

THE PREMIER: I think we had better adjourn, unless we are willing to pass the Address-in-reply on the voices.

MR. GEORGE: That is not likely.

MR. GREGORY: I move the adjournment of the debate.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:35 p.m. until the next Tuesday afternoon.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 4th September, 1900.

Papers presented—Question: Cost of Cyanide Works, Norseman—Question: Payment of Members, Referendum—Address-in-reply; debate, sixth day. Premier's speech on the general question—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Regulations and additional regulations under Beer Duty Act.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—COST OF CYANIDE WORKS, NORSEMAN.

MR. WALLACE asked the Minister of Mines: 1, Whether the cyanide works at Norseman public battery are completed? 2, If so, what is their total cost? 3, What is the working capacity of said cyanide works? 4, Under what terms and conditions are the works carried on?

THE MINISTER OF MINES replied: —1, Yes. 2, £1,232 19s. 1d. 3, Designed for 400 tons monthly, but subject to variation according to nature of tailings. 4, To take over tailings at 27 cubic feet

to the ton, and allow 80 per cent. of assay value, less a charge of 10s. per ton for treatment.

QUESTION—PAYMENT OF MEMBERS, REFERENDUM.

MR. VOSPER asked the Premier: 1, Whether he recollects having promised that a referendum should be taken on the question of payment of members. 2, Whether he also remembers having stated, in reply to a question, that no special legislation is contemplated for this purpose. 3, If so, how he proposes to provide for the expenditure entailed by such referendum.

THE PREMIER replied:—1, In the Legislative Assembly on the 19th July, 1899, the Premier moved "That the question of payment of members should be referred to the electors of the colony for an expression of their opinion at the next general election," and the motion was carried unanimously. 2, Yes. 3, The Government intend carrying out this undertaking, and the expenditure to be incurred will be nominal.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

DEBATE, SIXTH DAY.

Debate resumed from the previous Thursday, on the motion for adoption of Address-in-reply; the Amendment of no-confidence having been negatived at the last sitting, and the debate now dealing with the general question.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): I have noticed in the Press during the last few days a number of assertions attributed to the Premier, in which it is stated the Opposition have done their best to delay the business of the country this session. To that statement, which I do not think the right hon. gentleman will repudiate, I give a flat denial; for every member on the Opposition side of the House, not only this session but last session, has tried to promote the public business and to get through the work as quickly as possible. Owing to the fact that members sitting on this side of the House have their homes in other places than Perth, they might make many objections to the number of delays in regard to attendance in this House, and also to the delay shown in placing Bills on the table. But in this session alone the Premier

went behind a special promise which he made, that the House should meet on the 7th of the month; and, instead, the House met on the 15th: in that case one week was lost. What followed? As soon as a vote of want of confidence in the Government was tabled, the Premier had the House adjourned for a week, instead of his getting up and speaking at once. On the first night of the debate, the House adjourned at 9 o'clock on the motion of one of the Government supporters. On the next night a division took place at an early hour as to whether the debate should be adjourned: the Opposition were beaten, and the House adjourned. Now the Premier is telling the people of the country that we are delaying the business of the House! Our first object is to turn out the Government, and I can assure the right hon. gentleman that we shall continue in that object as long we hold seats on the Opposition side; at any rate, I shall, and I think a great many of those who sit on this side are of the same mind. In the division which followed the debate on the no-confidence motion, the Premier boasts that it is shown he retains the confidence of the people of the country. I say that the division shows he does not retain the confidence of the country. In that division the Opposition lost the votes of the member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham) and the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly), who were absent.

THE PREMIER: You do not know that. That is speculation.

MR. GREGORY: The Opposition also lost the vote of the member for the Swan (Mr. Ewing).

THE PREMIER: We lost some too.

MR. GREGORY: One vote. Three members on the Government side of the House got up and not only accused the Premier of treachery, but said they did not believe in his public works policy. I think they do not believe in any part of his policy, but they keep him in power. There was the member for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan), who was quite dissatisfied with the Government. The member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) also said he was very strongly against the Government.

MR. MORGANS: What about the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes)?

MR. KINGSMILL: He is all right.

MR. GREGORY: The member for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) also objected to the policy of the Government; but these members voted to retain the Government in office because it was the last session of this Parliament. The Premier also pointed out that the number of members who voted against the Government was increased because two members from the Government side of the House voted with the Opposition. I should like to point out, the power of the Opposition has grown right along the piece, and many members who have sat on the Government side are now so disgusted that they have had to come over to the Opposition. There is only one exception in which a member has left the Opposition side and gone to the Government side. In the old days the Premier used to recruit his members from this side; but only one instance can be given in which a member has left this side during the last Parliament to go over to the other side, and no doubt that member had an axe to grind.

THE PREMIER: What?

MR. GREGORY: The Bonnievale Railway.

THE PREMIER: That is a nice insinuation.

MR. GREGORY: The division list of the Government side did not show that the Government had the confidence of the country.

MR. MORGANS: Are there any axes to grind on your side?

MR. GREGORY: I am not aware of any; only to get to the Treasury benches, and that is a very laudable ambition. According to the voting on the Commonwealth Bill, East Kimberley, which has always been represented by a strong Government supporter, had 61 votes cast on the Federation question; DeGrey had 95, and that constituency is represented by another Government supporter; Ashburton was represented by 96 votes, and that constituency returns another Government supporter.

MR. D. FORREST: It is none the worse for that.

MR. GREGORY: I forgot: in that constituency the member represents a great many sheep and bullocks also. In Roebourne 116 persons voted, in West Kimberley 131, and in Gascoyne there were 143 votes cast. These constituencies

return six members who always vote for the Government; and, according to the widest franchise given, only 642 electors are to be found in those constituencies: these six representatives vote on the Government side.

MR. A. FORREST: We cannot help that. Alter the constitution.

MR. GREGORY: If we had the assistance of the hon. member we could alter the constitution, but while we have these pocket boroughs it will be impossible to do so. In four of the Coolgardie electorates there were 23,364 votes cast, and these constituencies return four members, giving 5,841 voters to each member. According to the new Constitution Act each of these representatives has an average of 2,920 electors, yet the Premier thinks these places are sufficiently well represented, and he thinks that by a few sops and a few public works he is going to get the sympathy of the people in these electorates. The Premier has already stated the goldfields members were out of touch with their constituents, and that he alone is in touch with the people. The Premier is now trying to gain the sympathies of the goldfields people with a railway from Norseman to Coolgardie, a railway to Leonora, and by other public works in those parts. The Premier will find out that he cannot buy the votes of the people in that manner. What the people in those districts want are fair representation, proper electoral rights, payment of members, and a democratic policy in the House; and until they get these things they will never give the hon. gentleman sympathy. Who is responsible for the present electoral laws? Who is responsible for the provision that a man must be six months on the roll before he can vote? That provision was insisted upon by the Premier when the Electoral Act was before the House.

THE PREMIER: It is the same in South Australia.

MR. GREGORY: What the people desire here is a system of granting electoral rights similar to the voters' certificates, so that one month before an election a man who has been in the colony twelve months can obtain a certificate and vote at the election. That is the policy which will practically be in force within the next three or four years in this colony. The people also want to

abolish plural voting, which is contrary to Parliamentary practice in these colonies or Parliamentary principle. Why should one man be able to record 30 or 40 votes? Parliament is supposed to be a national and not a local institution; therefore why should one man be able to cast 30 or 40 votes? It is a bad principle, but one which is supported by the Premier.

THE PREMIER: It is the same as in England.

MR. WOOD: And the same as in Victoria.

MR. GREGORY: There are a lot of bad things in England: they have not payment of members there. The question of payment of members was fought out in this House, and I would like to urge upon the Government the desirability of bringing in a Bill this session providing for the payment of members of the next Parliament.

THE PREMIER: You agreed to the proposal last session.

MR. GREGORY: I agreed to it. If we adopt payment of members for the next Parliament, and the members of the next Parliament do not agree to it, they can repeal the Act; and if we vote that members of the next Parliament shall be paid, then it cannot be said that the members of the next Parliament voted themselves the money. If the Premier will refuse to bring forward a Bill, I hope some hon. member will move a motion requesting, in fact ordering, the Government to bring in a Bill for the payment of members of the next Parliament, and I believe it will be carried in this House and in another Chamber. If the Premier will not do this, his hands should be forced. A motion in favour of payment of members which was brought forward last session was opposed by every member of the Government, except the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and he did not vote at all. When the question as to the affirmation of the principle was brought before the House by myself and we had a division, then it was found that every Minister, except the Commissioner of Crown Lands, voted against the motion. An attempt has been made by the right hon. gentleman to give a sop to the Labour party. He has promised that he will give them a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill, and the Premier has said that the Opposition will do what

they can to prevent the measure becoming law. Do the Labour party think they are going to get any favours from the Premier? They will get a Bill like they got a Truck Act, but that is all. If the Labour party wish to get anything in the House, they must first obtain payment of members. We must also remember the action of the Premier when the question of adding a clause in the Mines Regulation Act was brought forward by me, so that no man should be allowed to work underground for more than eight hours a day. That was opposed by the Minister of Mines, and it was opposed by the Premier; but as soon as political pressure was brought to bear on the Premier by some of his supporters—

THE PREMIER: I do not think I ever opposed it. I did not oppose it.

