in describing the functions of a harbour board, as distinct from a marine board. If a board is to be appointed to take charge of the Fremantle Harbour, hon. members will not I trust, believe the Fremantle community to be sufficiently parochial to demand that the board should consist only of Fremantle merchants or Fremantle residents. The Fremantle Harbour is a national work. Perhaps hon. members will allow me to point out what exactly I mean by a national work. The Fremantle Harbour has, no doubt, been constructed by the State of Western Australia for the purpose of bringing the mail steamers to Fremantle. It has been built in order to make of Fremantle the Brindisi of Australia. I trust the harbour board to be created will be a nominee board; that is to say, that its members will be nominated by the Government; and I hope at least two members of the board will be men possessing a thorough knowledge of what the functions of a

harbour board are. The other members might be nominated at the instance of the Government, or at the invitation of the Government, by Perth and Fremantle; and those members should be good business men. When the harbour board is formed, its duties and functions will be to provide a good harbour, an up-to-date harbour, such a harbour as will be in the nature of an inducement to owners all over the world to send their ships here. The aim of the board should be to accommodate ships at the least possible cost to the owner, and, farther, to deliver goods to the consignee at the lowest possible cost. I may point out that the functions of the board will not be to provide Fremantle with a revenue for the purpose of building up its harbour. While the board must raise revenue sufficient to cover the cost of working the harbour, interest on capital, and sinking fund, its functions will also be to see that the ports of Bunbury, and Geraldton, the North-Western ports, and also the Southern port of Albany—

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: And Esperance.

HON. R. LAURIE: And Esperance, if you like—to see that all those ports are placed on exactly the same footing as Fremantle with respect to the cost of wharfage. That is to say, seeing that a mail steamer cannot call at Bunbury or Geraldton, the harbour board should see that the Bunbury or Geraldton merchant who receives his goods at the port of Fremantle pays only the same wharfage as if the vessel had gone to Bunbury or Geraldton. It comes to this: one of the functions of the harbour board will be to see that justice is meted out to everyone. Bringing ships to Fremantle Harbour and giving the merchant his goods at the same wharfage rate will place the merchant at Bunbury on a par with the merchant at Fremantle, and so on. That will be one of the functions of the harbour board. If you have a properly constituted body who know how to manage a harbour, they will bring about another improvement. Ships coming to Fremantle will then remain there four or five days, and in that time with the facilities provided a vessel will discharge from three thousand to four thousand or five thousand tons of cargo. At the present time, owing to the dual control and the anti-

quoted manner in which cargo is handled, to discharge that amount of cargo from a ship will take three or four weeks. Under present conditions merchants are paying 32s. 6d. or 35s. a ton, and in some cases 45s. and 60s. a ton, for goods landed at Fremantle, as against 15s. to 30s. a ton paid for goods landed in the Eastern States. When a ship comes to Fremantle it has to lie so long in port that the ship-owner puts up the rates. The expenses of a large ship are from £80 to £100 a day, therefore the owner has to guard the interests of the vessel when he comes to Fremantle. With the facilities offered by a properly constituted board at Fremantle, merchants will receive their cargoes at the same rates that merchants in Melbourne or in Sydney receive their goods. Merchants will tell you that, owing to the high freights from Europe, they can obtain their heavy lines of goods from Sydney at a less rate than if goods are landed here direct. That has in a measure been knocked upon the head lately because inter-State freights are higher now, for these are the days of combines and understandings. But merchants in the past have found that heavy lines of goods can be sent to Sydney from Europe and be brought on here by the coastal vessels cheaper than if the goods were obtained from London direct to Fremantle. We have been building up a harbour, and ever since the harbour started there has been no fixed plan. We have been building wharves, and the Engineer-in-Chief had his ideas how the wharves should be worked. His ideas were up-to-date as to the fixing of electric cranes, or hydraulic cranes, and the laying of the rails. But the Government saw fit—and I agree with the Government of the day, they were quite right—to save the expenditure of £70,000 or £80,000. The rails were laid, but they have been covered over to allow the wharves to be used in a different manner from that proposed at first, and sheds have now been built there. If a board had been appointed previous to the building of the present sheds, we should not have seen the buildings erected in the manner they have been: there would have been a saving to the Government of half the cost of the present sheds. Not only that, but the facilities for working would have been much better. Indeed I

can tell the House that when a cargo leaves a ship's side it has to go to a shed which is 166 feet away, to deliver into the cars. There is no place in Australia where the distance is half so great. To take the goods 166 feet means double labour and double cost; and the merchant here is made to pay more for his goods than he ought to pay at the present time. I have no hesitation in saying that the three sheds erected at Fremantle are giving the Government a revenue of £500 a month. The wharfage charge is 3s. 6d. a ton; the Government provide the shed, and the whole of the work is done at the expense of the merchant, who has to pay 1s. 3d. for the handling of the cargo, being the 2s. 3d. paid into the revenue of the State for the use of the shed so that the ship may lay alongside. I have no hesitation in saying that when the harbour is handed over to a board, that body, if it is the board I think it ought to be, will shape out the wharves that are required and the sheds that are required, and will reduce the cost to the merchant by a very considerable amount indeed, in rates and charges. I am satisfied that I shall be found to be correct in saying that in twelve months from the formation of a harbour trust in Fremantle, goods will be delivered at that port at 10s. a ton less than they are landed there at the present time. The question has been debated as to whether the sliding scale should be abolished, and I wish to touch on that subject very lightly. I can scarcely see how members of the Legislature in this State could ask that the sliding scale should be abolished at the present time. I may take a different view from most members, but not two years ago we were in the throes of a federal election, and it was a question whether this State should join the Commonwealth or not. Part of the agreement made in connection with joining was that there should be a sliding scale. At the present time the House of Representatives and the Senate are clutching one another by the throat as to what the tariff should be. I ask members, if the sliding scale is abolished, is it fair, having got the people of this State to join the Commonwealth, that one of the conditions should be ruthlessly thrown on one side. I say it is not fair or honest.

Let us at least be honest; let us see what the duties imposed will be before we consider whether we should do away with the sliding scale. If we can see our way to abolish it, by all means let us do so. I shall hail with delight the abolition of the sliding scale, but not before we see if we can do without the revenue. Before the tariff is fixed up by the Commonwealth it is distinctly unfair to ask that we should break the agreement made when we entered federation.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Long before that it was agreed.

HON. R. LAURIE: It may have been long before that, but I only mention the time when we entered the federation. I pass on to a question that materially affects this State, the redistribution of seats; and I ask members if they feel satisfied that the Government are earnest in their desire for reform, and will bring a measure before the House such as that indicated by Mr. James in his speech in the Town Hall. I shall not vote for such a measure, and I say it emphatically. It is a matter of indifference to me whether I am here or not—my time could be spent better in my own business than here—but I will say that I shall not vote for a measure such as that indicated by Mr. James. I am prepared to show my desire for reform, and if the Ministry wish reform, then I am willing to agree to a reduction of the membership of this House if it is proportionate with the reduction made in another place. That will show whether the Government are earnest in their desire for reform. Let the Government reduce the number of members in the other House to 36, and let them reduce the number of members of the Ministry to four. If they do that it will show they are earnest in their desire to save money; but to reduce the membership of this House by ten and that of the other House by four is not the way to save money. It will be a paltry sum, as pointed out by Mr. Moss. The aim of the Leake Government was administration, and I take it that this State at the present time does not want legislation: what it wants is administration. If the members of the Ministry will pay more attention to the administration of affairs, if they will pay more attention to see that the promises they have made are carried out, there will be thousands

of pounds saved and no necessity for the so-called reform. If the Premier of this State brings forward a measure showing that he is honest in his intention for reform, on the terms which I have pointed out, then I will vote for it. There is a wave passing through the Eastern States in favour of reform. I have no hesitation in saying that reform is required in South Australia. The legislation passed in that State for many years has retarded the country to such an extent that at the present time they are looking round to see how they can get revenue, and what form of taxation they can impose. We are not in that condition. Our population is growing by leaps and bounds, and our revenue is increasing. What we want now is administration, not legislation. If the Premier is honest and if the Ministry are honest in their desire for reform, let a measure be introduced for a reduction of members in the lower House to 36 and in this House to 21. If the Government will do that, I shall vote for the Bill, and we shall see that the Ministry are earnest in their desire. If they do not, I shall vote dead against the reduction to 44 and to 21. I boldly state that, for it is only fair that the people who send us here should know what we intend to do, and we should give reasons for the manner in which we vote. It has been mentioned by Sir Edward Wittenoom and by Mr. Drew that we should subsidise steamers on the coast to carry cattle from the North-West. I am dead against subsidies of that class. Where there is business to be done there is enterprise to meet it, and I go farther. In paragraph 19 of the Speech it is stated that provision will be made for a dock at Fremantle. Build that dock, and you subsidise every steamship in Western Australia to the extent of £1,500 per annum. I will show how that will be brought about. At the present time there are about five steamers engaged in carrying cattle in the North-West trade. I will instance one steamer, the Tangier, belonging to Connor, Doherty, and Co. All ships have to undergo a yearly examination or they are not allowed to trade. That is necessary for the safety of life and of the ship. That being the case, any vessel employed on the North-West coast, or the South-West coast, has to proceed to the Eastern States for an

annual overhaul. To take a ship to the Eastern States and bring it back again cannot be done under a cost of £1,000. That is a clear subsidy of £1,000 to the shipowner trading on the North-West coast, if we provide a dock for his vessels at Fremantle. Farther, a ship has to run for 12 months before she will incur that expense of £1,000. It is known to every shipping man, and no doubt to hon. members generally, that after a ship has been in the water for three months its bottom becomes foul, and that as a result of that fouling the ship, instead of using 10 tons of coal per day, will use first 12 and eventually as much as 15 tons. Consequently, if we provide the means of docking there will be a saving of at least £500 or £600 per annum to be made by docking a ship every six months instead of every 12 months; and the more frequent docking will effect an annual saving of £500 or £600 in the coal bill. There is no doubt of it. I may tell hon. members that when, about 10 years ago, I was sent to this State to manage the affairs of a certain company which had four or five steamers running on the North-West coast, I felt myself called on to consider closely whether instead of sending the ships for docking purposes to one of the Eastern States I should not send them to Singapore. Hon. members will readily see that the sending of a steamer to Singapore meant a dead loss, because there would be freight neither to nor from that port. There was the farther consideration that if sent to Singapore, the ship would be far away from where those most interested could supervise the repairs. Therefore the construction of a dock at Fremantle is equivalent to an immediate and direct subsidy to the shipowner. I think I have made it perfectly clear that the shipowner will derive great practical benefit from a dock. Mr. Doherty, of Messrs. Connor and Doherty, assured the members of the Chamber of Commerce yesterday that such were the absolute facts. I believe I have succeeded in convincing the Chambers of Commerce that the reason I have stated in itself affords good ground for the construction of a dock. Now let me point out the advantages of such a dock to the State as a whole. The possession of the dock by

Fremantle would mean that the port would be on the highway from the Eastern States to India, to England, and indeed one may say to all parts of the world, and that it would also be on the highway from all parts of the world to the Eastern States.

HON. M. L. MOSS: We have heard that expression about the highway, before.

HON. R. LAURIE: Yes; probably. The hon. member, however, is not as large as some of the highway-men I have seen. The expression has, no doubt, been used; but still I may say the geographical position of Fremantle places it on the world's highway. At the present moment there are at Fremantle two ships which, if docking accommodation were available, would be placed in dock, and the probability is that each of those ships would leave an amount of £1,500 or £2,000 in Fremantle. A couple of months ago, there arrived at Fremantle two ships with broken shafts; one ship had lost its propeller, and in the case of the other, the propeller was falling off when the boat arrived at the port. Had docking accommodation been available, both those vessels would have been docked here, and, as a result, from £1,000 to £2,000 would have been circulated in Fremantle by each ship. Those amounts would have been spent with the local tradesmen, such as engineers, boiler makers, and others. I contend that undoubtedly a dock at Fremantle will pay. Probably Ministers feel some degree of uncertainty as to whether the time has arrived when the prospective returns will justify the building of a dock. My conviction is that if it is proposed to construct a suitable dock at Fremantle, the British Government will subsidise the work. The British Government are certain to subsidise a dock at such an important point as Fremantle. There is no dock capable of taking a warship of the size prevailing, between Singapore, Sydney, and the Cape of Good Hope. The State of Victoria is now expending a sum of £260,000 in the enlargement of its Alfred Dock. In Sydney private enterprise is building a dock capable of taking in a ship 800 feet long.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Why did not private enterprise build it at Fremantle?

HON. R. LAURIE: The hon. member asks why private capitalists did not build a dock at Fremantle. In reply, I may point out to the hon. member that Fremantle has not yet arrived at Sydney's stage of development. The State of Western Australia, if one may be permitted to say so—and it is, in a broad sense, absolutely correct—is not yet 15 years old. In less than 15 years the population of Western Australia has increased from about 36,000 or 40,000 to over 200,000. Sydney, on the other hand, is pre-eminently the largest shipping port of Australia, and has behind it an immense country which has been largely developed. The State of New South Wales is singularly fortunate in possessing a harbour like that of Sydney. One of the results of its good fortune is that private enterprise has been able, within the last 40 or 50 years, to build not only one, but three docks, at Sydney. At the same time, I have to remind hon. members that the largest dock Sydney possesses is the Government dock situated on Cockatoo Island. That is at present the only dock in Australia capable of taking in a warship, and it is controlled by the State. From what I have said it follows that Western Australia is in exactly the same position as New South Wales. We are now about to get a State dock, and no doubt in due time we shall have smaller docks and slips owned by private persons. I trust that when the time does come, we shall have business for these private docks and slips. Meanwhile, I think it is the duty of the State to build a dock such as I have described. When that dock is built, I am perfectly satisfied sufficient business will be brought to the port, by reason of the presence of the dock, to return interest on the capital cost. Even, however, if the dock does not pay directly, the money left behind by the ships repaired at the dock will be quite sufficient recompense to the country; that is, regarding the matter from a broad, national standpoint.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What is to be the cost?

HON. R. LAURIE: The question of cost is entirely one—

HON. M. L. MOSS: Don't give your estimate now: you may be paid for giving it later on.

HON. R. LAURIE: At the present moment we do not know to what extent the Imperial Government will be prepared to subsidise a dock. It will be entirely a matter for the Ministry to say what description of dock is to be built. I would, however, urge on the Government and the public that the dock to be built should be large enough to take in not only the largest vessels coming to Fremantle, but also any of the cruisers which may visit the port. I urge, farther, that before the dock is built, before even plans are drawn up, the Imperial Government should be approached and asked to what extent they will be prepared to subsidise a dock such as will answer their requirements. Then, when the amount of the subsidy is known and the probable revenue from the dock, outside those sources of revenue which private people will enjoy, has been computed, I have not the slightest doubt it will be recognised that from its very inception the dock will pay interest and working expenses, and provide a sinking fund as well.

HON. W. MALEY: Albany is the only place suitable for a dock.

HON. R. LAURIE: I have not the slightest doubt that Albany is suitable for a dock; but, still, one cannot alter the geographical position of a country. One cannot shift the trade of Western Australia down to Albany.

HON. W. MALEY: It all passes Albany.

HON. R. LAURIE: No doubt. But, unfortunately for Albany, the population of Western Australia is at this end of the country.

HON. M. L. MOSS: The trade passes Eucla, too.

HON. R. LAURIE: I did not intend to dwell longer on the motion now before the House, but Mr. Brimage has invited me to give some information about marine boards. I was one of five gentlemen—I wish to call the attention of the Minister to this fact—who were asked to sit in Fremantle as members of a Royal Commission appointed by Sir John Forrest to inquire into the working of marine boards, with a view to consolidation of the Shipping Acts of Western Australia. The functions of a marine board, I may mention, are in regard to sea matters pretty much what the functions of the Board of Trade are in England: the two

cases are practically on all-fours. The members of the commission held some 20 sittings. We had before us the whole of the Marine Board Acts of the various States ; we had all our experience to guide us ; and as the result of our work we had a report drawn up and all but ready for presentation. Then the chairman of the commission was advised—I believe by the then Government—simply to hold no farther meetings. The result was that the labour of those five commissioners was absolutely wasted. We had a measure almost ready for the Government draftsman, and I venture to say that the advice we were prepared to tender to the Government would have resulted in such a Shipping Act as would have been a pattern for the other States to imitate, since we had selected from the Acts of those other States their best features. We had profited by the good experience of one State, and by the troublesome experience of another. However, after some 20 sittings devoted to the subject by business men well up in shipping matters, a request was made that the whole matter should drop. I consider it a disgrace to Western Australia that there should be no marine board, and another disgrace to this State that its shipping laws should be in their present condition. A shipmaster who has trouble with his vessel in Western Australia is brought up before a preliminary court, at which charges are made ; then the functionary who presided in the preliminary court and framed the charges there—

HON. M. L. MOSS : And who prosecuted.

HON. R. LAURIE : And who prosecuted, afterwards sits in judgment on the captain. Such a state of things is absolutely wrong. A man who frames charges against a captain after a hearing in the preliminary court, and then prosecutes the captain, is bound to find the captain guilty. There is no getting away from that.

HON. M. L. MOSS : The "City of York" case was quite enough.

HON. R. LAURIE : I have referred to no ship in particular ; but I maintain that gross injustice is frequently done to professional men. The master of a steamer or a sailing vessel should not be

placed in such a position. He has spent four years' time at sea, and has probably also spent years in a training ship before going to sea, and he has gradually worked his way up the ladder, with the result that when he comes to Western Australia he is brought before a board which, knowing absolutely nothing about shipping matters, cancels his certificate, or takes it away from him for, say, six months. Really, it would be far better for the captain to be sentenced to six months' imprisonment ; because depriving him of his certificate means taking away his bread-and-butter. It is a disgrace that we have no marine board. One of the reasons adduced for not proceeding with the labours of the Royal Commission, I afterwards heard, was that the Federal Government would take the matter up. I consider Western Australia to be in a better position than the Federal Government to manage its own harbours, lighthouses, and buoys ; at any rate, Western Australia should have some representation in the matter when these things are under the control of the Federal Government. But West Australia, instead of being given representation, will have none ; since the Federal Government will send over men from the other side to do that which our own citizens are capable of doing. I shall not take up the time of the House longer. I trust that during the session now before us every measure reaching this Chamber from another place will have its due meed of attention, and be dealt with in a just and honourable manner.

HON. W. T. LOTON (East) : After being away from the arena of political life for some time, one is apt to get a little bit rusty on political subjects. Members will, no doubt, be glad to hear that it is not my intention to address them at length on this occasion. I think we are agreed on several of the first paragraphs of the Speech : they contain matters not of a debatable character. I think I may say also that the whole of the members of the House will agree with the sentiments expressed therein. We could have all wished, I am sure, that the intelligence conveyed in the first portion of the Speech had been of a more encouraging character. Still, we have to take life as we find it, and the wisest course is to

make the best of it. I am in accord with the sympathetic remarks which have fallen from the various members, particularly from the leader of the House, in connection with the matters dealt with in the paragraphs referred to. And where we see there is an opportunity of rejoicing, I also agree with the remarks made in regard to those events. This Speech is of fairly good length, but after reading it, not particularly critically, I fail to see that there is any very distinct or definite policy therein. At the same time there is reference made to several measures of importance which the Government propose to deal with. Some very stringent criticisms have been passed not only upon the Government, but upon the person the Government have seen fit to appoint to the position of Commissioner of Railways. It does, no doubt, look somewhat strange to members that, after the railways had been under acting management and Parliament for nearly the whole of last year, almost immediately before Parliament is meeting an important position should be filled. But I suppose, in the interim, the Government, knowing it was their duty to appoint some person or persons to a position of this kind, had been looking about to find a person whom they considered suitable. While I am not going to commit myself to one side or the other, because we shall have an opportunity of dealing with the question when a certain Bill is brought before us, I am rather inclined to congratulate the Government on their action than to condemn them. I commend them because they have taken upon themselves the responsibility, before meeting Parliament, of appointing a person to this position. The Government surely have not gone beyond their constitutional powers in this direction; and as to whether the man who has been appointed to the position is to be a success or not, I am not prepared to say. But the gentleman is possessed of several qualifications which should, to a great extent, fit him for a position of this kind. And I am bound to say, from my knowledge of the gentleman, if he is given fair-play and a fair opportunity, I believe we shall see a considerable improvement in the general management of the railways in a very short time.

HON. M. L. MOSS: That is rather beside the question.

HON. W. T. LOTON: I do not think so. I have already said I think the Government have kept within their constitutional power in appointing a Commissioner of Railways. I was rather surprised to hear the hon. member, the legal member who sits next to the leader of the House (Mr. Moss), express an opinion to the contrary the other day.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Cheap advice.

HON. W. T. LOTON: If that hon. member looks into the question, I do not think he will find that the Government have exceeded their rights at all. If they had gone beyond, and had appointed two other Commissioners, I think they would have "put their foot" into it certainly; but no doubt the Government considered very fully the power they had, and have gone as far as they thought they could do and no farther. They have left it to Parliament to say whether there shall be more Commissioners or not. At the present time, without pledging myself one way or the other, I am inclined to think we can do better with one Commissioner than with three, because it will be a saving in expense, and the various departments will have to be controlled and managed by the particular experts in the departments. Therefore, I do not see the necessity of having three Commissioners. I would rather leave the responsibility, so far as it goes, with the Minister for Railways and the Government, because I do not think the responsibility is going to be taken from the Ministry. The Government will have to be responsible to Parliament. That is my view of it. I would leave the farther responsibility in the hands of one Commissioner instead of three; at least I think so, without going farther into details and seeing the Bill. I do not propose to deal at any length with the very vexed question of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. As a matter of fact, I have not read the report of the Royal Commission. I have glanced through it to a certain extent, and it seems to me that there are some appalling revelations in that report. I may say at once—but the opinion is not a new one—that during the whole time of the construction of the Coolgardie Water Scheme the Government made an egregious mistake and continued it, when they carried on these works, excepting the dam, departmentally instead of by contract.

I think the whole of the works, except the Mundaring dam, should have been carried out by contract rather than by departmental day labour. Thousands of pounds would have been saved and the work would have been completed long ago, and the water would have been at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie by now, instead of being only half-way there. We are promised an amendment in the constitution, and the Premier, when delivering his political speech in the Town Hall, went a little into the details of the question. Personally, I think it is very undesirable to be frequently tampering with and changing the constitution. It should be touched as seldom as possible. In a very few words I desire to say, although I think it is undesirable, I am afraid, to a certain extent, in regard to a redistribution of seats the question of population will have to be taken into account. But the redistribution must not be on a population basis solely or nearly. The various industries of the State, from the North-West to the East, must be considered and have full and fair representation. With regard to the number of members and the saving in this direction, the proposal, at the present time, is not one that will meet with my support—the proposal being to reduce the number of members in this Chamber by nine and in another place by four. If we are to have an amendment of the constitution and a redistribution of seats, I do not see any very urgent necessity for them. This is only the second session of this Parliament, and in the ordinary course there will be another session and then an appeal to the people, if not before that time, then by a dissolution; and it seems to me, seeing that very little practical business was done last session, it would be wise on the part of members to devote their attention to business instead of to a dissolution, and wait for that dissolution until next year. In the meantime we could get on very well as we are. We had better do good work than upset the country. That is my view of the question of the amendment of the constitution. There is one question that most members have referred to, the Inter-State duties—the duties collectable under the tariff of Western Australia before joining the Commonwealth and known as the sliding scale, which hon.

members know has not yet come into operation. And I think it is a little uncertain when it will come into operation; at any rate it is not coming into operation this year. The hon. member who seconded the Address-in-reply alluded to the increased amount of taxation that had been collected during last year; and it might be inferred from his speech that the main cause, or one of the causes of the increased taxation, was the continuation of the Inter-State Tariff. I do not desire to misinterpret the expressions of the hon. member, but that was the inference I gathered from his speech. I do not think the hon. member could have given much attention to the question, if that is his opinion. The present tariff is the same that has been in existence for several years past. Therefore, what has been collected under that tariff could not have been the cause of the extra taxation. If members look into the question they will see very clearly indeed that the extra taxation has been caused by the excessively high tariff that was brought forward in the House of Representatives, and imposed up to the present time by the Federal Government. That is where the shoe pinches. It is the Federal Tariff that has been inaugurated which has caused this extra taxation on this country. When we find on lots of articles an excess imposed over our ordinary tariff of ten per cent. on the invoice value to start with, and an *ad valorem* duty of ten and fifteen per cent. higher than our present tariff, while on machinery there is a duty of ten to fifteen or twenty per cent. higher, it is easy to see where the increased revenue comes from and how the heavy taxation has been brought about. It seems to me therefore, that it would be practically suicidal to do away with the Inter-State Tariff at the present time. We must hold on to it. It is the duty of every member of Parliament, in the interests of the State, to refrain from interfering with that tariff for the present, and this for several reasons. One reason, and a most important one, is that we do not yet know what the Federal Tariff is to be. The Senate has pulled the Representatives' tariff about pretty roughly, reducing the duties in many instances. We can scarcely expect, however, that the House of Representatives, as now constituted, will agree to accept

the whole of the Senate's suggestions. We hope, nevertheless—at all events, I hope most sincerely—not in the interests of this State only, but in the interests of the Commonwealth, that the excessive duties fixed by the House of Representatives will be considerably moderated, much as the Senate has moderated them. When the Federal Tariff is finally settled and we have lived under it for a year or so, it will be time enough to deal with our Inter-State Tariff. The bogey, as I may call it, of high taxation, held up to frighten the people, has nothing at the back of it. For if we are paying extra duties in this State, the fact remains that everything here is on a higher scale. Wages in every class of employment are higher here than they are in the Eastern States, and the whole of the Western Australian people are much better off in every respect, and particularly better off financially—that is to say they have more money—than people of their class in the other States of the Commonwealth. I have not prepared, and therefore do not intend to worry hon. members with, a lot of statistics; but I must give just a few bearing on my argument. If the Inter-State Tariff, which is so much railed against by some people, had been done away with during the last year, say from the date of the inauguration of the Federal Tariff, what would have been the result? Up to the end of last year we have had nine months' experience of the joint operation of the Federal Tariff and the Inter-State Tariff. Now, supposing the Inter-State Tariff had been abolished, what would have been our financial position? I have ascertained, as nearly as it is possible to ascertain, the amount of duties collected under the Inter-State Tariff; and the total appears to have been practically £200,000. If the Inter-State Tariff had been abolished, therefore, our revenue would have been £200,000 less; practically £1 less per head of the population. Some hon. member may maintain that had the total taxation been reduced by £200,000, each one of the 200,000 residents of Western Australia would have an extra pound in his or her pocket. I do not think that contention will be advanced; but if it be, certainly the matter will be difficult of proof. I question very much whether the average man would have an extra five