MR. KINGSMILL: Not for long; perhaps half an hour.

MR. GREGORY: I think the Premier spoke against it, also the Minister of Mines and the Attorney General, and the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) spoke against it; but after tea the Premier came back into the House, and withdrew the whole of his opposition to the proposal.

MR. MORGANS: You have an imaginative mind.

THE PREMIER: It is simply imagination on your part.

MR. GREGORY: I know how I scored on that occasion, and how the Opposition side scored. Although the Premier said he could have beaten us on that occasion, he did not bring the matter to a vote.

THE PREMIER: I am sure I was not opposed to it.

MR. GREGORY: I am quite sure the Premier was opposed to it.

THE PREMIER: I might have said it was not necessary.

MR. GREGORY: That is only one instance of the way in which the Premier has turned round. Look at the question of Federation. Every attempt was made to prevent the Commonwealth Bill going to the people. We had a strong federalist petition sent to the House, signed by 23,000 adults of the colony, and how was that treated? It was tossed into the waste-paper basket. But greater pressure was brought to bear by a petition of 23,000 people, which was sent to the home authorities, and when the Premier

saw the great force behind this question, he left his followers in the lurch and came round to the federalist side. One thing I feel very satisfied about: no matter how great the result was to us, we certainly give very little credit to those who turned round at the last moment.

THE PREMIER: Many people give us lots of credit.

MR. GREGORY: In my district the electors supported my view by 3,600 votes, but in the right hon. gentleman's constituency there was a minority in favour of the Bill.

THE PREMIER: At Kalgoorlie they said they did not know you, when I mentioned your name.

MR. VOSPER: They know you too well.

MR. GREGORY: I am very pleased the Premier came back from the goldfields with a good impression. He said that he saw ten thousand people there, and he did not see a single umbrella amongst the whole ten thousand.

MR. A. FORREST: I had an umbrella.

MR. GREGORY: On the question of recognising the railway associations, the Premier turned over one of his old colleagues, a gentleman whom I could not have supported, because I believe in the recognition of the railway employees, and if the question had been brought before the House I should have voted against that Minister. This matter has been growing for the last eighteen months, and has been referred to in the Press for the last six months very repeatedly; yet we hear it stated that the Premier knew nothing about it. In fact, he did not know anything about it until he saw there was a great political pressure behind; and as soon as he saw that, he deserted his colleagues and exerted all his power to keep himself on the Treasury benches. When the ten-feet regulation was agitating the public mind, we also heard the Premier knew nothing about that matter; but when he saw ten thousand people on the goldfields determined to assert their rights, and also saw a few umbrellas, we found his colleague very soon left the Government, and now holds the position of Agent General. It is said the Opposition object to the public works policy of the Government. We do object to the gross extravagance which is going on, and this extravagance I hope to assist in checking

in a small way, because I do not pretend to understand thoroughly the finances of the country. Indeed, I am really afraid very few members in the House can say they thoroughly understand the finances, but if my figures are correct, the country is in a very peculiar position. In the Railway Department, if there had been less extravagance, a great many more miles of railway could have been constructed; but it is useless going over the old ground. Nearly every member is aware of the gross extravagance in connection with the buildings along railway lines; and if these buildings had been left out of the Government policy, a great many more miles of railways could have been constructed in the country. We ought to encourage cheap railway lines in every way, because nothing can be better for outlying districts.

MR. PIESSE : Cheap and nasty.

MR. GREGORY : The very best railway in the colony is the "cheapest and nastiest," namely the Kalgoorlie-Boulder line; but where there is a bad system, and the Government are robbed daily by the employees—

THE PREMIER : Robbed by whom?

MR. GREGORY : By the employees.

THE PREMIER : Surely not.

MR. MORGANS : What would the railway men say at the allegation that they are robbing their employers?

MR. GREGORY : When I travel on the railways I can see where small mistakes occur, and that the Government are being robbed of a very large amount by the present method of issuing tickets on the line I have mentioned. In the whole course of the Kalgoorlie-Boulder line, although thousands travel over it on Saturdays and Saturday evenings, there is not one passenger platform; but at Goongahrie, where a passenger very rarely alights, the cost of the buildings and platform amounts to something under £6,000. That money is wasted, and I believe the same state of things exists right throughout the whole of the railways. Then there is the Menzies-Leonora railway. What line could be constructed to bring better revenue than that? The district has gone ahead by leaps and bounds, and an immense number of mines are at work, and while I have not bothered to get statistics in regard to the value of the work going on there, I am

sure money would have been available not only for this line but many others, had it not been for the maladministration and the gross extravagance of the present Government. As to maladministration, one need only point to the action of the Government in regard to the Perth Ice Company, the Nullagine Reward Claim, and the Premier's desertion of his colleagues. But no question has ever seemed to trouble the Premier except that of retaining political power. An hon. member said the other day he believed the Premier had nailed his flag to the mast with tin tacks; but my own opinion is that the Premier has nailed his flag to the mast with something much more slippery and greasy, something that will enable him to slip down the flag quite easily and run up another. When we are told in the Press that the Premier has told his followers they can throw out the public works proposals and all his Bills, and all he requires is that they shall keep him in power, it can be seen there is no such thing as a policy on the Government benches.

MR. MORGANS : The Premier never told his followers that.

MR. GREGORY : We have the affirmation of several members that the Premier did tell his followers that, and the Press asserts the same thing, and neither here nor in the Press have those statements been asserted to be incorrect. The object of the Opposition, according to some hon. members, is the Treasury benches; but even if that be the object I say it is a laudable ambition, and it would be a laudable ambition on the part of anybody to turn the present Government out of power, because we want pure administration under better electoral laws, and more equitable representation. The Government have always in a great degree stolen their policy from the Opposition, but it has only been when the Opposition could get pressure to bear from the members of the Government "corner" that any good has been obtained from the Government. The Government have tried their best to coerce members, not only on the Government side but on the Opposition side of the House; and when the Premier dares to ask me what action the people of my constituency will take towards me in regard to the public works policy, and more especially dares to ask a

new member what the people of Geraldton will say to his action, I can only describe such procedure as most unfair and unjust. But the Government go further and use the intimidation of a dissolution. That is too bad, and altogether unparliamentary and unprincipled. Knowing the Government as we do, how can we hesitate to blame them? What hon. member is there in the House who would not be able to hold the Treasury benches in the same manner as the Premier has done? In the last five years the Premier has had the spending of nearly twenty millions of public money, and if he has not been able to make friends of the constituencies and of supporters, he ought to have been. How can any hon. member think it right for the Premier to go to one portion of an electorate, and the Minister of Railways or the Minister of Mines to go to another portion and deal out "sops" *ad libitum* on the eve of a general election, especially with a strong Government nominee as a candidate? But the Premier and Government got their answer when the goldfields people elected an Opposition man—if there be any parties in another place—in the person of Mr. Sommers, by a large majority.

MR. MORGANS: Is that why you want to be in power; to give "sops"?

MR. GREGORY: We desire to be in power to protest against these "sops," and to point out how bad and unprincipled they are.

THE PREMIER: You do "protest too much, methinks."

MR. GREGORY: That is what I have often thought when I have heard the Premier proclaim so much about his honour; indeed one would think the Premier had posted on his door "Here is an honest man." In regard to the Perth Ice Company, that matter was settled and stated so in the Press on the day Parliament met, and, to my mind, that was a very hasty settlement. For the disclosures in connection with the Perth Ice Company we have not to thank the Government, because if it had not been for the *Sun*, a goldfields newspaper, I presume we would not have heard anything about the matter. I have been given to understand that complaints about the way in which the Ice Company were forwarding their goods had been made to the Railway Department

twelve months prior to the discovery of this offence which has been condoned; and this is a case in which, to my mind, the Government condoned a felony, because somebody must have issued the way-bills on which the goods were taken all the way from Perth to Menzies, going through station after station, and it is impossible to believe that many of the railway employees knew nothing about the matter. There must have been aiders and abettors amongst the railway employees, and persons responsible for the actions of the Perth Ice Company. I desire to say publicly, because the matter has previously been referred to publicly, that the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), who was acting chairman of the Ice Company at the time, attempted to "sack" or discharge the manager of the company the moment he heard of these disclosures, but he was foiled, and the first thing the hon. member did was to resign and withdraw entirely from his position. I do not think for a single moment the late Minister of Railways or the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) would have anything to do with such a nefarious action; but I blame the Government, because in a case in which many of the Premier's friends had been and were deeply interested, he had no right to allow an offence of the kind to be condoned. I know this condonation may have arisen from the Premier's good nature, and a desire to help those who had supported him in the past.

THE PREMIER: Not at all.

MR. GREGORY: In saying this I do not mean those who have supported him in the House, but others who have supported him outside, and I believe the action was taken more from good heart than a desire to condone an offence.

THE PREMIER: Do you mean the shareholders?

MR. GREGORY: The shareholders are responsible to a considerable extent.

THE PREMIER: The shareholders are responsible only for the amount of their shares: you cannot get more from them than the value of their shares.

MR. GREGORY: Action should have been taken in the public courts, and evidence produced to show exactly who was responsible, because the bad effect remains behind unless that is done, and

I regret the unseemly haste in which the matter was closed on the day Parliament met, because we would have liked some say in the matter.

MR. A. FORREST: The company had to find the money, and that is the reason there was delay.

MR. GREGORY: It would have been well to wait a little longer. Let us look at the difference in the treatment of railway employees, certain of whom must have known of these frauds. The member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) made a disclosure in the House, and an employee of the Railway Department, suspected of giving information to that member, was immediately dismissed the service.

MR. MORGANS: Quite right, too.

MR. GREGORY: This man was dismissed for making it public that certain frauds were going on, but other aiders and abettors of the frauds were allowed to continue in their positions, and I suppose it is more than possible they will get advancement. That is not the proper way; and on these facts alone we should be justified in seeking to destroy the Ministry, because in no other country in the world would a Government be left in power who had condoned such an offence as that committed by the Perth Ice Company. We have been promised that a Conciliation and Arbitration Bill will be brought before us, and I hope it will shortly be laid on the table. The second reading is already set down; but, so far, I have not been able to see the Bill; and I cannot understand how members can be expected to deal with the second reading of this Bill unless they are supplied with it three or four days beforehand. When the Bill does come before the House, I hope we shall see that all Government institutions are brought within the scope of the measure.

THE PREMIER: You have had such a lot of experience of that sort of thing in other countries!

MR. GREGORY: I hope the Government departments will be brought within its scope, and I intend to do my best to secure that. I have had some little experience of similar legislation in other countries; and I do not think that in many countries the Government would be able to flout the House as they have done here. Last year, a motion was

carried in this House that a commission be appointed to inquire into the administration of this colony's Police Department; and what have the Government done? The Premier says he does not think it necessary, and of course we are not to have the commission.

MR. MORAN: Why does not the House move again?

MR. GREGORY: I believe we shall move again; still, that is the way this House has been flouted. I should like to have seen in the Administrator's very lengthy Speech, which tells us all about the little schools and post-offices which are being erected, something about the trans-continental railway, and that the Government intend to take some action in this House, by motion or otherwise, to agree to the construction of that railway, provided the funds be found by the Commonwealth Parliament. I should like to see some such action, and I hope it will be taken. I wish to express my pleasure at the improvement which has taken place during the last twelve months in regard to hospital administration in this colony; but I thought the Government would have seen their way to grasp this question more thoroughly. It was manifestly unfair that persons in one part of the colony should have to contribute all, or the greater portion, of the upkeep of their hospitals, while in other parts the whole of the upkeep of hospitals is provided by the Government. I know it is a very difficult question to grasp, but we shall have to grasp it sooner or later; and I thought the Government would have brought forward this session a Bill dealing with public hospitals. Another proposal which might be well worthy the attention of the Government is that all the various pamphlets and papers issued by Government departments should have the cost of their production printed on the face of them. A lot of papers come into this House, and a very large expenditure is thereby incurred; and it would be well for the Government to insist that in future the total cost of the production of any papers should be printed thereon. I hope a select committee will be appointed to deal with certain cases which have come into notice during the last twelve months—to deal with the question of the Perth Ice Company, and with the Nullagine Reward Claim. These matters should

be thoroughly investigated, because we are very sick of what we look upon as mal-administration; and I hope they will be attended to. The main question on which I rose to speak to-night was in regard to this colony's finances. I wish particularly to ask that certain information be given to this House. We members here are representatives of constituencies, we are returned by the people, it is our duty to know as much as possible of the finances of the country, and I look upon it as the absolute duty of the Treasurer to take us fully into his confidence. In the past, he has not done so. It has been almost impossible for us to get a just and true idea of the total indebtedness of this country, and I hope the right hon. gentleman will give this House the information I am now seeking. The other day I gave notice of a question in this House, but it was altered to a notice of motion, and even though a reply had been promised this evening, I find that owing to the forms of this House I am debarred from asking that question. According to the information we have in our possession, our present indebtedness is £11,804,178, less the accrued sinking fund, which reduces the amount to £11,427,017. To this I would add £3,000,000 for works which have been authorised and for which money will be required out of our present authorisations. This additional sum will increase our indebtedness, without any further authorisations, to £14,500,000. We want the Premier to assure us that such is not the case, or to tell us what is the total amount that will be required to carry out those works. We want the Premier clearly to refute that statement: we want him to give us some idea when the works at present authorised will be completed. In the Administrator's Speech we are told with regard to the Coolgardie Water Scheme:

Already 24,000 pipes, equal to a length of 127 miles, have been made out of the 67,000 required for the whole work, and 15,000 have been distributed along the pipe line. It is estimated that in twelve months' time the whole of the pipes will be made and distributed; about a quarter of the pipes will be laid, the minor reservoirs at the pumping stations will be in hand, and the pumping machinery, which is to cost about £240,000, will be in course of erection. The date of the completion of this great national work is therefore not far distant.

When we are told that in another year a quarter of the pipes will be laid, are we to assume that all the pipes will be laid in four years from now, or that they will be laid in two years? Will the department lay three-fourths of the pipes in one more year? How is it that the engineer, when he computes the cost of all these different works, cannot give us in a Government paper an idea of when these works are likely to be completed? Then we should also like the Premier to tell us whether he admits that, when our present authorised works are carried out, our indebtedness will be £14,500,000. We should like to know what he estimates our population will be, and how he comes to his conclusion. Let us distinctly understand how we may ascertain what will be this colony's debt per head of the population. We should also like him clearly to point out to us how he is to get the additional £2,000,000 which will be required for the completion of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. At the present moment less than £600,000 has been expended on this scheme, and we are told it will cost over £2,500,000. We should like to know when and how this additional £2,000,000 is going to be obtained. We should like to know also whether the £500,000 worth of rolling-stock authorised has already been purchased and paid for, and how much of that £754,000 of the old authorisation from 1896 has been ear-marked for other works, and how much is available for the works the Premier has now in hand? From what I can ascertain, the Premier had authorisation for £7,780,000, and out of that he has raised £7,511,848, leaving him only £268,152 to carry on some £3,000,000 worth of works. To this, however, must be added £979,635 which we are told, the Premier has in hand. How is that amount made up? How much of it is in stores, and how much of these stores is available for the carrying out of those works? That is what this House would like to know. We do not want to know that the Government have some obsolete locomotives, or some stores bought for altogether different works, and which will never be useful. Possibly some £300,000 worth of old stock is put down here as a credit balance. We want to know whether that £300,000 worth of stores will be available for the carrying

out of the works which are authorised. In addition to this, there has to be found a sum of £956,000. This amount has been reappropriated from works authorised by the 1896 Parliament; and, so far as I can make out from published records, I think the Government will have to find, for the completion of the works already authorised, from £3,000,000 to £3,500,000 more money; yet, in the face of that, the Premier asks us to agree to further loan expenditure. I say we are quite justified in protesting, until the Premier takes us into his fullest confidence; and if he can show us that the actual state of affairs is not so bad as appears on the surface, the Opposition may possibly have to retract many hard things they have said about the Premier's policy. [MR. MORGANS: Hear, hear.] I do not think the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) would say "hear, hear," if he thought we should have to spend another £3,500,000 on the completion of those works. If things are as bad as they appear to be, I think we shall find we are in a really serious position, and I am satisfied the Premier will feel very pleased if, when the next Parliament is elected, he is relieved of the responsibility of carrying on the finances of the country.

MR. MORGANS: Everything is right.

MR. MORAN: The second Treasurer says everything is right.