shillings in his pocket; but it is unquestionable that the State would have £200,000 less revenue. At the close of the financial year ended on the 30th June, 1901, we were £74,000 in debt. At the close of our last financial year, on the 30th ultimo, with the operation of the Inter-State Tariff and that of the excessive Federal Tariff, we have, after defraying the balance of indebtedness at the end of June, 1901, a credit balance of about £120,000. The position, therefore, is as follows. If we had not collected duties under the Inter-State Tariff, we should have had £200,000 less revenue, and instead of possessing a surplus of £120,000 we should be at the present time between £70,000 and £80,000 to the bad. I ask hon. members which position they prefer, in the interests of the country? I ask them to consider the matter not from the point of view of their special personal interests, but with regard solely to the interests of the State. Not knowing what the Federal Tariff will be, not knowing what our revenue may be for the next twelve months, which is the better position, to be out of debt and have £120,000 to distribute in local works—[MEMBER: Sops]—or to be indebted to the extent of £80,000? There is only one answer to the question: we would rather be as we are, undoubtedly. Just a few more figures to show the position of what I call the middle class and the working class. From the statistics of the Post Office Savings Bank, I gather that during the year ended on the 30th June last the deposits in that bank amounted to £1,534,000; the amount of the deposits for the previous year was £1,333,000; so that practically there was an increase of nearly £200,000 in the amount of deposits in the Post Office Savings Bank—deposits made, it must be remembered, for the major part by the middle and working classes. Does that fact go to prove that the people are too heavily burdened, that they are staggering under the existing customs tariff? I think not. To me it seems to show the exact reverse of that proposition. These people have been enabled during the last year to increase the amount of their deposits in the Savings Bank by a little more than the £200,000 which the Government have collected by means of the Inter-State Tariff. I think, therefore, everybody is

doing fairly well. Of course every community will always have some people in trouble and in poor circumstances; but this State, I consider, has but little to complain of on that score at the present time. Any industrious, healthy person seeking employment and willing to work can, I am sure, find something to do at a remunerative rate of wages.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: There is plenty of work.

HON. W. T. LOTON: I am in bad form to-night by reason of a severe cold; and I have said all I wish to say, and possibly more than hon. members are inclined to hear. I do not propose, therefore, to touch on the remainder of the matters mentioned in the Speech.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about the Midland Railway?

HON. W. T. LOTON: I do not think it worth while to discuss the Midland Railway business at the present stage; but I am prepared to give my opinion in a few words. The Midland Railway Company has a concession from the Government of this State. Thus, there are two parties to the business—the Government and the Midland Railway. The duty of the Government is to see that the Midland Railway Company's contract is strictly enforced. Farther, the company should have no more assistance from the Government; rather the reverse. The company has been assisted too long and too much. While it holds its concession, let us see that it carries out the corresponding obligations imposed on it. I have nothing against the company, except that it has locked up its lands and thus retarded settlement. If the Midland people would work their railway systematically and well, I do not know there would be any reason for desiring to take the line out of their hands. The company ought to show the Government, and I think can show the Government—indeed, I am not certain that it is not showing the Government—that a railway can be run more cheaply than under Government management. I believe the company is making its railway pay fairly well now; and if that is the case, it should certainly afford more conveniences to the travelling public. Apart from that, I should have been glad at any time within the last two years to see the Midland Railway pur-

chased by the Government at a fair price, but not an exorbitant price. Unless the property can be secured by the State for a fair and reasonable amount, I would ask the Government to content themselves with keeping the company strictly up to the mark. I trust that during the present session members of both Houses will give their best attention to the measures brought before them. I am here for that purpose. I hope the measures to be placed before us during the session will be as few as possible. The Government would do well to devote their attention to the effective administration of the country under the laws already existing, rather than to bring in a number of Bills. There is plenty of work for the Government to do. They will advance the country's interests much better by careful administration of existing laws, than by introducing a lot of new-fangled measures just for the sake of passing them through Parliament and filing them away in the pigeon-holes, where they will be duly forgotten. Of course important measures require amendment and improvement from time to time, and I am willing and anxious to give careful attention to proposals for the improvement or amendment of existing laws. I sincerely trust we shall not have a long and ineffective session. If the work that comes down is reasonable in quantity, we shall be able to give it our best attention. As regards the Redistribution of Seats Bill and amendment of the Constitution, I speak with all sincerity when I say that I hope the Government will let the matter rest, at all events for another year. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): I think it will be admitted that there is good reason why the Address-in-reply should be debated at some length. If hon. members give their attention to the various matters laid before Parliament by the Ministry through the Governor's Speech, the resultant advantage is that the Government become acquainted with the individual views of hon. members on many points of public policy. For my part, I never regard the time spent in debating the Address-in-reply as wasted. Some very long speeches have been made, and some very important statements have been put forward, and some extremely

severe criticisms have been passed in various quarters. I do not think it necessary to refer to the introductory parts of His Excellency's Speech. We have all expressed our sympathy with those who have sustained painful losses. Those losses have been painful not only to those immediately affected, but to the public generally. I am pleased indeed to hear so wide an expression of sympathy in the circumstances which have arisen. We deeply regret that His Excellency the Governor is about to leave us for a post to which he has been called by His Majesty the King and His Majesty's Ministers. In his new appointment he will have to deal with problems very different from those encountered here. All the courtesy, tact, ability, and backbone which Sir Arthur Lawley has displayed to such good purpose in this State will be put to the severest test in his new appointment. From my knowledge of His Excellency, however, I have not the slightest hesitation in saying that he will be able to meet those emergencies which we may naturally expect to arise in a country so lately the seat of war. I am sure we are unanimous in wishing every prosperity and all health and happiness to him, as also to his good wife, Lady Lawley. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I heartily indorse the views which have been expressed by Mr. Loton on the subject of an amendment of the Constitution. My feeling all along has been that triennial Parliaments are quite short enough, save in the most exceptional circumstances, which certainly have not arisen in this State. A three-years term is brief enough for the life of a Parliament, especially in the circumstances which have arisen during the last twelve months, when there has been, as expressed in the Speech, unstable government. We have seen things take place which I believe have been very seriously detrimental to the progress of the country. And I hope members will concur with me in expressing the hope—now we have the prospect of a Government that is able to command a good working majority—that we shall set down to earnest work for the benefit of the country at large. I do regret to find in certain quarters attempts made to create trouble and difficulty already. Members are perfectly within their rights in raising questions on the matters of

policy put forward by the Government, but I think the country generally—and I have conversed with many persons who are of the same opinion as myself—think that in the present Government we have one promising to do good work, and they should have an opportunity of displaying their abilities and carrying on the government to the satisfaction of the people. I trust that the efforts which are being made, which have very much the appearance of being attempted for private ends, and not from an earnest desire to bring about pure and good government, but for purposes of party advancement, will not be successful. There can be no necessity for an appeal to the country before the time comes when the Assembly will naturally be dissolved. In ordinary circumstances, with triennial Parliaments we shall only have one year of really good work. The first year after the meeting of Parliament is always to a certain extent unsatisfactory, and the last year is generally devoted by many members of Parliament to the consideration of what will best suit their constituents when they have to appear before them at an early date. Therefore I say that in triennial Parliaments there is scarcely one good year for legislation. I hope this House will set its face against any unnecessary interference with the ordinary and due course of Parliament, and that they will support the interests of the State they have at heart; also that members will let it be known very distinctly in other quarters what their opinions and intentions are, and I believe it will have a very good result. I am very pleased with the paragraph in the Speech dealing with education. I hope the Minister for Lands will take an early opportunity of asking members of this House to go along St. George's Terrace and pay a somewhat extended visit to the technical schools in operation there. I am certain it will be a revelation to members to see what is being done by the young people, and older people too, of the country in technical education of various kinds—carpentering, plumbing, assaying, and carving work.

HON. B. C. WOOD: They will not take boys in there.

HON. G. RANDELL: They have about 150 pupils, as many as they can take, and they are prepared to take

another 150 if accommodation can be obtained for them. That only indicates the success of the introduction of technical education in the State. I think now such advantages are given to the country it will be a disgrace if the young people do not grow up superior to their predecessors when they go into the world and take up the business of life in earnest. Every opportunity is being afforded the pupils of equipping themselves for life and the proper discharge of their duty as citizens of the State. I was very much surprised, I may say almost disgusted, to see a very flippant remark made by one who poses as a leading politician with regard to this particular paragraph. He spoke of the technical education as the cookery classes. Although that is a very important part of the instruction, I am sure the Minister for Lands will bear me out that it is essential to have young people taught how to cook to the best advantage, economically and for the digestions of the husbands they may have hereafter, and their children, if they have any. I regret that such a remark was made in reference to this very important part of the curriculum of the technical school, which I believe is being carried on with very great success indeed. I think we may congratulate ourselves on the system of technical education. I heartily concur with the intention mentioned of carrying technical education farther, and taking it into centres where it is likely to be of advantage in the different parts of the country. True, it will cost a considerable sum of money, but the advantages accruing to the State will be more than commensurate with the cost entailed. In these days of enlightenment, when technical education is taken up in various parts of the continents of Europe and America, it behoves the English people, and especially Australians, to be abreast with the best practices followed in other countries. In the future we shall have to depend upon our own resources, and our young people should be trained to use their eyes and hands, and make the best of everything that comes to them, so that it will be of advantage to the Commonwealth generally. Although the Speech has referred to one or two painful events, there are matters for congratulation to be found in the pages of the Address. I am pleased

to notice that the Goomalling railway is at last completed. It must be a matter of satisfaction to every well-wisher of the country that the railway has reached Leonora, on the distant north-east gold-fields, and I hope we may be able to carry out the intention expressed in the Speech without unduly burdening the community, to take the railway to Laver-ton, which promises to be a very important part of the gold-bearing country of the State. I am also pleased to see that at last steps are being taken, and I hope the work will soon be culminated, to complete the railway to Nan-nine.

HON. B. C. O'BRIEN: It has been 18 months on the road; it is nearly time.

HON. G. RANDELL: I am sorry to think that there has been something radically wrong, and that the line has been so long delayed. It seems to me that Mr. Drew has put his finger on a weak spot when he said that the railway sleepers and the material for the construction of that line had been carried over the Midland Railway to their destination instead of being taken to the port of Geraldton. There may be an explanation offered which will satisfy hon. members; but there seems to have been something wrong somewhere, that this course was not pursued. Mr. Loton has referred to the question of the operation of the sliding scale, and I heartily agree with members who have said that it would be a breach of faith, and dis-creditable to the community, if the sliding scale were swept away. Mr. Loton has given satisfactory reasons why it should not be, that without the sliding scale we should have probably had a deficit at the end of June last, instead of the surplus we have at the present time. I quite concur with the hon. member when he says that it is not that the population of the country are feeling the duties levied, to any appreciable extent. The prosperity of the country—the wages paid, the work going on everywhere, and the employment which can be obtained by everyone—shows conclusively that we are not suffering from the collection of these duties. It is true we are collecting high duties, but the money is spent on reproductive works for the advancement and benefit of the country, preparing the way for the

increase of population which we are receiving from day to day. It is highly satisfactory to see the population of the country progressing at such a steady continuous rate. The addition of something like twelve or fifteen thousand souls, which is the immigration over emigration and births over deaths, is a most satisfactory state of affairs for Western Australia. I believe that in no part of Australia at the present time can it be said that the population is increasing in the same ratio as in West Australia. It will be the duty of members, as well as of the Government, to adopt such measures as will conduce to a continuance of this state of things. We must have population for the settlement and cultivation of the soil, and I think every facility should be given for the settlement of the land. It is a step in the right direction and should be undertaken by the Government, and heartily supported by the Parliament.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: At once?

HON. G. RANDELL: Yes; at once. No time should be lost. While speaking on the duties of customs, I trust that whatever Government are in power they will keep a strict, careful, and scrutinising eye on the actions of the Federal Government. It seems to me there is a disposition on the part of those in power in the Commonwealth to ignore certain States and to a certain extent to ignore Western Australia. It is known—and I am heartily in accord with Mr. Burgess on this point—that I looked upon it as a misfortune for this country at the particular juncture to enter federation; but we did so, and I think we have been taught some severe lessons. Through the prosperity of the country we have not felt the trouble. It is highly necessary that the Government and all public men should watch the actions of the Federal Government to see in what direction things are tending, so that the functions of the States shall not be usurped to the injury of their interests. With regard to the public works mentioned in the Speech, I think some of them are of importance. I think that referred to by Mr. Laurie is of the greatest importance, and that sooner or later we shall have the important work of a harbour dock carried out. Whether the time has arrived to

enter the London market for the purpose of obtaining money for the construction of a dock which will take the largest of the ocean-going steamers, of twelve or fifteen thousand tons burden, time will show. I hope the Government will not be in a hurry to go to the money market just at the present moment, for works such as those contemplated require careful consideration. I think I can gather from what I have read in the newspapers of the other States, that there is a tendency on the part of the people in London to look with some disquietude on the borrowing propensities of Australia; and that the term they have applied to Australia is perhaps not altogether inappropriate, the "Great Loan Land." The last proposal on the list is for the provision of a water supply to Midland Junction, Fremantle, and the intervening localities. This matter I regard as of the first importance. I think above all things Fremantle, at the present moment, needs a good, wholesome, potable supply of water for her own inhabitants, and also for the shipping which frequents the port. The existing state of affairs is not, I think, creditable to us; and no doubt it has a prejudicial influence on those who visit our shores in ships, and on the persons who own those ships. While I concur to a great extent in what Mr. Laurie has said concerning the drawbacks which we experience by reason of the delays taking place, and in many other ways, I think he perhaps omitted one item in reckoning the cost of the extra freights which we have to pay, and that is the bulk of trade. It has always been the case that where the trade of a port is large, freights to it are lower than to a port with a smaller trade. This factor has special weight in the case of large ports which afford return freights. I consider that no stone should be left unturned to secure for the port of Fremantle an enduring good name among the shipping which frequents it, and I trust the best efforts of the Government will be used towards that end. I do not think it matters much whether we call the controlling authority to be created a marine board or a harbour board. Everything will depend on the provisions of the Bill to be brought in for the constitution of the board. After that, of course, matters rest with the

personnel of the board. I do trust, therefore, that the proposals of the Government in this respect will be of such a nature as to secure the cordial support and co-operation of Parliament and the mercantile business men of the community. The Government will do well, I think, in dealing with this important matter, to take into their confidence the merchants as embodied in the Chambers of Commerce. In this way they are likely to secure laws which will be easily and readily administered, and administered not only for the benefit of the ships, but also to the advantage of the harbour and the State generally. As regards the Midland Railway, my views are in perfect accord with Mr. Loton's. I have to point out, however, that we must take great care that any action we decide upon regarding the Midland Railway Company cannot be construed into repudiation or injustice. I am sure Parliament will insist that the company shall be compelled, so far as the law itself is concerned, to carry out strictly to the letter the terms of the agreement entered into, and that it shall give all necessary conveniences to those persons who are obliged to travel on its line. But it is probable—and I think we must take this into consideration—that if a company had not been formed for the construction of the line, the Government of this State, at any rate for some years, would not have felt themselves in a position to undertake the work. There seems to have been much ignorance, if I may say so, with regard to the capabilities of the land along the Midland line. It had been described by many people as desert land, and the discovery that there is a large area of excellent country along the Midland line is of comparatively recent date. If any means exist of compelling the Midland people to either sell their lands or lease them on reasonable terms, those means should be used.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: The company cannot compete with the Government.

HON. G. RANDELL: I do not like the word "confiscation." I understood the hon. member to say something about confiscation.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: No. I said the company cannot compete with the Government—cannot sell land on the same terms as the Government.

HON. G. RANDELL: I heartily concur in the remarks which fell from my friend Mr. Moss, and which have been reiterated by several other hon. members, with regard to the position of the late Mr. O'Connor's family. Notwithstanding the report issued by the Royal Commission which sat recently, Mr. O'Connor deserves well of this country for the magnificent works which he had the courage to undertake, and which he carried many stages towards completion. I feel sure he would have brought them to their final and successful completion, but unfortunately his death occurred. I do hope the Government will take into consideration the marvellous brain power and knowledge which the deceased gentleman brought to bear on those extremely important works which have contributed so much to the advancement and prosperity of the State, and which will react beneficially to the latest generation. The Fremantle Harbour, constructed in the face of the adverse opinion of Sir John Coode, to my mind exhibits the courage and also the skill and knowledge possessed by Mr. O'Connor. An engineer like the late Mr. O'Connor would not naturally be in a hurry to dispute the dictum of a world-famed man like Sir John Coode. I always disagreed—and perhaps I may be accused of presumption in expressing my disagreement—with the opinions of Sir John Coode in this connection. It is well known, however, that I did disagree, and that I gave my reason for disagreeing. Sir John Coode considered that a sand travel on the coast debarred us from the creation of a harbour at the mouth of the river. I insisted that there was no such thing as a sand travel on our coast, and that all the damage which has occurred in the harbour and outside it was purely the result of mischief going on within the river itself. I am glad to think we now have at Fremantle a harbour of which the people of this country may be proud, and I hold the honour of constructing that great work and carrying it to a successful issue belongs to the late Mr. O'Connor. Farther, his courage—and also, I may say, the courage of Sir John Forrest—was displayed in conceiving that gigantic scheme, the Coolgardie Water Works. Mr. O'Connor, after careful and exhaus-

tive consideration of the subject, was able to give his approval to Sir John Forrest's conception, and to undertake the work. That some difficulties have arisen in its execution, and that the recent Royal Commission has furnished a report which, to say the least of it, is very disquieting, is not the fault, to my mind, of Mr. O'Connor, who I think was overloaded with work. Great as was his intellect, and wonderful as were his skill and knowledge, he was, I believe, overburdened; and therefore he had to trust to those under him for the execution of his ideas. On these grounds I do trust the Government will do their utmost to see that the family of such a splendid man shall not suffer from his inability, as I may call it, to provide for them while he was alive. Mr. O'Connor was of a most generous disposition, and assuredly his remuneration was utterly inadequate for a man of such ability, skill, and knowledge. The impression of the Government and of the people generally seems to be that the administration of the Railway Department is not of a very satisfactory nature. If we had nothing more than the information placed at our disposal last night by Mr. Burges, there would be good ground for holding that something needs to be done, and done quickly. Almost ever since railways have existed in this State, there have been complaints concerning the administration and the failure to meet the emergencies of the day and the requirements of the trade created by a policy of public works. In the early days of the railways, as is well known, money was scarce and hard to get; and, therefore, some excuse may be offered for the parsimony which characterised the Government of the day in providing for the proper equipment and management of the railway system. The deficiencies due to that unavoidable policy of parsimony have, in a certain measure, persisted to this day through the years since railways were first introduced into the country. We have arrived now at a point when the Government to my mind are justified.—I say this advisedly—in carefully considering what steps should be taken to remedy a state of things which can only be described as disastrous. I consider Ministers have acted, as Mr. Loton has said, quite within their rights, and have neither violated the constitution nor flouted Parliament. As

I take it, the last body which should have a voice in the appointment of a General Manager or Commissioner is Parliament. When listening to conversations on this matter, and when reading what has passed in another place and what has been stated at irresponsible meetings on the goldfields and in other places, my mind has naturally reverted to the old story of the man and his son and his ass. In connection with Mr. George's appointment, that story has received, I think, an admirable exemplification. Whatever the Government might have done, they would have been blamed. If they had failed to appoint someone, or if they had appointed some other person, or if they had sent to England or America for a manager who had had experience in railway matters, still fault would have been found with them by some people, I think. To my mind, it redounds to the credit of the country that we can find within its borders a man considered by the Ministry of the day, who have the task of selection, competent to undertake so important and I may say so dangerous a task. I hold that Ministers have done quite right. I have the highest opinion of the abilities of the gentleman whom they have selected, and I shall be grievously and bitterly disappointed if in the course of a very short time Mr. George does not make some material alteration for the benefit of the traffic on our railways. I feel assured that he has sufficient knowledge, sufficient backbone, and sufficient energy to discover at the earliest opportunity the weak spots in our railway administration. I feel every assurance that if only Mr. George be given a fair and reasonable chance by the Government of the day and the general public, he will make his influence felt for good in that highly important, almost the most important, Government department of this State. I do, therefore, strongly protest against the hard words which have been said as to his selection, and against the endeavour to handicap him at the very start in his important duties, by the reflections cast on his capacity and ability to manage our railways. Like Mr. Loton, I am not in favour of the appointment of three Commissioners. I do not think much good has ever been attained by triumvirates, which I believe did not prosper even in the old days of

Rome. At any rate, I do not think they are likely to prove a success now. But with some additional powers to those which were enjoyed by the traffic manager, and with a well defined enactment on the question, for which enactment we must wait before expressing an opinion on it, Mr. George's appointment as Commissioner of Railways arouses in me the happiest expectations. From my knowledge of the inner workings of the Cabinet, I feel certain this important appointment has not been made without the most careful consideration. I am certain Ministers considered the question of opposition from all quarters to the appointment of a man residing in the State, and especially a man who was a member of the Legislative Assembly. In this connection, I ask hon. members to bear in mind that Mr. Paterson some years ago was appointed Manager of the Agricultural Bank while he was a member of Parliament, and that he has been one of the successes in Government appointments. Ministers, in the full knowledge that an appointment of this kind would be criticised in the freest possible fashion, would set about the business most deliberately and carefully. They must have been satisfied in their own minds that Mr. George is quite capable of carrying out their intentions and of relieving the country from a state of things which constitutes a discredit and a danger. Now I ask that hon. members will give Mr. George a fair and reasonable opportunity to prove his ability and capacity. Some members have expressed the fear that Mr. George, having been appointed for five years, cannot be got rid of. I feel little doubt, however, that there is some machinery for terminating the engagement if Mr. George does not discharge his duties to the best of his ability and to the satisfaction of the Government. In such circumstances, there should be no great trouble in removing him from office. I do not for a moment believe, however, that such a step will be necessary. I shall be grievously disappointed if Mr. George does not fulfil the highest expectations which the Ministry have formed of his services. He will, I believe I may safely assert, receive the cordial co-operation of the officers of the department, the higher as well as the lower. I believe, also, that the large body of men

constituting the railway employees here are quite disposed to give him every assistance and every help in the discharge of his onerous and difficult duties. I only hope the result of the appointment will be such as to remove all the difficulties and losses and vexatious delays which have occurred and are occurring in the management of the railways.

At 6:34, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.
At 7:30, Chair resumed.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER (East): It seems to be the practice of members to address the House on the Governor's Speech, and I suppose it is my duty to speak, or it may be thought I am not doing my duty to my constituents. I shall not dwell long on the various subjects touched upon, but shall express my opinions on each of the matters as other members have done, or it would not be known what opinions I hold. The first paragraph deals with the recovery of His Most Gracious Majesty, and I rejoice at the recovery of the King. His Majesty has commenced his reign in a way that shows that he is the right man in the right place; and it is the wish of all his subjects that he will be speedily restored to health and able to do justice on the throne for the good of his people. I am sure the removal of His Excellency Sir Arthur Lawley, and his lady, from this State will be a matter of disappointment to everyone throughout the country. I do not think we have ever had a Governor in Western Australia who has generally made himself so agreeable and pleasant to the whole of the people of the country as Sir Arthur Lawley has done, and his removal will be deeply regretted. It will be a matter of comfort to know that in going to the Transvaal, Sir Arthur Lawley will have a larger field for operations, and perhaps it will be more profitable to him. Still, we shall always remember that in this country His Excellency was esteemed as a man and a gentleman. The termination of the African war is a matter for the congratulation of everybody in the English-speaking world, and all must hope that a Government will be established in the Transvaal which will do a great deal towards satisfying the population of the country, restoring rights to the people,

and wiping out the horrors of a dreadful war. I trust the services of the Australian troops will be no longer required. I think they deserve credit for the active part they took throughout the war, and I hope the troops will now return to their duties in this State, because many of those who went to the war ought never to have left this country; they would have been better employed in looking after stock and attending to their farms. I hope the war has not instilled into the young men ideas which will not allow them to return. Of course, there were many from the towns of the State who went to the war who would never be missed, and it would be a very good job if they stopped behind in Africa. With respect to the death of the late Premier, I am sure all concur in the one opinion that we deeply regret the loss, and we sincerely sympathise with the widow and family. We have all seen how general has been the sorrow and sympathy expressed throughout the country. Paragraph 7 of the Speech refers to the influx of population to this country. It is a matter of great satisfaction. We are glad to know that the country is worthy of notice; and I hope those who come here will bring considerable capital. I regret extremely that the Immigration Restriction Act has been enforced in the way it has by the Government. This is a blot on the whole of the Australian Governments. I think Australia should be free to receive emigrants from every part of the world. We want population and we want cheap labour; the sooner the Immigration Restriction Act is repealed the better for the welfare of Australia. It is a matter for congratulation that our pastoral industry has escaped disastrous drought. It is really pleasing to know that in this State we have never yet experienced a total failure in any respect.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: What about up North?