MR. MORGANS: Do not worry.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I have thought it desirable to take the first opportunity of speaking on the Address-in-reply, in order that I may give some information to hon. members in regard to that matter which seems to be concerning them most, namely the financial position of the colony. [SEVERAL MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] As far as I have been able to gather from the speeches of hon. members opposite, especially the members for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) and the Canning (Mr. Wilson), also the members for Beverley (Mr. Harper) and East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), the action they have taken in moving that this House has no longer any confidence in the Ministry is prompted by a belief that the finances of this colony are in an unsatisfactory condition, and that even the small expenditure contemplated during this financial year, as set forth in

His Excellency's Speech, gives cause for alarm not only to hon. members, but also to the people of the country. That is a very serious matter, and if hon. members really believe the colony is, or is likely to be, in financial difficulties, I do not know of anything more important to them, and to everyone of us. Personally, I think some other means might have been taken rather than the action which was taken to obtain information in regard to this matter. It would have been better to obtain the information which I shall give hon. members this evening, rather than to rush in without that information, and to at once assume that there is something very unsatisfactory in the condition of the colony, so unsatisfactory indeed as to merit the instant dismissal of Ministers. I do not think the procedure adopted will do any good to the people of this country; because it seems to assume as facts, and to publish far and wide through the world, beliefs which, as I shall be able to show before I sit down, are based on absolutely erroneous information, or are the mere imaginings of persons who know very little—I will give them credit for knowing little, because I should say something harsher if I thought they knew more—of knowing very little of the financial position of Western Australia.

MR. WILSON: Why did you not give the information?

THE PREMIER: The hon. member asked why I did not give the information. I do not want to be taken off my line of argument. I say it was his duty to ask for information, before making the speech he did the other day and publishing throughout Australia and throughout the world that Western Australia is in an unsatisfactory financial position, thus doing injury not only to the colony, but to himself and everyone who lives in it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: These are your own figures.

THE PREMIER: We have had that trial of strength, and I am glad to say the Government still have sufficient power to repel these quickly concerted attacks. I call them quickly concerted attacks, because they are not based upon knowledge, as I will be able to show before I sit down. I hope that as we have had a trial of strength, hon. members will, after the observations which I shall make to-night, be satisfied to get on with the

business of the country, because we have plenty to do and very little time in which to accomplish it. I regret to say I do not believe that the fear as to the financial position of this colony and the desire to exercise economy were the lever which actuated members. If that had been the object of those members who spoke and voted with the Opposition in the division on Thursday last, if they were honestly desirous of preventing public works from being proceeded with solely on economical grounds, they would, I think, have taken a different course from the one they adopted. Without asking for information and for knowledge, they immediately set themselves to work to displace the Government. There will be plenty of opportunity during the session to deal with the various items of expenditure as they arise.

MR. MORAN : That is a political dodge.

THE PREMIER : There will be plenty of opportunity during the session to deal with any financial matters as they arise; and if this House in its wisdom thinks that any work proposed by the Government is unnecessary and that it is undesirable to undertake that at the present time, members will have an opportunity of saying so. It will be for the Government then, as it always has been and always will be, to take the course they think they ought to adopt in regard to any action of this House. But if, as I said before, the only desire was for economy and the economical administration of affairs, a good deal of argument will be required to convince me that the course taken was the only one and the right one to take. Members opposite knew very well they were in a minority in this House, as they always have been, I am glad to say. Perhaps they are in a worse position at the present time than ever before, because they only had fourteen votes, bringing all they could to the poll.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Once we numbered only three.

THE PREMIER : Oh ! Well, you have got on a bit since then ; but at any rate you are very weak now.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Why ?

THE PREMIER : I do not know why. If you ask me, I say it is because the people have no faith in you. Members of the Opposition have tried to get the assistance of some members on this

(Government) side of the House. Far be it from me to say anything disrespectful of the two members who voted with them on Thursday last ; but I must say it was a very strange, in fact I might call it a rather unholy alliance. The question of federation was imported into the debate. Two members on this (Government) side of the House were anti-federalists, who fought manfully, boldly, and straightforwardly against federation throughout the country, by visiting many parts of the colony ; and because I did not take exactly the same course as they adopted in regard to the matter, they seemed to desire on this occasion to support those who were the head and front of the federal movement.

MR. MORAN : That never entered into my consideration for a moment. You know you are unfair.

THE PREMIER : I will not be unfair.

MR. MORAN : Stick to the finances.

THE PREMIER : I will speak of the finances by and by, but I am dealing with you now. When the history of the federal movement in this colony is written, if my action with regard to it is ever referred to or carefully referred to, it will never be said of me that I deviated from the straight path of the federalist, except in the direction of trying to get fair terms.

MR. MORAN : It will all depend on the writer of the history.

THE PREMIER : The only thing that can be said about me is that, having been a federalist since 1888, having attended the Federal Conventions, having signed that document which you all know about, the Premiers' document in Melbourne, having returned here and studied the matter as closely as I could and associated with all my old friends here, I tried in their interests, and as I believe in the interests of the colony, to get better terms for Western Australia ; and having failed to get those better terms, through the action of members opposite to a very large extent, I then returned to the path from which I had justly deviated, as I considered, in the interests of this country. I found voting with the Opposition the other evening my two hon. friends who were anti-federalist to the backbone.

MR. MORAN : No ; a federalist just like you.

THE PREMIER: They were anti-federalists in this great campaign, and a few weeks after that campaign I see them associating with members opposite who, in their opinion and I think in the opinion of most people, did a great deal towards winning federation for Western Australia. One would have thought that if those members were of opinion that I sinned a bit in going back to the straight line after deviating—I did not keep on deviating—they would at any rate have given me credit for good intentions. At all events, I was not such a sinner as members opposite, with whom those two members associated themselves the other evening. It is no use saying the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) was not actuated by the action he had taken on federation. We know very well he was.

MR. HARPER: By your action on federation.

THE PREMIER: My action only? Very well, if it be so. The hon. member has lost confidence in me because I did not follow him entirely; because, having somewhat deviated, and tried to help him a little and those who supported him in this colony, I did not go the whole way. The hon. member finds himself to-day in a very largely outnumbered minority in this colony. The member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) is the head and front of this little "Cave of Adullam": a very small cave, but a cave which has given me a lot of trouble. He has had the very willing assistance of my friend the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), who is something like Mr. Micawber, being anxious for something to turn up, and he does not care what it is if it suits him. Those two anti-federalists have allied themselves to the federalists opposite—with those who have opposed the agricultural interest in this country for years and years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have not.

THE PREMIER: With members who have called the agricultural community the "pig-and-potato men." A gentleman sitting on the front Opposition bench never tires of insulting the agricultural community of this country by calling them the "pig-and-potato men."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He is not here now.

THE PREMIER: I do not care twopence whether he is here: he ought to

be. I say he has time after time grossly insulted the agricultural community of this country, and myself and those who have supported me, by calling them "pig-and-potato men." That is a man the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) and the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) now associate themselves with. I am surprised at the two members. I should have given them credit for a little more foresight. Cannot they see that members opposite are only making use of them for their own purposes? The very mole is less blind than they.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What are you making use of?

THE PREMIER: I can only say that those members will see whether I am a false prophet. If they get into a close alliance with members opposite, and stick to them, they will see where they are going to be led to.

MR. HARPER: There is an "if," though.

THE PREMIER: There is a motion of which notice has been given by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), and perhaps members opposite will vote for it. I myself do not think they will. I believe they will seek to amend it, though I believe there was an understanding that if the hon. member would vote for the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition, they would support his motion.

MR. GREGORY: Whom have you sent round for this?

THE PREMIER: I only make the statement. If it is not correct, I shall say no more about it.

MR. MORAN: You are only "fishing," now.

THE PREMIER: There was an understanding that if the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) would support the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition, the Opposition would support the motion of the member for East Coolgardie.

MR. MORAN: Is the hon. member in order in referring to a debate or motion not yet before the House?

THE SPEAKER: I do not think there is any harm in referring to it, but it cannot be discussed.

THE PREMIER: I do not think I am out of order. I am only making my point, and it is of no use for the hon.

member to interrupt me. I want members to know what they are going to do.

A MEMBER: The Premier is going to frighten them a bit.

THE PREMIER: They are going to support a motion that, owing to the great alteration which is about to take place in the constitutional life of the country—and we will admit that we are going to have some change in the constitutional life of the country—

MR. MORAN: Mr. Speaker, I must again ask your ruling. Is not this debating the terms of the motion?

THE PREMIER: I am not going to debate it, but I wish to refer to it. I can put it in other words, if I like.

MR. MORAN: Do, then.

THE PREMIER: The next assertion is that the alteration will affect most materially the financial condition and resources of the colony. Those members opposite who have done their best and worked hard for federation—and I give them all credit for it—are going to join the hon. member in saying that federation will adversely affect this colony: they are going to say federation will adversely affect the financial position and resources of Western Australia! If federation will do that, then I say I hope hon. members pointed that out to the electors when they were advocating federation. The Opposition agreed to support the motion now to be brought forward, in return for support given by the member for East Coolgardie to the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition. I do not think they will do that, because it would put them in too foolish a position.

MR. GREGORY: I want to raise a point of order. I desire to say no such arrangement was made.

THE PREMIER: You are really not leader yet: you may be some day, but until you are you have no right to speak for your party. I want to make this point: If federation is going to adversely affect the financial position of the colony, how can hon. members opposite support the motion?

MR. WILSON: Why do you?

THE PREMIER: I do not believe it will.

MR. MORAN: You said it would.

THE PREMIER: When?

MR. MORAN: A thousand times.

THE PREMIER: I was trying to get better terms for this colony, and no doubt I used all the arguments I could. I do not believe federation will for any length of time, certainly not for the first year or two, affect the financial position of the colony. I want to make this point: the Opposition will "go back" on the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran): they will never support him in his motion because it would be a disgrace to any number of men, after advocating with all their strength and power the question of federation, to join in this motion which says that federation is going to materially affect the finances of the country. The Opposition will not give him their strength because no man could vote for such a motion after so strongly advocating federation.

MR. MORAN: How do you know the motion is going to be moved at all?

THE PREMIER: I do not know, and I should not be surprised if it were withdrawn.

MR. MORAN: You sent round several ambassadors about it.

THE PREMIER: I did not.

MR. MORAN: They came direct to me: you did yourself.

THE PREMIER: The Opposition will never support you unless they alter the motion to suit themselves.

MR. MORAN: That may be.

THE PREMIER: But that is not the bargain they entered into.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You run your own show: we will run ours.

MR. MORAN: What about these finances? No more "herrings."

THE PREMIER: The member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) has, I believe, lost confidence in me—he told us so in the House, so there is no breach of confidence in saying he has lost confidence in me—why? Because of my action in regard to federation. I would like to ask him and those he represents, if any reasonable person can believe that the existing duties on produce would have lasted longer without federation than with it. After all the cry in the country, and no matter what people may say to the contrary, the cry of the anti-federalists and the producers has been "the duties." They have not cared about the power to make laws in the Federal Government, nor about social matters—

these have not affected the rural people of the country anything like to the same extent as the duties have. It has been the fear of the duties on agricultural and other produce being removed.

MR. HARPER: And the loss of revenue.

THE PREMIER: I do not think the farmers looked into the financial question as it affected the Treasury, but as it affected themselves.

MR. MORAN: That is very rough on them.

THE PREMIER: I say that nine people out of every ten do the same. Does a person oppose a railway which will go by his land? I have not come across those high-minded, upright people, those people who go in the sky, as the hon. member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) has. I think people are a little bit practical in this world, and look at matters as they affect their own interests. Would these duties be continued if we did not get federation? I tell hon. members that there is a far better chance of the farmers retaining the duties under federation than without it.

MR. HARPER: There is no chance now.

THE PREMIER: I think there is a great chance. What are the Opposition going to give the hon. member? Who will give him a chance? Not the people he supported the other evening, but hon. members on this side.

MR. HARPER: You will turn round yourself.

THE PREMIER: I shall not. I have promised, and I shall keep faith with the producers of the country; but if the hon. member expects the Opposition to do so, he will make a mistake. The hon. member knows that had it not been for the strong party represented in the House by myself to-day, the duties would have gone long ago—he knows that very well; and the hon. members opposite whose platform is free-trade and no duties at all, those gentlemen whom the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) and the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) supported, are not the farmers' friends. Yet those are the people the hon. member allies himself with.

MR. HARPER: We cannot trust you.

THE PREMIER: That is more rude than just.

MR. MORAN: No matter how rude you are, be just. You cannot help being rude.

THE PREMIER: I am going to keep faith with the people. I do not go about the place afraid to give my opinions: I leave that to the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), who has never given an opinion in this House he has not been able to get out of. I shall keep faith with the people of the country, and allow the duties to disappear gradually under the terms of the Commonwealth Act. I am prepared to fight the battle throughout the country and amongst the electors, if that necessity arises. We shall have for three and a half years those duties, and I tell the hon. member (Mr. Harper) that if he had defeated federation, if that crime which he charges me with had not been committed, he would not have had the food duties for six months: they would have been swept clean away. With the assistance and good faith of the members whom I see on this side, we shall do our best to prevent the duties being swept away altogether; we shall do our best to keep faith with the people of the country. I told the electors of Bunbury, who were not very friendly at that time, "You have a better chance of having the duties prolonged for three or four years by adopting federation than if you defeat federation. By defeating federation you will not get any duties at all: they will be swept away in less than a year." I have something more to say about the hon. member.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The strong should be merciful.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member, in one of the speeches he made in the country, and which we were all glad to read or listen to, told the people that he was willing to forego all duties on everything else except flour, wheat, and chaff—I think those were the articles—all other duties could be swept away. His own district was to be protected—the district that produces these articles was to receive this protection: the other duties were to go, anywhere; they were to "go by the board." This is the producers' friend!

MR. GREGORY: Are you referring to the Commissioner of Crown Lands, because he said the same?

THE PREMIER: I am referring to the member for Beverley.

MR. MORAN: But the Commissioner of Crown Lands said so too.

THE PREMIER: I am not dealing with the Commissioner of Crown Lands—he has not attacked me: I am dealing with the member for Beverley, the friend of the farmers, the friend of the Murray and Wellington districts; but the hon. member would let the farmers of Bunbury and Sussex and Nelson shift for themselves. All the other products could “go by the board,” but the duties on wheat, flour, and chaff should be preserved. Did narrowness and self-interest ever go further than that? Did anyone ever hear anything so narrow-minded or self-interested as that? The whole energies of the hon. member are not in the interests of the farmers at all, but in the interests of his own constituency.

MR. HARPER: Is not wheat grown anywhere else?

THE PREMIER: There are other districts where wheat is grown—your district and other districts like yours. I have done with the hon. member. I have pointed out how the attitude the hon. member has taken up is not in the interests of the people he pretends to befriend. The hon. member may be misguided, but that he has acted foolishly in the interests of the farmers I have not the slightest doubt. I come to another branch of the question on which I desire to address hon. members—I will come to the finances by and by. I say at once that I do not propose to reply to the detailed statements made by the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) as to the Railway Department. I could not do that if I tried: it would take more time than I have at my disposal to fish out and ransack the departments to find out whether this statement or that was based on fact or not. If the hon. member was in earnest and he had any desire for the public good, if his desire is to assist the administration and to have evil-doers punished, then I will help the hon. member, and I offer him my assistance in getting a select committee to look into these matters which he has referred to. I have no desire, I can assure hon. members and the people of the country, to shield wrong-doers. If any officer in a department is charged with wrong-doing, or with even making errors, the only duty I feel I have to that officer is to see that he gets fair-play; to see that he will be heard in his own defence before he is

condemned. Whether it is the humblest man in the service or the highest, if he is charged by the member for East Fremantle with wrong-doing, I will assist the officer in getting a select committee in order that he may have an opportunity of answering the charge face to face with the hon. member. I may say, however, that these periodical attacks without asking for this inquiry strike at the root of discipline, and cause a bad feeling throughout the service. They tend to insubordination, and they scatter throughout Western Australia and far beyond our limits the idea that we have a civil service or a Railway Department composed of officers who are fleecing the country. The hon. member who makes these charges year by year wants an *ex parte* statement from the Minister to deny these charges which, after all, are only *ex parte*. The hon. member never asks for any further inquiry, and next year another big batch of charges comes along. A great injury is done to the service, a great injury is done to the department, and a great injury is done to the public of this country in this way. Members of Parliament have great privileges, and with those great privileges they have great responsibilities; and Parliament should not, except in great emergencies and with great care, be used to libel people or take away their characters. It is just as necessary for members of Parliament to be careful in using scandalous words as it is for a member of the public. In justice to his own conscience, a member of Parliament is, in this respect, under as great a responsibility as any man in the street. In fact, a member of Parliament is under greater responsibility, because what he says is reported, and however wrong he may be, or however capable of explanation his charges may be, his statements do irremediable damage to the Government, to honourable public servants, and to members of the public. Look at the matter from the public servants' point of view, and see what is done by a member who makes such statements and charges. Vital injury is done to public servants, who have nothing but their good name and reputation for honour and integrity. They have small salaries, saving perhaps a little; and, if their good name be taken away, they lose their dearest possession.

MR. MONGER: And the man who has made these dirty remarks is absent this evening.