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: In the coastal districts we have never had what has been an entire failure, and although we admit this country is not so rich as some of the other States, we can congratulate ourselves upon having more certain and reliable seasons. There is a great deal to be done by energy and exertion, and we shall be able to make

our country capable of producing much greater quantities of stock and produce. Clause 8 refers to the resignation of Mr. John Davies; and I say candidly I do not think the country lost anything by his resignation. I think he is well out of the country, and I think it would have been a benefit to the country if he had left before he did. Mr. Davies put every impediment he could in the way of preventing certain railways being constructed for the development of the country, because the proposal did not emanate from him. I have heard this from a very good and reliable source; and I know he was a thorn in the side of the late Engineer-in-Chief. This is the reason that the construction of many lines of railways was not carried out.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member should not speak in that way of a man who is now out of the country.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: I have already expressed all I have to say on that matter. With respect to the appointment of Mr. George, I may say that I have known that gentleman for many years, and I think it is only right for every hon. member to say honestly what he thinks of the appointment. I think Mr. George is a man of large and varied experience. Certainly he has had some experience in railway matters, and in a business connected with railways, timber companies, and other industries in this country. He has carried on a business profitably to himself and those connected with it. In matters appertaining to the welfare of the country and to anything else we should look somewhat to what one has done in the past; and if a man has been able to do good for himself in the past we should not take it for granted that he is not a desirable man to manage affairs in the future. It seems to me, a man with intelligence and ability who has got on for himself can do good for the country when put into an important position such as Mr. George has been appointed to. It is argued that Mr. George's appointment should not have been made without the approval of Parliament. Everyone, I think, will admit that the position to which Mr. George has been appointed is one of the most important, perhaps the most important, ever created in this State. The position of Commissioner of Railways under the conditions

contemplated will carry with it a far higher degree of responsibility than has ever attached to it hitherto. On this ground, I think it would have been wise to obtain the prior approval of Parliament for the appointment. I must say, however, from my personal knowledge and from what I hear of Mr. George, that I believe him to possess the ability to manage men, and also a degree of tact and good sense which will probably render him better suited to his new position than any man likely to be obtained elsewhere. There is an old saying, "Better deal with the devil you know, than the devil you don't know"; and I think that saying will probably apply in the present case. I sincerely trust and believe that Mr. George will not disappoint those who have placed him in so important a position. I know him to be a conscientious man, and I am certain he will do his level best to bring about a satisfactory state of affairs in the Railway Department. Undoubtedly, railway matters require a vast deal of supervision and in many respects radical alteration. Many of the practices obtaining in the department at the present time are not calculated to render the working of the railways profitable. For example, I have on several occasions observed that a long train of perhaps 30 or 40 carriages is run all the way from Perth to Midland Junction, carrying perhaps not more than a dozen passengers. The question arises in my mind, whether it is wise to drag so large a number of carriages from Perth to Midland Junction and back again, when so few passengers are to be conveyed. Surely the resulting wear and tear to the rolling-stock and to the line is in a large measure unnecessary. The thing certainly looks to me like mismanagement. Farther, I cannot regard as satisfactory the methods adopted for the transit of trucks. Trucks are conveyed from the stations to which they have been consigned to Perth, and are then taken back again, before being handed over to those who require them for the purpose of conveying produce to market. In this direction there has undoubtedly been a good deal of mismanagement. I feel, however, that it is wrong to be hasty in commenting on these matters. The railways constitute a very large department, which necessarily is only with the

greatest difficulty managed in such a fashion as will give satisfaction to everybody. At the same time, I do think that under judicious management by qualified and responsible men many of the existing difficulties may be overcome. The appointment of two additional Commissioners will involve the country in heavy expense, and I for my part am inclined to doubt whether their appointment is really necessary. Could not one man placed in full control of the railways adjust whatever matters require adjustment, without the assistance of two other Commissioners? It seems to me only reasonable to suppose that such might prove to be the case in this State at the present time. I do not think the country should be called on to bear the enormous cost of maintaining two additional Commissioners. It must be the sincere hope of all hon. members that the political turmoil which characterised the last session will not prevail during the present one, and that the Government now holding office may remain in power for some time. It is but bare justice to give the new Premier and his Ministers an opportunity of showing whether they can carry on the Government of the State advantageously. We should show our confidence in the present Administration, and we can best do this by placing the fewest obstacles in the way of Ministers, as well as by rendering them every possible assistance. I say candidly that I would rather have seen a man of more mature years occupying Mr. James's position. The experience he is now gaining will, however, be of considerable benefit to that gentleman, who I trust will at all times be willing to be guided by the experience of those whom he knows to be capable of advising him. Mr. James must also remember that it will be his duty, as Premier of Western Australia, to advance the interests of the State generally, and not those of one section of the community alone. Here, I think, I indicate a mistake our new Premier has been apt to make during his past career. Mr. James has, at times, seemed to forget that the general interest was committed to his care as a legislator, and not the interest of any particular section. I trust that now he is Premier he will do all in his power to advance the common interests of the State. On the

question of civil service reform I have not much to say. I believe the gentlemen appointed to deal with the question will give every satisfaction to the State. Certainly, we should all be reassured by the knowledge that the State departments are being properly administered. As things are, it must be difficult for the Civil Service Commissioners to know where their investigations ought to begin, and where they ought to end. My view is that the Commissioners should go to the head of each department and ascertain the number of his staff, and what each member of the staff has to do. After that, they might look into the duties and requirements of the staff, and see whether there is any over-manning or under-paying. I recognise that the Commissioners have a most difficult, arduous, and responsible duty to perform; and I trust they will perform it judiciously and with tact. The observations in the Speech on the educational system of the State do not call for much comment. I quite concur in the remarks made by my friend Mr. Burges as to the importance of securing good and efficient men as instructors. We need not only men who can teach their pupils to read, write, cipher, and all that sort of thing, but men who will be in a position to give some attention to the moral education of the children under their care, men who will endeavour to teach their pupils to be good, to be true, and to be faithful to each other. There is at the present time a widespread movement towards equalisation and equality. Now, what can more tend to bring people together and to produce social peace and unity than the bringing up of children in the way they should go? All children, I think, should be taught in the schools to be truthful and honest, and to do by each other as they would be done by. These matters are at present much neglected in all our schools. Too much regard is paid to the prejudices of the various denominations. To my mind the religion which will not allow instruction of the nature I have indicated to be imparted is not worthy of the name of religion. I do not believe that any sensible religious man would object to the pupils of every school being taught to be truthful and honest, and to do their duty by each other. If these principles were inculcated in every school of this

State, or indeed in every school of the world, what a different world this would be! Unity and good feeling would prevail amongst all men. The proposal to establish a school of mines has my approval, since such an institution will undoubtedly result in great benefit to the whole State; as would also a school where employments of every useful description might be taught to young people. The teaching of agriculture in all its branches is particularly desirable, and young people should in all respects be brought up to understand that they have their way to make in the world, that no useful employment is disgraceful, and that it is necessary they should follow up some course of instruction which will enable them to gain an honest livelihood. There is no need for me to say much concerning the Fremantle Harbour Works. The knowledge that these works are making satisfactory progress towards completion must be a source of gratification to every member of the community. At one time, it was considered almost impossible to make a harbour such as we now see at the mouth of the Swan. Certainly we never dreamed that we should accommodate the number of vessels now lying along the Fremantle wharves. We know that those vessels can come in and go out in the space of a few hours, whereas in the olden time these matters occupied days. The harbour may, therefore, be regarded as a great convenience to the shipping, and also as a credit to the State. I do not think we can do better than to follow the lines laid down by Mr. Laurie for the formation of a board of management for the harbour and the wharves. Undoubtedly, Mr. Laurie has had vast experience in these matters, and therefore his advice is well worthy of consideration by members of this House. Next I come to paragraph 14 of the Speech, which refers to the construction of the Goomalling railway. I wish to record my firm belief that the State will never have occasion to regret the construction of this line, which opens up an enormous area of agricultural land occupied by selectors who are working it in a most satisfactory manner. I dare say the Minister for Lands is well aware of the enormous acreage occupied as farming land along that line. There is a still larger area of the same description of country lying to the north-eastward and

eastward of the terminus of the line, which I trust will at an early date be extended some distance farther. No one interested in agriculture can fail to be gratified at seeing under cultivation an area which prior to settlement was mere forest land, covered with thickets and bearing not a blade of grass. Such country when cleared becomes some of the richest agricultural and pastoral land to be found in the State, even far superior to land in other agricultural districts of which we hear much more. I consider the agricultural prospects of the State, therefore, to be of the brightest nature. I look forward to the country I have described becoming the best wheat-growing land in the whole of the Eastern Districts. It will, however, cost a good deal to clear and fence. Moreover, before anything can be done with the land, water must be conserved. Water, indeed, is necessarily almost the first consideration; and I think it would be in the interests of the State if the Government did something to help settlers in that respect. Wherever there is a large area of forest country capable of being converted into good agricultural land, the first thing the Government should do is to conserve water for the use of intending settlers. Country of this description is not, of course, suitable for settlement by men who have nothing: it must be taken up by those who have a little money to start with. Water is the first requirement, fencing coming next, and then ring-barking. After the land has been ring-barked for one year it can be cleared at a trifling cost. The land I refer to should in the near future become one of the most valuable assets of the State. Considerations of this nature enable one to appreciate what a serious drawback it is to the community that the whole of the lands held by the Midland Railway Company are not thrown open for selection. A large portion of that company's lands in the vicinity of the railway is still unimproved. The Midland lands consist mainly of forest country, which in the past was mistakenly regarded as almost valueless. Now, as we all know, forest land has proved itself the best in the State, although to clear it and render it fit for cultivation takes some time. Every encouragement, I consider, should be given to selectors taking up forest

land. In particular they should be assisted in obtaining a water supply, so that they can make a speedy start on the clearing of their land. Referring to the Leonora railway, I am sure the information contained in the Speech will be satisfactory to members. The line will give an impetus to the mining industry in that district, and enable, perhaps, farther discoveries to be made, as no doubt there is valuable gold-bearing country which has not yet been tapped. The construction of the Nannine line, we are told, was delayed through want of rails, and we now find that the construction of all these lines was delayed for want of rails. Why should this be the case? When a line is surveyed and the contract let, the department ought to have the rails and material ready for the work. The importance of having all works carried out by contract is brought prominently before us. The contractor has to complete the work within a certain time, and he will see that he has the rails and the necessary material provided, while the Government never do. The Government generally keep works idle for a long time because they have not the material to go on with. I am glad that the Goomalling railway has been completed, and I do not think the fault lay with the contractors. It was a cheap line, and should have been constructed in six months instead of two years. From our experience of the Coolgardie Water Scheme we have every reason to be satisfied as far as the success of the scheme goes, but the report which we have had laid before us is not at all satisfactory. It shows that by mismanagement this work will be saddled with an unnecessary additional cost of over £50,000, and I am sure this will be a matter to be regretted throughout the State. There is not the slightest doubt that there is serious cause for dissatisfaction, considering what is revealed in connection with the carrying out of this scheme. I trust that the farther work will be completed without mistakes of the kind which have been made, and that the whole State will derive the benefit which it is supposed it will do from the scheme. We know in the first instance there will be an enormous saving in the supply of water to the trains running to the gold-

fields. In the past the want of water has been a great handicap to the profit of the railways. Not only have the trains to carry water to take them to Menzies, but they have to take sufficient water to bring them back again. This, to a large extent, prevented the lines from paying. By the Coolgardie Water Scheme this expense for the railways will be avoided, and a permanent supply of water will be provided for the goldfields generally. I hope the work will be found to be reproductive in every sense of the word. With respect to the reticulation, I think that is a matter which will require consideration when brought before us. It appears to me that this will be a matter more for the towns to undertake than for the Government. If the water were supplied in one large reservoir near a town, then I think the duty of the Government has ceased, and the municipalities should consider the distribution of the water. I now come to the proposal to invite Sir John Forrest to attend and open this water scheme. I am sure his presence on that occasion will give great pleasure throughout the country; everyone will be very glad to see him, and the movement will receive general approval from both Houses of Parliament, as well as from the country as a whole. I now come to a question which has already received a great deal of consideration from members, the lamented death of the Engineer-in-Chief, to whom the country owes an everlasting debt of gratitude. The harbour works at Fremantle will be a lasting memorial of his great ability, and I think also we should give to him a large share of credit for the way in which the work in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme was initiated.