THE PREMIER: I shall now refer to remarks by the member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) on the Treasury accounts. In regard to these accounts the hon. member made some most insulting charges and observations, all of which, however, can be easily explained, the circumstances in no way deserving his strictures. The hon. member might have asked questions first and obtained information on which to base his charges; but

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!

and the hon. member rushed into a financial statement and endeavoured to make out that the Government have, in common parlance, "cooked" the accounts. Now, the public accounts are published at the end of every quarter, and also at the end of every year in exactly the same terms: there is no difference between the quarterly and the yearly accounts. The hon. member referred to £16,460 shown as a credit to the Treasury under the head of "Paymaster of the Railways," and at once jumped to the conclusion that the amount ought to have been paid in June, whereas it was shown as a credit to the Treasurer, and he could not understand how it could be a credit. Had the hon. member gone to any bank manager or other person accustomed to keep accounts, he could easily have ascertained the information he required; but he did not take that course, and went on to say that the accounts were "cooked," and to make other rude observations. I would point out that this £16,460 was money paid by the Treasurer by the end of June, and not having been recouped, it was a credit to the Treasurer. If hon. members look through the public accounts they will find the same item time after time every quarter, sometimes large and sometimes small in amount; and it represents the last fortnight's pay of the year, which neither last year nor any other year has been charged; and when I tell hon. members the reason why, they will, I think, say it is a good reason. There is always some overlapping in public accounts, as in everyone's accounts. The Government receive a vote from the Legislative Assembly for the wages of the year, and

we pay the wages for the year. I had a deficit last year, and I did not want to pay anything more than I was compelled to, but rather to get rid of the deficit. Every employee is paid fifty-two weeks' wages, and when confronted with a deficit, it is easy to understand I did not want to pay fifty-four weeks' wages; and we paid the men the same last year as we did the year before, and the same as we have done for years and years. We have always carried on two weeks, and unless I have more money than I know what to do with, I will not pay more than fifty-two weeks' wages in a year, especially when I am confronted with a deficit. In regard to the gold exhibit for the Paris Exhibition, put down at £12,877, that was gold purchased and now at Paris, and in the meantime it is a credit to the Treasury, seeing that when we sell the gold we can recoup ourselves. In regard to the £22,157 for the expenses of the Transvaal Contingents, the Government have paid this sum, and have not received back vouchers, the amounts not having been allocated. The amount allocated is, I suppose, about £6,000, whereas the £22,157 is additional, and has not been allocated, but a great deal of it belongs to the Imperial Government, and the accounts are only just now being concluded. Of the £22,157, some £13,000 is being claimed from the Imperial Government, and the other will be paid monthly during the year until the Contingents return. Hon. members seem to think the Treasury is so elastic that £50,000 or £60,000 can be paid away without any vote, for purposes which have never been before the Legislative Assembly. My idea is that this is too much to expect from any Treasury, and the money obtained from the general advance account should be distributed monthly throughout the year. The main reason why it was not paid was that only £8,000 or £9,000 belonged to this Government, the other belonging to the Imperial Government, and the accounts have not been analysed; but the balance due will be recouped. These are the matters the member for East Fremantle referred to, and they are matters which occur every day in accounts, and are dealt with by the Treasury in the customary way. The carelessness of the hon. member is shown, because without any inquiry whatever, he gets up in his place

and makes wild and rambling charges reflecting on the integrity and honour of everyone; and while making terrible charges against officers of long-standing, experience, and probity, he laughs all the while as if it were a good joke to take away the characters of good honest people, or at any rate to try his best to do so. I want to give the hon. member the last dig—the last word—and then leave him. His action shows he has not an educated mind, and he allows his uneducated mind to run riot; and it would do him a great deal of good to learn something of the world, and of the civilities and courtesies common amongst men of the present day.

MR. KINGSMILL: He has no chance in this House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This is not a very good school.

MR. WILSON: He has caused a lot of discussion, anyhow.

THE PREMIER: Now I come to the part of my remarks which, perhaps, are most interesting, at any rate to the people of the colony. I want first to point out that the object of the members of the Opposition, as set forth in the words of their leader, and also the object of my friends, the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) and the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), in their own words is to prevent the continuance of public works at the present time.

MR. MORAN: You are absolutely wrong. I never said anything of the sort.

THE PREMIER: That is the outcome of the motion, of which the hon. member has given notice. The words are "That no new public work should be authorised this session, and that no work already authorised and not in progress shall be commenced."

MR. MORAN: Yes.

THE PREMIER: That means all works.

MR. MORAN: Does it? There are only about £3,000,000 for the Coolgardie Water Scheme left to you yet.

THE PREMIER: The motion covers the Leonora railway, the Goomalling railway, and the Nannine railway.

MR. MORAN: It does not cover the Goomalling railway.

THE PREMIER: I will take two of the works, anyhow. The notice of motion covers the Norseman railway.

MR. MORAN: That is right.

THE PREMIER: Now we know what the hon. member wants.

MR. MORAN: I will keep you right.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member's object, and also the object of the Opposition in the words of their leader, is to prevent the construction of new public works.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Until the people have had a voice in the matter.

THE PREMIER: The notice of motion covers any new public works, and I want to point out that there are really only two or three such works. If the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) wishes the Goomalling railway to be considered as commenced, I must say the people there want the line carried further than is authorised at the present time. There are, after all, only three works to which the hon. member refers.

MR. MORAN: Five works.

THE PREMIER: The Leonora railway, Nannine railway, Norseman railway—what are the others?

MR. MORAN: The metropolitan districts water supply.

THE PREMIER: The metropolitan water scheme has not been submitted yet.

MR. MORAN: Do not talk, then: you are only bluffing the country.

THE PREMIER: What is the other work?

MR. MORAN: The Fremantle dock.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member wants, at any rate, to put an end to the Leonora railway, the Nannine railway, and the Fremantle dock—these are the three works he is desirous of preventing the Government going on with.

MR. MORAN: No; I mentioned two other works besides.

THE PREMIER: I will not admit that the metropolitan districts water scheme is a work the Government intend to carry out now.

MR. MORAN: This is a piece of bluff.

THE PREMIER: Call it a piece of "bluff," if you like, but we wish to consult hon. members and see what is best to be done; and I, for one, do not think everything necessary to carrying out the metropolitan districts water supply can be done at once.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You should have explained that.

THE PREMIER: I have already explained.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You did not explain it at the time you spoke.

THE PREMIER: I am now pointing out the works which some hon. members do not want carried out.

MR. MORAN: That is your game.

THE PREMIER: These works are the Leonora line, the Norseman line, the Nannine line, and the Fremantle dock. Now we know where we are; and I am much obliged to the hon. member (Mr. Moran), and also to hon. members opposite; for we are all on safe ground now, and we know exactly where we are.

MR. MORAN: Do not mix me up with the Opposition.

THE PREMIER: These are the four works which the members for Beverley (Mr. Harper) and East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) desire to stop.

MR. MORAN: That is right.

THE PREMIER: I wish to say that all those works have been authorised and approved by both Houses of Parliament.

MR. HARPER: In different circumstances.

THE PREMIER: I wish to say that most distinctly.

MR. MORAN: You are wrong.

THE PREMIER: True; I should except the Norseman railway, which was authorised by this House only. I beg the hon. member's pardon. That work was lost by one vote in another place; but all the other works have been authorised by both Houses.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. You said that before.

THE PREMIER: Yes; but I want to say it again. Now I think this is a valuable piece of information which I have obtained from the member for East Coolgardie, and I have no doubt the same idea also animates the mind of the member for Beverley, that these three or four works are the ones they wish to prevent our commencing; and perhaps the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) will tell us whether these are the works he has in his mind. He told us he did not want the Nannine railway constructed as projected, that he did not want it to go to Tuckanarra or to any other 'arra. When he spoke the other day, he said he did not believe in

these or any other railways being carried out by this Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We wanted another Government to carry them out.

THE PREMIER: You wanted another Government to carry them out; but the hon. member will recollect, and everyone else must realise, that there cannot be another Government to carry them out until after the general election; and therefore I say, if we do not have a dissolution—as hon. members seem to think I have threatened a dissolution, I say, suppose we do not have one—hon. members opposite, if they came into office, could scarcely carry out, during the life of this Parliament and without a reference to the people, works of which they had disapproved; and therefore the necessary Bills would not pass, I suppose, till say October of next year, and then the money would have to be procured and the rails imported: so it would be the end of 1901, or perhaps some time in 1902, before this railway to Nannine could be commenced, before the Leonora railway could be proceeded with, and before the Norseman railway could be carried on for one mile from Coolgardie, or even surveyed. That is the prospect I wish them to look forward to. I wish personally to understand, and to let hon. members understand, and to let the people of the country know exactly, what those members opposed to me are driving at, so that there shall be no misunderstanding.

MR. GEORGE: They know what you are driving at—to keep in office.

MR. WILSON: Who has kept back the Nannine railway?

THE PREMIER: I suppose the present Government; but I say I do not want to keep it back any longer.

MR. KINGSMILL: I think it was reappropriation that kept it back.

THE PREMIER: And hon. members opposite desire to keep it back a little longer. I take all the responsibility for not proceeding with the Nannine railway up to the present time; but I will take no responsibility for delaying its construction in the future.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is fair; but you will take the responsibility up to date?

THE PREMIER: I will take the responsibility up till the end of last session.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have had the money.

MR. GEORGE: What does the responsibility mean?

MR. DOHERTY: What you do not possess.

THE PREMIER: Speaking politically, I am sorry to say I do not for a moment believe the hon. members I have mentioned have been actuated by any desire for economy. That is simply a subterfuge—a political subterfuge, of course—and a dodge for party purposes; and, as I said before, it is mixed up a good deal, as far as my good friends here (on Government cross-benches) are concerned, with disappointment and chagrin at being defeated on the question of federation. They must have someone of whom to make a scapegoat, to be sent into the wilderness with all the sins of the federalists on his head; and they thought they had better get me, and put on me all the sins of the federalists and send me into the desert. My two hon. friends (Mr. Harper and Mr. Moran) thought that was the best thing to do: they must have someone to blame and to find fault with, and instead of blaming those who, perhaps, are just as responsible as I have been, and who perhaps, in the opinion of those two members, have not acted any better than I, they put all the sins upon my head, and desire to cast me adrift and drive me into the wilderness.

MR. GEORGE: "Ichabod!" thy glory hath departed.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

THE PREMIER: I say the Government have been very much misrepresented in regard to their works programme. Everyone has been saying we have a long programme of new public works which we wish to foist on the country; whereas there is only one work, the Norseman railway—and that has been approved of by this House—which has not received the assent and the approval of both Houses of Parliament. I again say, if this late motion of censure had been a genuine motion, if hon. members had really desired economy, they would never have taken the step they took, but would have dealt with these matters, as they will have a full opportunity of doing and as they will have the right to do, on their merits when they come before this

House. But they are afraid these works will be passed: they are afraid that even the Norseman railway will be passed in this House, and in another place too—they are afraid of that; and therefore they think it is better to embark upon a general vote of want-of-confidence in the Government, rather than risk defeat on the separate items of works. And another thing: they do not want these works to be particularised; they do not want, for instance, to be obliged to vote against the Nannine railway. The hon. member opposite (Mr. Illingworth) does not want to vote against that railway; the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) does not want to vote against the Leonora railway or the Norseman railway. They would rather have a general vote, so that no one would know exactly what they meant by voting.

MR. MORAN: That is the way to put it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why not look at the constitutional procedure?

THE PREMIER: Pardon me: we will ask questions directly. I say that is the reason why members of the Opposition desired to defeat the Government on the general issue. Those hon. members know very well the people of the country will resent their action in regard to these public works; and, therefore, when we come face to face with these works proposals, as I hope we shall, when the Leonora railway comes before us on the Loan Estimates with a vote for further consideration, I should like to see the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) voting against it. Let him do so! And I am afraid my friend there (Mr. Illingworth), although I do not think his constituents very much desire his line to go on, does not like the idea of voting against the railway he has advocated so often and so strenuously in this House.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And which you did not construct when you had the money.

THE PREMIER: If we had not the money now, if we were in *extremis*, if there were financial difficulties surrounding us on every side, then I would give great credit and all honour to the hon. member for thinking first of the country and not of his own constituency; but I shall be able to show him directly that such is not the case; I shall be able to show that the colony is in a thoroughly

sound and solvent condition : that, in fact, is the task I am going to set before me to-night, and I will presently ask the Speaker to leave the Chair, so that I may come to it refreshed. The task I have set myself to-night is, not to prove that the colony is insolvent, not to prove that there are financial difficulties : I am going to try to prove to hon. members and to the people of this country that we owe scarcely any money at all.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Then we will go for the transcontinental railway.

THE PREMIER : And if I do not prove it up to the hilt—if I do not prove that this country is in a thoroughly solvent condition, and that we owe nothing, or scarcely anything at all—then I shall be quite willing to hear the criticisms which hon. members may desire to make in regard to what I have said.

MR. VOSPER : Better have the refreshment first.

At 6-25, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

THE PREMIER (continuing) : When we adjourned an hour ago, I had reached that part of my speech which dealt particularly with the public debt of the colony and the soundness of our financial position. Before I enter upon that, I should like to again place before members and the people of the colony the works that are mentioned in His Excellency's Speech, and the works which the Opposition, as stated by the member for Central Murchison and also the members for East Coolgardie and Beverley, object to being carried out at the present time. First, there is the Leonora railway, for which £60,000 was passed last year in a Loan Bill. The survey for that has been completed, or is about completed, and the rails have been ordered. There is nothing to prevent the work being taken in hand almost immediately. The Opposition and the members for Beverley and East Coolgardie wish that railway not to be proceeded with. When I spoke on the alleged no-confidence amendment I pointed out the position of that railway, and the great advantage it would be to the Mount Margaret district ; I pointed out the large quantity of gold being produced there ; and to show you the

importance of that district I may mention a fact referred to by my hon. colleague the Colonial Secretary (Hon. G. Raudell) in the Legislative Council. I have not the exact figures, but it was something of this sort, that the present single telegraph wire which runs from Menzies to Niagara, and by Yerilla, Murrin Murrin, and Mount Malcolm—a rather circuitous route—on to Lawlers, and is now on the way to Lake Way, is not able to carry the telegraphic traffic that comes to it. When this matter was referred to me and it was asked that another wire should be erected from Niagara to Mount Malcolm so as to divide the traffic, I was somewhat sceptical. I asked what amount of traffic was carried over this telegraph line between Menzies and Mount Malcolm, and all the country to the east and north of Menzies. To my surprise and great delight I found that at the present time the number of messages from Menzies onward is at the rate of 136,000 a year, and that the revenue derived from that telegraph line is at the rate of £5,000 a year. I think the amount is £5,245, but at any rate it is over £5,000. That will give hon. members some idea of the importance of the subject : they do not want anything more. I told them all about the gold being obtained, its value amounting to half a million a year, and I believe that this year the output of gold from that district will be worth more than half a million. Seeing that telegraph messages are sent at the rate of 136,000 a year, and the revenue is over £5,000 a year, those who have not been there and who have not a personal knowledge, such as I am glad to say I have and many others in the House also possess, will realise the importance of the place for which it is intended to build this railway. They will recognise that we are not building it to a stump in the wilderness, but to a rich goldfield, which in the production of gold at the present time holds second place in the colony, being outrivalled only by Kalgoorlie itself. That is the railway which the Opposition and my two friends here wish to stop. Then there is the Nannine railway, the particulars of which I gave. They wish to stop that too. [MR. MORAN : Hear, hear.] That is a railway authorised by this House in 1896. It is for a district coming into prominence

and thoroughly deserving of the railway, which in my opinion is fully justified. That, I say, is another railway those members want to stop.

MR. OATS: It should have been built.

THE PREMIER: Then there is the Norseman railway, which I spoke about the other day; and I shall not say very much about it now, but will do so when the Bill comes up, if we ever get to that point. That is another thing the Opposition wish to stop. They do not wish a survey to be made, and nothing is to be done with that railway. I do not know whether the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) has taken up the position of leader of the Opposition, but he says "hear, hear," and I suppose he speaks for everyone. Then we have the Fremantle Dock, which makes the four works that according to these members should not be commenced. As I said before, the hon. member expects, and has reason to expect, that his motion will be supported by the leader of the Opposition if it comes on. I do not think it will be.

MR. MORAN: I did not say that it was coming on, yet.

THE PREMIER: I expect the Opposition will leave the hon. member in the lurch: that is my opinion.

THE PREMIER: The Fremantle Dock is not to be commenced—at any rate, the duplication of the Coolgardie to Kalgoorlie railway is not to be commenced.

MR. MORAN: The duplication is in hand.

THE PREMIER: Not at this moment.

MR. MORAN: Yes, it is. My motion cannot affect that work if it is in hand.

THE PREMIER: You do not mean that.

MR. MORAN: What do you think, then?

THE PREMIER: We want to go on with it.

MR. MORAN: Then we are together.

THE PREMIER: There is also the loopline about the Boulder.

MR. MORAN: That is not one of the four.

THE PREMIER: That is one of our proposals.

MR. MORAN: That is one of ours too, perhaps.

THE PREMIER: Then you do not know your own mind.

MR. MORAN: You would like to know my mind.

THE PREMIER: Those are the four works. Then we come to those which the hon. member thinks we should not touch at all. There is the metropolitan districts water scheme.

MR. MORAN: That is bluff, I call it.

THE PREMIER: A permanent and sufficient water supply for all the suburban areas, including Fremantle and Guildford.

MR. MORAN: You said you would not touch that.

THE PREMIER: I said nothing of the kind. If hon. members go on interrupting, I shall have to appeal to the Speaker. The metropolitan districts water scheme these hon. members will not consider at all. They will leave Fremantle as at present, and leave the shipping and the trade of the colony suffering for want of a good water supply. The hon. member will not touch that, or he will not have a select committee to consider the matter. These hon. members do not seem to be opposed to the Fremantle Harbour Works being continued.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We cannot stop them.

THE PREMIER: We can easily stop the Fremantle Harbour Works. Give the order to stop them, and they will be stopped—there is no doubt about that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But you cannot give the order.

MR. MORAN: The British public can.

THE PREMIER: If there is no money, we shall have to give the order.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But you have lots of money, you say.