THE PRESIDENT: The hon. member must not read his speech.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER: I am not reading. I am simply looking at a copy of the Address which I hold in my hand. There is not the slightest doubt that the work in connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme received the most careful attention of the late Engineer-in-Chief. I simply concur with the remarks which have been made by Mr. Moss as to the duty of the House in taking into consideration the great indebtedness of the State to the late Engineer-in-Chief, and when the matter is brought before us we

should consider the widow and family of the man who has done so much for the welfare of the country. It will be our duty to show that we appreciate his work, and not leave his relatives destitute. I am quite sure from facts that have come under my notice before his death that the late Mr. O'Connor was one of the most conscientious men in the employ of the service. He was conscientious and right-minded, and a man whose ability could not be surpassed. I think I have touched upon almost every subject in the Governor's Speech; therefore, I will not tire hon. members farther. I trust that throughout the whole of the session we shall work in unity, and pass measures that will be calculated to advance the interests of the country. I have much pleasure in supporting the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. Jameson): I can scarcely traverse the whole of the arguments which have been used in regard to the subjects dealt with in the Governor's Speech. The remarks have been highly controversial and contentious. I congratulate hon. members on the admirable debate we have had during the last few days, and the new matter that has been brought forward, which I am sure members of the Government will value and take advantage of. I thoroughly agree with Mr. Randell in stating that when members come together for the first time after a long vacation it is desirable that the Government should be made acquainted with the various needs of the country to which they have given attention during the recess. The Address-in-reply gives an opportunity for that purpose, and not merely to deal with the questions appearing in the Speech, but also to bring forward any fresh matters: it is a unique occasion, and one which should never be neglected. I say, as leader of the House, I value very much the expression of opinions from members, particularly with regard to any fresh matters that are brought forward. As to the Speech itself, I need not weary members by making any remarks on the first few paragraphs, as they deal with matters of congratulation and matters of deep regret on which we are entirely at one. Every member has shown that he feels very greatly the loss which the State has sustained. In regard to paragraph 8

which deals with railway matters, that appears to be the real bone of contention, and I think members will realise what a difficult question it is from the fact that so many differences of opinion have been expressed. This is one of the most difficult questions the Government had to face; for, as members know, for a long period, perhaps for 10 years, the railways have been a constant source of trouble in the State, and the complaint which Sir Edward Wittenoom made in regard to the shortage of trucks is a very old matter indeed. One member said he remembered the time when a Minister for Railways was turned out of office, even in his night-shirt, on account of his demand for more railway stock. It was maintained at that time he had no right to make a demand for more rolling-stock, but that the railways should be administered so as to show a profit. That was a false step in the policy, and from that time there has, no doubt, been trouble in connection with the railways. When we look at the question we see that the whole trouble has arisen from this very thing, the shortage of railway trucks.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: From mismanagement.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is where the mismanagement came in. It is on that ground we have had to raise the rates, because if there is a shortage of rolling-stock it means running overtime, which causes an immense increase in cost in running the trucks. Moreover, we have to pay the same maintenance whether we have a large rolling-stock or not. The fact of not having sufficient rolling-stock on the railways has greatly decreased the amount of traffic. Those who can look back to the beginning of our trouble know that it was the question of the shortage of trucks which caused it, and on that account largely the rates have been increased. There has been a difficulty also with the eight-hours movement, but that is not so serious as it seems, and does not increase the cost so much as the want of rolling-stock. Everyone wants to see economical management; that has been the object. We must recognise that the fault does not lie with the Minister of the day. The Government came into office with this difficulty, and it was one of the first works of an honorary Minister of the late

Government to order a large quantity of rolling-stock, but owing to pressure of work in America and England this stock was a long time in coming. Some has arrived and the remainder will be here before long, so then we shall be in a better position to run the railways at a profit and perhaps to reduce the rates. At the same time our railway revenue is one of our chief assets, and if we allow it to appear in financial centres that the railways are not paying, there will be a difficulty in raising money at a reasonable rate. It is better to raise the rates until we can get economy in management and an increase of rolling-stock to enable us to reduce the rates again. As far as the objection to raising the rates is concerned, that has been rather a bogey, and has been worked up unnecessarily. Of course, hon. members are aware—I have perhaps already said this—that we must get from the railways a return sufficient to cover interest, maintenance, and sinking fund. There cannot be a sinking fund unless there is a profit; the accumulation of a sinking fund is dependent on the making of a profit. It has been definitely decided by the Government, therefore, that the first charge on the railways will be interest, the second maintenance, and thirdly, if there be any profit at all, sinking fund. This is all that is desired. The Government do not wish to make a profit on the lines, but simply desire to see them managed for the greatest good of the whole community. Now, a great deal has been said concerning the appointment of a Commissioner, Mr. George. I think, or I hope, I shall be able to persuade hon. members that in this connection at all events we shall be able to claim their sympathies. I feel sure we shall receive their consideration after they have seen our difficulties. Hon. members know that when the Leake Government came into power for the first time there was no manager of railways. We had, of course, our Minister for Railways; but whoever has looked into the State railway system will recognise and own that it is altogether beyond the scope of the Minister so far as management is concerned. The Minister is not by any means an expert, he has no technical knowledge of railway working, and, moreover, cannot leave his office very

much. As a matter of fact, it is not sound policy to allow the management of the railways to devolve on their Ministerial head, as was the case when the Leake Governments were in office. The Minister at that time had to manage the railways ; for there was no manager, nor was there any Commissioner. I may inform the House that the various members of the Government differed as to whether a really first-rate railway expert should be got to manage our system, or whether it should be managed by means of a Commission. My own opinion has always been that in view of existing conditions in this State, in view of the enormous extent of our railways and the very large number of important industries arising, and farther in view of the labour difficulties we have experienced, it is most desirable to have management by Commission, at all events for the present. A Commission, to my mind, affords the readiest means of putting the railways in thoroughly good working order. That has been my opinion ; but it was not the opinion of the late Minister for Railways, Mr. Kingsmill, at the time the matter was first discussed. The Minister then went to the Eastern States principally with the object of discussing there the question whether a first-rate manager should be obtained or whether a Commission should be appointed. Mr. Kingsmill interviewed a number of leading men in the East, and undoubtedly came back primed with much information. He returned to this State with a somewhat different view of the matter. When he left, his opinion had been that the better course would be to appoint a manager ; but on his return, having discussed the matter, as I say, with many experienced men in the Eastern States, he concluded that management by Commission offered the better chance of success. At all events, a Commissioner was appointed. We undoubtedly had the power to appoint a Commissioner ; and so the question arose whether we should exercise that power or leave it to Parliament to say if a Commissioner should be appointed or another system of management adopted. True, we might have consulted Parliament, and if the decision was in favour of management by a Commission, we could have brought in the necessary Bill. If,

on the other hand, Parliament did not approve of a board, we could have left the management of the railways in the hands of the one Commissioner. That is really the position to-day. We have not invaded the rights of Parliament in any way whatever. This matter is really one of great importance. In some respects it reminds me of the conflicting views concerning government held by the Anglo-Saxon races and the Latin races. As hon. members are aware, the Latin races favour a strong executive administering the affairs of the country and taking all responsibility. The Anglo-Saxon races, on the other hand, are disposed to throw all responsibility on the Parliament of the day. I say distinctly, there is no body of men better fitted for making appointments of this nature than the executive Government of the country. It is simply impossible that members of Parliament should come to any agreement on a question demanding such very close attention. I assure hon. members that Cabinet spent a whole day in the most careful consideration before deciding on so important a step. Hon. members must recognise that in appointing a Commissioner we did not interfere in any way with the rights and powers of Parliament. Parliament is still at liberty to say, " We do not desire to appoint two other Commissioners, and therefore the Commissioner who exists, whom you have already appointed, will simply be General Manager of Railways." That is practically what it comes to : members are now in the same position as before the appointment was made. The country had formerly a General Manager of Railways at £1,500 a year, and it has now a Commissioner of Railways at £1,500 a year. No doubt, the appointment of a Commissioner relieves the Minister for Railways to some extent, for he is now called on to place himself in the position of manager of railways. I must point out that Parliament has still another alternative. Parliament may say, " We want a first-rate expert to sit on the Commission." If hon. members hold that view, they are perfectly at liberty to obtain the services of an expert at £4,000 or £5,000 a year, and to appoint him to a seat on the Commission. These sums of money, large though they may sound, are of no importance whatever in view of

the fact that the railway system handles an annual revenue of one and a half millions sterling. An able man can save his salary often in a week. I have no doubt, from what I have learned, that Mr. George has already saved his salary twice over since he was appointed. It seems necessary to point out, however, that to obtain the services of a first-rate expert is really a matter of extreme difficulty. Of course, it is easy enough to say—as has been said by some members, though not perhaps members of this House, and as has been stated in the Press—that all the Government had to do was to advertise in India, Great Britain, and America, in order to secure the services of a first-rate railway expert at £4,000 or £5,000 a year. Now, really, what a very unpractical suggestion that is! Supposing we had advertised for a railway expert at £4,000 or £5,000 a year, how many replies do hon. members suppose we should have had? Why, we would have been compelled to keep a large staff of clerks employed for a month or six weeks in opening letters of application. The response to an advertisement offering terms of such a royally munificent description would have been absolutely boundless. The only means of securing an expert from India, Great Britain, or America, would have been to send a first-rate man to those countries for the purpose of procuring applications which would be really suitable. But it is by no means certain that we should get the kind of expert we require in England. The manager of such a railway as that between Liverpool and Manchester is, without doubt, highly skilled in the transport of enormous quantities of freight over short distances as rapidly as possible. The working expenses of such a line are enormous; but, comparatively speaking, the high expense rate does not matter, because the tremendous population implies a tremendous amount of traffic. A man trained to that style of management, it must be seen, would be practically valueless in a new country such as this, where the conditions are altogether unlike those obtaining at home. In a compact country like England, where the traffic is practically compressed into a mere nutshell, a man does not acquire the kind of experience which should induce the Government of this

State to pay him an annual salary of £4,000 or £5,000 to come here and take charge of a railway system like ours, the circumstances of which are so vastly different from those of the system to which he has become accustomed. Such a railway expert, indeed, would be practically of no use to us. The chances are that an English railway expert would prove an utter failure in such a country as Western Australia. I admit that an American railway manager might be a success; but the demand for first-class railway experts in the Eastern States at the present time is so great that it cannot be met; and if those States are unable to secure the men they want, it is highly improbable that we should succeed in getting the man we require, since we are really not in a position to offer such a large salary as some of the sister States would be prepared to pay. As for obtaining an American manager, the demand in America for skilled railway administrators is so heavy that there is an appreciable difficulty in filling vacancies. Moreover, it is just as difficult to induce an American railway expert to leave his own country and come to one of which he knows nothing, as to induce an English railway expert to do so. Hon. members will recognise, therefore, that the Government had to contend with exceedingly grave difficulties. We considered the matter most carefully, and then came to the conclusion that as we had the right and power to appoint a Commissioner, and as the management of the railways was entirely beyond the scope of the Minister, it was advisable to select a Commissioner in this State; and we decided to appoint one whom we knew to be a good business man, an upright man, and a man who had proved during many years his keen interest in the affairs of the country. We believed that in Mr. George we had found such a man, and we accordingly appointed him to the position; and we believe to-day that Mr. George's appointment will prove one of the most successful efforts ever made by any West Australian Government to improve the railway administration. I deprecate the unfair attacks which have been made upon Mr. George, I deprecate the application to him of such terms as "greenhorn," before he has had an opportunity of showing what he can

do. Mr. George has been the manager of a large and successful business in this city; and the same qualities which he brought to bear on the conduct of that business we expect him to bring to bear on the affairs of the country; and we believe he will prove a great success. From my knowledge of what has gone on in connection with this matter, through and through, I am as convinced to-day, after all the arguments I have heard against the appointment, as I was at the time it was made, that the Government on this occasion have acted rightly. Of course, the matter is one of opinion. Naturally, I support the view I have expressed, but I ask hon. members simply to take this view. The very varied expressions of opinion on the appointment prove that the disposal of the control of our railway system is not a matter easy to settle. I ask hon. members to believe that the Government have acted for the best interests of the country, have used their best efforts to do what they believe to be best for the country. I ask hon. members to believe that, because I am absolutely convinced that there was no ulterior motive of any description whatever in the appointment of Mr. George. An ulterior motive has been suggested, but none exists. Mr. George's appointment had nothing whatever to do with his being a member of Parliament. Mr. Randell has already pointed out that the appointment of one member of Parliament to a civil service post proved a great boon to the country. [MEMBER: That is only one instance.] The future may show more instances. I will give one prospective instance, selected from this very House. I do not think anyone will for a moment doubt that if a Harbour Board is to be appointed for Fremantle, a gentleman who spoke on the subject of harbour boards this afternoon would be one of the most suitable men to sit on it. I refer to Captain Laurie. I venture to say no one doubts that gentleman's complete mastery of the subject. It does not follow that because a man is a member of Parliament he does not possess expert knowledge which would be of service to the State. It is hard to say that a man, because he is a member of Parliament, is not fitted to take a public appointment. Exception has been taken by some hon. members to the following pro-

vision, expressed in paragraph 9 of the Speech:—

Adequate provision, however, will be made to leave with Parliament the full power of controlling rates and of dealing with all questions involving the interests of the Railway servants of the State.

As I have pointed out already, the object in appointing a Board of Commissioners is simply to secure business-like administration, purely to secure that the management of the railways shall be carried on in a business manner. There are, however, in connection with our railways great questions of policy which ought not to be put outside political control, particularly in a developing country such as this. For instance, there is the settlement of our land—a most important matter. Undoubtedly we must demand—even if we have to pay for the privilege by general revenue—certain concessions in favour of those who are settling on our land. It would be an absolutely suicidal policy to place the control of the railway rates entirely in the hands of a board, and to say that Parliament cannot for five years or ten years, as the case may be, influence rates in any way whatever. The adoption of such a policy might mean the ruination of the country. In a country of such enormous extent as Western Australia, the necessity may arise for making the railway rates vary according to distance; that is to say, it may be found necessary to introduce the zone system. At any rate, Parliament may consider it advisable to make specially low rates for the distant parts of the State, which otherwise would remain unsettled. I give this merely as an instance of questions of policy which should not be placed outside the control of Parliament. Next, as regards the interests of the railway servants of the State, surely it is clear that if you make six or seven thousand people—which I believe is the number of our railway servants—entirely subject to a Board of Commissioners, you are practically disfranchising a large proportion of the population: you are practically putting them beyond the scope of Parliament. Every man in the country has a right to be represented in Parliament; and there is no constitutional means, I maintain, of putting any member of the community outside the pale. Have these

six or seven thousand railway servants no rights? Are they not to be permitted to approach the member whom they elect to Parliament and say, "A great injustice has been done us by this Commission, and we ask you to have it remedied?" They must have that right, and it is entirely beyond the power of Parliament to deprive them of it; therefore the Bill creating the Board of Commissioners must be framed in such a manner that Parliament will still have a certain control, as a matter of policy, in every individual case. Parliament must also, as a matter of policy, have control over rates, so that the development of the country may not be hampered. Paragraph 10 of the Speech refers to an amendment of the Constitution Act. I have listened most carefully to the observations offered by hon. members, and I must admit I am inclined to believe there is not the same urgency for this matter as there was, particularly in view of the enormous increase of our population. The State is certainly advancing very rapidly. The rate of progress is quite phenomenal, and undoubtedly if that rate be maintained, a reduction in the membership of either House might be an unwise proceeding. I merely point this out. I believe this measure will be brought forward, but it will be entirely for members of both Houses to say what shall be done. I do not see anything in the Speech about the exact numbers, but I know the ratio of the numbers is 46 to 21. There is reason in that. This Chamber being reduced to 21, we must also recollect that we, as members of the different provinces, represent large interests—broad, general interests. It so happens that the six members of the Federal Senate represent large general interests; therefore we have six more members which we have added practically to this House in that Senate. Then there are also five members in the House of Representatives: they are elected by large bodies, and represent large interests; so that in looking to the Federal Parliament, we have members there who represent similar interests to those represented by members in this House. When federation was being debated, it was decided by many members that there should be a reduction, and many members are pledged to a reduc-

tion. Many of those who hold seats in other places have given pledges to reduce the number of members of Parliament in both Houses. They will have to carry out their pledges, but if the conditions of the State have so changed, that will be a reasonable ground for their taking other views. At the same time, the ratio of 21 to 46 is a more favourable ratio to us than exists in South Australia at the present time.

MEMBER: There they are practically bankrupt.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: In regard to the civil service, I think every member is in accord with the action which the Government have taken as to the appointment of a Civil Service Commission. I know the very first motion I submitted when I joined this Chamber was one for the appointment of a Commission for the classification of the civil service. I had some difficulty in getting that motion through. Being a young member at the time, I found great difficulties in the way; however, I succeeded in getting the motion passed. I hoped a Commission would have been appointed, but the views of the Government of the day were not exactly the views of those in power at the present time, and the body which was then appointed consisted of the various permanent heads of departments and members of the Government. As I said at the time, the Government may as well have put themselves into a basket and tried to lift it as to appoint a commission of such a nature. It was left for the present Government to go into the matter, and I think we have succeeded in getting some of the ablest men to sit on the Commission, for unless we have a stable civil service, with the constant changes of Ministries the position of officials will be a very unfortunate one indeed. In regard to paragraph 12, dealing with the educational system, I am glad members support what the Ministry have done in regard to that matter. I think we cannot take very much credit to ourselves on this question. The credit rests with the past Government in having secured the services of Mr. Cyril Jackson. I think our educational system compares favourably with any educational system throughout Australia. Only to-day I was conversing with Mr. Jackson on the question of agricultural education. We have

studied the question as it is carried out in other parts—in Germany and in other countries—and as we see mistakes have been made in other States in the past, we are trying to avoid them. Mistakes have been made in having costly colleges in country districts carried on at great expense, giving purely a theoretical education, which is of very little value to those who have to go out on to farms in after-life and make a living. The scheme we advocate is that of having an extension of the technical schools in various centres. Of course we shall have a school in Perth to begin with, but later on in outlying centres. In these technical schools boys from 14 to 16 years of age, or even 16 to 18 years, will be taught theory, also to try to observe and think. This class of education is always valuable, whatever branch of life one takes up. After receiving the theoretical education boys will be in a position to go on to the more practical work of agriculture when they go into the country. We also have a farther scheme, which is that when the boys arrive at the age of 16 or 17 they will go on to the experimental farms and do practical work, and see how farming is carried out on a practical basis by practical men who have a thorough knowledge, and who will be able to make the farms a financial success. These farms will cost the State nothing; they will pay for themselves, and the instruction received will give the students more valuable lessons than anything else. In this scheme there are centralisation and decentralisation; centralisation where the theoretical knowledge is taught, and after that knowledge is imparted to the pupil, he will go to the outlying parts of the State and visit the experimental farms. For several years he will work there obtaining an idea of what can be done in various parts of the State. The Government have come to this conclusion after a great deal of care. They believe it will prove to be perhaps the most successful system that exists in any of the Australian States. With regard to the objections made by a member that in outlying schools teachers are not up to the mark, I regret that we do hear that stated. I know there is a great deal to be said for the complaint, but efforts are being made to get over that difficulty in so far as we have an admirable training

college at Claremont and we shall no longer have to look abroad for our teachers, for they will be local productions, so to speak. The teachers will be produced in this country to go to every part of the State, and as soon as the training school gets into thorough working order we shall have a valuable army of teachers for our own work, and I do not think we shall have to go beyond the boundaries of the State. With regard to paragraph 13, which deals with the proposed harbour board, I think, after the very able address which we have heard to-night from Captain Laurie, I need say very little on the subject. He has shown us clearly that it is very desirable to have a harbour board, and we intend to bring in a Bill to deal with the matter in the early part of the session. I can foresee, I am afraid, that when the executive members to that board are appointed, we shall have the same outcry as usual. Still we will do the best we can to appoint the most suitable men, and I hope members will give us credit for our endeavours made in that direction. In regard to railway construction, there is a good deal to be said about that. Several members think we are not advancing fast enough in regard to our railways. We should like to see the railways extending very materially, but we must always bear in mind that the duty of the country is becoming very heavy. It is doubtful indeed if it would be a wise policy to extend lines other than those absolutely necessary at the present time. The existing railways should be equipped as fully as possible, and when we have everything in efficient order, then is the time to extend our railway system. As to the Esperance railway, that is the great bone of contention on the goldfields. Although I received a very hospitable reception when there, still there were severe strictures on my view in regard to the railway to Esperance. The Esperance railway would be a great mistake at the present time, and one of the reasons I stated on the goldfields I will repeat now. People are leaving out of their calculation the enormous cost of the harbour that would be required at Esperance. The late Engineer-in-Chief stated that the harbour would cost a great deal, and if we construct the Esperance railway, we shall have our

market in the east and our produce in the west; that is the objection.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: No.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The coastal districts, in place of being able to produce largely as they are doing to-day, will be robbed of their market. We are getting more settled and becoming a wealthy population. But instead of being able to bear the brunt of the taxation, which the people on the coast have had to do, the great brunt will then fall on the goldfields population, which will break their back.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: It does fall on them to-day.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: If you have money to expend, and we shall require it sooner or later, the proper course is to duplicate the line to the Eastern Goldfields, and with the water supply we now have we should be able to run that line comparatively cheap. There is one line I regret cannot be carried out at once; I think Mr. McLarty mentioned it in his speech. I refer to the Collie railway, and I think it would be of immense value if the first section of the line between Collie and Narrogin, or between Collie and Kamballie, could be constructed; not that the railway would be able to carry coal sufficiently cheap to compete with the firewood at once, but it would be the first step towards bringing the coalfields in conjunction with the goldfields. That is a policy which must always be kept in view, because it will have to come about sooner or later. There is one point which interests me very much, and which Mr. Moss brought forward in regard to co-operation; instead of constructing railways by departmental day labour, to have co-operation in carrying out Government works.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: That is only a fad.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not a fad.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: The contract system is the proper one.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: According to Professor Yves Guyot, the great French political economist, in the cities of Amsterdam and Paris this system is carried out entirely, and there one of the biggest trades in Europe is carried on. He points out that it is simply going in for a wholesale system, instead of a retail system, of buying your

labour. In the past merchants have gone into the market, and picked out the various goods they wanted. They buy what they require and buy wholesale. Why not buy your labour in the same way? Buy it and leave it to the labourers themselves how they are to be paid. In the Eastern States and in New Zealand, where they take up the most advanced methods in economics, this system is being used to great advantage, and I am glad the hon. member brought it forward, and I hope members will think well about it. Anything new of this kind is always difficult to bring about: the question should be thought out by the various members of the House. We really have to look to the thoughtful men of the community to carry out any new system, and I am convinced this would be of enormous benefit. I myself have carefully studied Guyot's works; and many of his arguments in favour of the wholesale, as opposed to the retail, buying of labour appear to me very strong. In connection with the Coolgardie Water Scheme, much has been said concerning the arrangements for reticulation. I have seen the Minister for Works, and he assures me that every effort is being made to arrange that matter as speedily as possible, that he has not by any means lost sight of it, and that he hopes the reticulation system will be completed before the water is ready to enter the pipes at Bulla Bulling. Hon. members may rest assured that although some of us do not take quite so sanguine a view as theirs of the prospects of the Coolgardie Water Scheme, still we are doing our utmost to have it carried through. There is one additional use for the water. We find that we shall be able to utilise it for pastoral purposes; that is to say, for the watering of stock between Northam and Southern Cross. The matter is one which rests with myself, and I take an active interest in it and am at the present time using my best endeavours to make all necessary arrangements. In regard to the late Mr. O'Connor, I can assure hon. members that Ministers appreciate highly what that gentleman did for the State of Western Australia. Like everyone, we felt his death very keenly. At the time it occurred, we decided to assist Mrs. O'Connor in a slight measure. I know it was the intention of the Premier

of the day, the late Mr. Leake, to do a great deal, although it was not actually decided what was to be done, for Mrs. O'Connor and the children. That matter was left to be dealt with when Parliament would be in session. The exact form which the proposed assistance will take has not yet been settled by the Government; but every member of the Ministry, I repeat, appreciates most highly what the late Mr. O'Connor has accomplished. We appreciate the enormous amount of work at very small cost which Mr. O'Connor carried out for the State. As regards the Coolgardie Water Scheme, we rejoice to know that he, at all events, is in no way to blame for any shortcomings there may have been in the execution of that work. It is most satisfactory to learn from the Royal Commission's report that Mr. O'Connor is absolutely blameless, and that any reflections which have been cast on him are quite without justification and thoroughly undeserved. Indeed, I can hardly find words to express how deeply we feel for his family. We have made up our minds to adopt some means of bringing the matter before Parliament. I cannot say more than that, because the Government have not yet, as I say, decided on the exact form which the intended assistance is to take. I can assure hon. members, however, that the matter is not being overlooked. I need not go fully into the question of finance. It is most satisfactory to know that our revenue is such that we are enabled, in some measure, to adjust the old stores account. Such an account is difficult of adjustment in the absence of a surplus, and Ministers consider it desirable to use at any rate a portion of the large surplus now available for the purpose of such adjustment. I am more than pleased to find so many members agree with us in our view that it would be a suicidal policy to interfere with the sliding scale at the present time. Indeed, I consider that would be absolutely one of the most foolish things possible. Undoubtedly, as Mr. Loton has so clearly pointed out, we are not yet in a position to say what the Federal Tariff will be; and from that, if from no other aspect, we really do require the revenue obtained under the sliding scale. We cannot see far enough ahead to justify us in even contemplating any

interference with the sliding scale. Such interference would, indeed, be evidence of a most short-sighted policy, besides constituting, in some measure at all events, a breach of trust. I repeat, I am pleased to find hon. members of this House ready to give the Government a general support in that matter. Several members have referred to agricultural questions. I do not propose to detain the House long on these, as I am only in a position to say that the Government are making great efforts to promote settlement in the country. I have used my best endeavours to master the subject as far as I can, and I see clearly that our first movement must be to appoint thoroughly competent land agents to deal with intending settlers and show them over the land. Up to the present, our land agencies have not been satisfactorily managed; and I have, therefore, put on the Estimates a sum of money to enable me to reorganise the whole system of agency, so that we shall be in a position to show intending settlers from the gold-fields and elsewhere over the land, and to make plain to them the advantages of the land. That is really all I have to say at the present time in regard to agriculture. Hon. members know that, as Minister for Lands, I am greatly interested in agriculture. I may add that I am actively employed in preparing certain measures, which I am not ready to detail for the moment, because they are *in nubibus*, so to speak—not thoroughly worked out. Reverting once more to the surplus, I wish to call attention to the various works to which it is to be devoted. It is sometimes urged by politicians that surpluses constitute a danger, inasmuch as they are liable to be fritted away in the distribution of sops. However, I do not think the present Government can be charged with any such conduct. There is no sop among the public works to which the surplus is to be devoted. Certainly, we are not assisting a class of people who can help us when we build a lunatic asylum. It is perfectly reasonable that such a building should be constructed out of current revenue. Certainly its cost is more properly met out of surplus than charged to loan funds.

HON. G. RANDALL: Do not forget the old proverb about "him who thinketh he standeth."

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Perhaps it is well to remember that proverb at this juncture. The construction of an asylum has been in contemplation for a very long time; indeed, it was spoken of 20 years ago. During the whole of that period it has been continually suggested that an asylum ought to be built; but it is only during the last week the Government were able to decide on a really suitable site. As regards the improvement to be made in gaols, I may observe that I am not in favour of a large sum of money being expended on the Fremantle gaol, in which I think we have a very good gaol. I know that gaol well, and consider it will be thoroughly appointed after some improvements have been made in its furnishing and in other respects. Mr. Moss has referred to various alterations which have been made since the report of the Penal Commission was presented, and I agree with him that good work has been done. I am most anxious to see the camp system, as it exists at Drakesbrook at the present time, largely extended. The Drakesbrook prison camp, I am pleased to say, is turning out a great success. Thirty prisoners are there now, and they are all doing good work. They are improving in physique, and also in conduct, and I think they will be able to leave gaol with a small return for their work. This will give them the chance of making a fresh start in life. In a country of such vast territory as this, there should be no difficulty in placing prisoners in camps established in different parts of the State.

HON. R. G. BURGESS: Send them to the guano islands.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: We can send them there, no doubt. There is certainly no need to coop them up in great buildings while there is so much work for them to do in the country. The construction of abattoirs, another work to be defrayed out of the surplus, is a matter of importance. The establishment of central abattoirs will undoubtedly assist in the establishment of a thorough system of meat inspection, and at the same time will tend to cheapen the cost of meat, inasmuch as the cold storage chambers to be established in connection with the abattoirs will facilitate the operations of small buyers. This

work will certainly tend to lower the price of meat in this State.

HON. G. RANDELL: You have a big contract on hand.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes; but we intend to face it. The Government having decided to take the matter up, Mr. Kingsmill went carefully into it in the Eastern States, and we have a good deal of information on the subject, into which we are not plunging blindly. I believe we shall succeed in what we are attempting. Hon. members will recognise, I think, that the underlying aim of the policy enunciated in the Speech is to cheapen the cost of living in this State. Hon. members will have learnt from Captain Laurie's remarks that the establishment of a harbour trust or board of management will tend to reduce the harbour dues, and that thus the cost of landing merchandise will be decreased. That reduction in cost will be for the benefit not only of the merchant, but also of the consumer. Again, we have taken much trouble in connection with our Perth markets, where another cooling-room is to be built. We are bringing the latest intelligence from the Eastern States to bear on the subject, and undoubtedly we shall do something towards reducing the cost of living by improving the Perth markets. We are also engaged in improving the stock routes; and we purpose to give every assistance, by and by, towards the opening up of the harbours in the great northern country discovered and reported on by Messrs. Brockman and Crossland. We shall open up harbours there, and in time establish a system of cold storage. Undoubtedly the prospects of the pastoral industry in this State are bright. All our efforts at the present time, it will be observed, are directed towards ameliorating the conditions of life in this State; not only by cheapening the food-supply, but also by improving the system of education, and generally raising the condition of the people. I hope hon. members will give us credit for using our best and most earnest endeavours in this respect. A good deal has been said concerning the working of private railways in this State. I myself was a member of the joint committee which inquired into the working of the Midland Railway. I

have to-day seen Mr. Rasou, the Minister for Railways, Mr. Kingsmill, the late Minister, and Mr. George, on the subject; and I find that certainly something has been done towards giving effect to the recommendations of the joint committee. Up to the present, however, it has been found difficult in the extreme to enforce all the conditions of the contract, certain rights having been waived for such a length of time. We are doing our utmost, and have the matter well in hand. There is just one matter in connection with my department which I shall refer to. If hon. members will allow me, I will read the letter which I now hold in my hand. As we know, an attack was made—I do not think it was quite a fair attack—by Mr. Drew on the Lands Department, which I represent as Minister. That attack had no reference to matters of policy. If it had referred purely to policy, I think I could have answered the hon. member very well, inasmuch as I could have shown that the policy of the present Government in regard to lands and agriculture is as enlightened as that pursued in the past. The attack being directly on the officers of my department, I mentioned the matter to my Under-Secretary to-day, and he just wrote down shortly his views of the position, and if members will allow me I think it only fair that I should give the information to them. It is the only way an officer has of dealing with matters which are brought before the House. I am sure members will bear with me while I read the document:—

1. With reference to your conversation with me this morning respecting delays in dealing with applications and replying to letters, I may say at the outset the subject is beset with difficulties, and is one of those troubles that is always with us. I am far from being callous as to delays and complaints arising therefrom—they often cause me much anxiety and annoyance—so that I frequently call the attention of officers to the matter and urge them to do their best to deal with matters promptly, and so remove causes of complaint.

2. On the other hand it does not appear to be reasonable to apply the ordinary business practice of replying to communications to a technical department such as this is, which in so many cases has to refer to other departments before acting, and where there are so many points to be considered and pitfalls to avoid.

3. The principal complaints respecting delays doubtless arise in connection with applications for land. Applications on being re-

ceived from the head office are first handed over to the collector of land revenue to receipt the deposits; he cannot pass them on until another officer of the Audit Department has checked and initialled the deposits; then they are sent on to the land selection branch to be recorded and acknowledged, and are passed from there to the correspondence record room for previous papers or the starting of a new "folio" in connection with each. Then they go back to the land selection division to be carefully examined, to see if land is vacant, if it is open under the section applied for, if the application is in form, and various other points—including the applicant's eligibility to hold the land applied for; on all these points being disposed of the application is inked in on plans; if the land is not surveyed a sketch for the surveyor has to be made; if it is within a pastoral lease the lessee has to be notified; if the application is amended in any way in the office, a sketch has also to be made for the applicant, and with most applications a sketch has also to be made to send to the district agent.

4. In addition to all this, if the land is within mineral country, as so many of the western district applications are, it has to be reported on and referred to the Mines Department before approval, and if within timber country, it has to be reported on by the Forestry Department.

5. After all this, if everything is satisfactory, the notice of approval is filled in, the rent and term, etc., are entered on the application form, and it is sent on for approval.

6. It must readily be seen that all this takes time, even if all this goes on smoothly; but it of course frequently happens that other issues arise and the department has to correspond with the applicant or others in connection with the application, which necessarily causes further delay.

7. I do not attempt to prove that our department or its officers are perfect, but I do honestly believe that we are conscientiously doing our best. For my own part I might mention that almost daily I have a batch of applications, transfers, etc., sent home to my house to attend to at night or before office in the morning in order to save delays.

8. With regard to delay in replying to letters, it must be remembered that in nearly all cases previous papers on the same subject have to be obtained before the matter can be dealt with, and as other action may be proceeding on the same file, it is almost impossible to avoid occasional delays, and then when the file is obtained it is almost always necessary to refer to some branch or department for a report or information, and then the matter may have to be submitted to the Minister for a decision. Of course we only hear of the cases where delays have occurred, and nothing of the ninety and nine which have been dealt with promptly—without special cases being instanced it is impossible to say whether delays were unwarranted or otherwise.

In connection with this matter, the following extracts from a report I wrote after a visit to

the Eastern States, in 1898, for the purpose of inquiring into the working of the Lands Departments in Sydney, Melbourne, and Adelaide may be of interest.

As an instance of the volume of correspondence dealt with by this department, I might mention that as many as 150 letters are sent out in a day. One day lately no less than 170 were sent; this is in addition to printed letters and circulars.

There was a certain grim satisfaction in finding in the course of my inquiries that, in each of the departments visited, they have much the same troubles and difficulties to cope with that we have; complaints respecting delays, occasional loss of papers, troubles and law suits with selectors, etc., etc., all occur; so far as I could learn no one of the three are much better in these respects than we are; therefore I regret that I am unable to recommend any royal road through these and all other difficulties.

District Offices and Land Boards.—With regard to district offices and land boards, doubtless they are very excellent institutions for saving the head office, and preventing congestion of work, but they are most expensive luxuries (they cost over £20,000 per year in New South Wales); owing to all the formalities to be observed, applications take as long in being dealt with as they do under our system, if not longer, and law suits, resulting on the decisions of the boards, especially in Sydney, seem to be quite common occurrences; in fact, one clerk in the Sydney office is kept constantly employed getting up the cases for the Crown Solicitor. So, even if the circumstances of our colony were such that the system might be applied, these objections, especially the one of *expense*, put the matter out of the question at the present time.

Thus you see we are in a different position from the Eastern States. I have been assured by men who have come from the Eastern States that they can get their land here much more rapidly than in the East. In regard to obtaining land, what we want is security of tenure. Time is not the essence of the contract. If it takes a little while longer to see if things are safe and the tenure is secure, the time is well spent. An application takes three weeks to a month generally; it is only in special cases that there is any delay. Members may say that in a certain measure the Minister is to blame in not having sufficient surveyors. It is often said that the Lands Department is over-manned, but that is not so. We are up to the extent of our strength, but the block of work is enormous, and all are hard workers. The work which is done in the department is very good indeed, and we may have to assist the officers by

giving farther aid. I thank members for having listened so attentively to my long address, but there were so many subjects to deal with that perhaps I have taxed their patience more than they deserve. At the same time I should like to thank members for the very kindly expressions which have fallen from some of them in regard to myself. When I came before members in the past as Minister for Lands, I knew it was thought very doubtful if I was entitled to hold that position at all. One member said I was always known as a physician and surgeon in the State, and it seemed unusual that anyone in that position should have taken the portfolio of Lands when the position of Colonial Secretary would have been more suitable. But there were reasons for it at the time, although I am not in a position to state what those reasons were; but it was thought, for several reasons, desirable that I should take up the position of Minister for Lands. The late Premier was very strongly of that view, and I took the portfolio at his request. I thank members for the kindly expressions which have fallen from some of them in regard to the work which I have done. It was with very great doubt and diffidence that I took up my position, and I say myself I do think in some measure one has succeeded in furthering the land interests of the State. It was said by many of my friends that I was too visionary and not sufficiently practical to go into such a department as that of the Lands. Certainly, I say I have visions, but these are based on very practical premises. When one goes to the South-West and sees good land at the foot of hills, with beautiful water running throughout it during the summer, where there is no disease such as malarial fever, one has only to look ahead to see a more populated country in the future, richly producing the special fruits of the kind suited to that country. And when one goes to the Southern part of this country and sees the waving fields of corn, it does not require much imagination to look forward to the time when that will be the grainery of the country. Again, when one goes North and sees the enormous rich lands there, little orchards and orange-groves springing up, one knows it must be a rich country bearing the fruits of the earth. I can hardly think that these

are visions in regard to these matters. I see a time when we shall have passed away, when a great population will be settled in this great country. I am even so visionary as to think that those marvellous shows of nature that we have in the shape of Caves in the South-West will yet be an enormous asset to this country. I lived in a city once where there were 200,000 visitors every year who came to see the beauties of art, and I know from that there is an enormous travelling population of whom, if we advertise properly, we shall get a fair share on purpose to visit our marvellous Caves in the South-West. These may be purely visions, but so long as one's visions are based on actual solid premises such as I have stated, one cannot go far wrong. It depends on us to-day whether these great assets are to be used for future generations and for their benefit. I hope so long as I am in this State that I shall have some part to play in farthering the interests of the country, and especially the interests with which I am now associated.

ADOPTION OF ADDRESS.

Question — that the Address-in-reply be adopted—put and passed without dissent.

THE PRESIDENT: I have to inform members that I have communicated with His Excellency, and the Governor will be pleased to receive the Address-in-reply at 25 minutes to 5 on Tuesday afternoon.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9.15 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 24th July, 1902.

Question: Coolgardie Water Scheme, Pipe Caulking—
Question: Rabbits Incursion, Fencing—Question:
Agricultural Lands near Esperance—Questions:
Esperance Railway Project, Proposals for Construction,
Survey of Railway, Harbour Improvements—
Question: Police Allowance, Goldfields—Question:
Health Boards (district), Elective—Question: Rail-
way Commissioner, Terms of Agreement—Address-
in-reply, fourth day, adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—COOLGARDIE WATER
SCHEME, PIPE CAULKING.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (for Hon. F. H. Piesse) asked the Minister for Works: 1. How many joints of the Coolgardie Water Scheme pipes were caulked prior to the 1st December last. 2. How many have been caulked since that date. 3. How many of these pipe joints have been caulked: (a), By machine; (b), By hand. 4. At what cost respectively per joint. 5. How many pumping stations have been completed and fit for work.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1. 14,647. 2. 24,758 (to 12th July, 1902). 3 (a), 37,162; (b), 2,243 (to 12th July, 1902). 4. Machine, 23s. 8d. per joint. Hand, 26s. 2d. per joint. (This cost includes the excavation of manholes and laying pipes in trench.) 5. The first three stations are sufficiently completed to admit of water being pumped.

QUESTION—RABBITS INCURSION,
FENCING.

MR. A. E. THOMAS asked the Premier: 1. Whether any steps had been taken to protect the land in the neighbourhood of Esperance Bay from the incursion of rabbits. 2. Whether the settlers East of Esperance would be given facilities for the fencing of their own holdings. 3. If so, on what terms would the fencing be made available. 4. When would any wire fencing be landed in the State, and how much. 5. What amount would be allocated for the above purpose.

THE PREMIER replied: 1. Yes; an inspection of the country around Esperance has been made with a view to