THE PREMIER: If the House does not want the Government to go on with the works, let hon. members say so, and no Government would go on with the works. Then there is a lighthouse to be constructed at the Fishrock.

MR. MORAN: Not if there is no money.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member is going on another tack. I wish to fasten hon. members to these works, and show these are the four works—the Nannine railway, the Leonora railway, the Norseman railway, and the Fremantle dock—

MR. MORAN: The whole bally lot, if you like.

THE PREMIER: You only speak for one—two, perhaps.

MR. MORAN: I will give you a present of the whole lot.

THE PREMIER: I now come to the consideration of the public debt of the colony, and I do so with pleasure, because I shall be able to show that those who have criticised the public debt have not spoken from knowledge, nor have they been actuated by a desire for economy, but to try and upset the Government.

MR. MORAN: Get to the figures, and give us less recrimination.

THE PREMIER: I feel I have a right to some consideration in this matter, having managed the finances of the colony for the last ten years; and if I had not managed them so long, yet after hearing the wail—I call it nothing else—of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), and the second wail of the member for Beverley—

MR. MORAN: The Bunbury "whale."

THE PREMIER: And the wail from the all-wise financial authority from the Canning (Mr. Wilson) in regard to the finances and his *ex cathedra* way of dealing with them—after hearing these statements about the finances of the colony, I ought to say something about the financial position, and I hope hon. members will listen to me. If we exclude from the public debt of the colony £85,000 borrowed by the Agricultural Bank and £44,538 borrowed by the Lands Purchase Board, which amounts are secured on the properties mortgaged to secure these advances, and cannot be considered as part of the public debt of the colony—

MR. MORAN: So are all the debts.

THE PREMIER: These are self-supporting assets—I wish hon. members to listen. It is impossible to deal with figures if I am interrupted. I am dealing with these two items, and I say they are self-supporting, and in no way a public debt, unless in the sense that the general revenues of the colony are behind as guarantee—excluding these two items, also taking credit for £377,160 invested in sinking fund, the public debt of Western Australia on the 30th June last was £11,297,471. We had then in hand, belonging to loans, some £900,000.

MR. MORAN: No.

THE PREMIER: We had £900,000 of loan moneys in hand, and we had

£280,000 worth of land which had been purchased with the Great Southern Railway from the land company, which land we are disposing of gradually for settlement, and which is charged in the public accounts at £300,000. That was the value of the two or three million acres of land, and it is charged on the public accounts at £300,000. There has been some amount paid off since, and I put the amount down roughly at £280,000. I say this is a reproductive asset too.

MR. MORAN: What about the other lands of the colony?

THE PREMIER: We had to purchase this land, paying the company for it; we are disposing of it, and it is a remunerative investment; so that our actual debt (taking credit for these items) on the 30th June was in round numbers about 10 millions, or at the rate of £55 per head of the population, roughly speaking. That was our public debt on the 30th June.

MR. MORAN: What are you paying interest on?

THE PREMIER: I am not dealing with that at all. The railways of the colony on the 30th June were valued at over seven millions sterling, that being the amount spent on them, or £40 per head of the population; and these railways are self-supporting—they pay all the working expenses, they pay the interest and pay to the sinking fund, and they do even more—they contribute in some measure to the general revenue.

MR. MORAN: We do not owe that at all, then?

THE PREMIER: On this £40 per head we get back from the working railways so much actual cash which goes towards paying interest on the total debt of £55 per head of the population. We have already spent on the Fremantle Harbour Works and the Coolgardie Water Scheme together, roughly speaking, about £1,400,000, or £8 per head; and though these two works are not self-supporting at the present moment, they have been undertaken on the basis that they will be self-supporting.

MR. MORAN: Both of them?

THE PREMIER: Both of them. I consider the Fremantle Harbour Works are being constructed on the basis of being self-supporting works. When in other places we know that harbour works

are built, in Melbourne and other places, and pay the interest on the debt—

MR. MORAN: Do they do that?

THE PREMIER: They do it in Melbourne. These works are constructed on the basis of being self-supporting; and the indebtedness for these works is equal to £8 per head. Therefore, all these other works we have constructed amount to £7 or £8 per head, or a sum equal to five shillings per annum per head of the population. This, I say, is the burden on the people of the colony at the present time for these works, or will be the burden as soon as the Fremantle Harbour Works and the Coolgardie Water Scheme are in full working. But I say also that these works will be self-supporting.

MR. VOSPER: What is the total value of our assets against the debts?

THE PREMIER: Seven million pounds for the railways.

MR. VOSPER: Have you a customer for them?

THE PREMIER: We could soon get one if we wanted, but I do not think anyone would sell them for £7,000,000. I ask what is there to be afraid of, when our population last year increased by 10,000 persons?

MR. MORAN: Last year?

THE PREMIER: Last year. Do not be astonished. I think the hon. member ought to have noticed that, if he watched the statistics of the colony.

MR. MORAN: I don't believe it.

THE PREMIER: Supposing our public debt should increase at the rate of a million a year during the next three years, which is not improbable, and I think it very reasonable the debt should increase at that rate; supposing, also, that all the works we have in hand, and those we are contemplating at the present time, were completed, the debt would be £14,000,000. But surely we may expect during the three years these works are going on that our population will not remain as it is to-day—surely it will reach, if not at the same rate as last year, which would make it 210,000, yet it should reach 200,000 at the lowest estimate—then our railways by that time will have had expended on them £8,000,000, and they will be self-supporting. There is no doubt about that. No one can think that the railways which we are building will not be any less self-supporting than are the rail-

ways we now have working. I cannot see why they should be less so. Then I say our railways will be self-supporting. The Coolgardie Water Scheme, on which two and a half millions will have been expended, will be finished and be doing the great good it is suggested the works should do for the goldfields, changing them from a place where discomfort reigns in regard to the mass of the people, and changing them into a place where men can live and enjoy themselves with their families. This work, costing two and a half millions, will be self-supporting. Then we have £1,000,000 on the Fremantle Harbour Works, and the Dock included perhaps, because I see the Engineer-in-Chief makes out that we have not spent so much on the Harbour Works as some people imagine. Then, supposing there is to be another half-million spent on works constructed which are to be self-supporting, there will be £12,000,000 of a debt. I submit and maintain that £12,000,000 of the debt in three years' time from now will be self-supporting, and that £2,000,000 will not be self-supporting. We shall then have only £2,000,000 of a debt which will not be self-supporting; and the actual burden on the people of the colony, by my calculation and my estimate, will be about seven shillings per head per annum. Is that a burden that is going to frighten anyone? I should say not.

MR. VOSPER: Every Treasurer in the Australian colonies has made the same calculation, and it has been falsified.

THE PREMIER: Let me go on with my business now, and you can deal with my facts and figures when you see them in cold print. My answer to the attack made on the Government and those who are supporting the Government, as to our finances, can be put in a very few words. I say positively there never was a time in our history when the colony was in a sounder position. During ten years, no additional taxation has been placed on the people: on the contrary, taxation has been reduced to the extent of half a million pounds during that time. We have a splendid revenue of two and three-quarter millions, if not more—it was £2,850,000 last year, but in round numbers say two millions and three-quarters—and we have been able to pay off a

deficit of £247,000 in one year, while there is over a million of cash in the hands of the Treasurer.

MR. MORAN: Over what?

THE PREMIER: Over a million of cash in the hands of the Treasurer. If the hon. member takes the public accounts he will see the amount is £1,200,000.

MR. MORAN: Do you count "stores" as cash?

THE PREMIER: I count as cash, money in the bank.

MR. MORAN: In the Savings Bank?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. MORAN: Money in the Savings Bank is not yours: it belongs to the public.

THE PREMIER: But I can use that money, if I like. There was £1,200,000 on the 30th June in cash in the hands of the Treasurer; that is, we have paid off the £247,000, and have over a million of cash in hand. With all these railways, harbours, jetties, telegraphs, roads, public buildings, and other conveniences throughout the length and breadth of the country, the actual burden on the people has never been increased since the Government took office, and at the present time the burden amounts to only five shillings or seven shillings per head of the population. What a record is this to be proud of! And yet we are subject to carping criticism year after year, from unthinking people who, for the most part, are without knowledge. The affairs of the country, year after year, have been carefully and honestly managed; and yet we are confronted with the carping criticism of those who have never successfully managed anything on a large scale, for themselves or others, in their lives. And what do these financial geniuses, as I may call them, do? They pile up the debt as high as they can, loan on loan; then, calculating the debt as they conceive it will be two or three years hence and before it has been spent, they divide that amount by the present population! That is the way they seek to show that the country is not in a good condition! But does anyone take that course in his private business? Does not anyone in dealing with big operations and large properties, with considerable obligations connected with them, put liabilities against assets? If such a

course were not taken, we could all be proved bankrupt. In the same way as the Opposition deal with the position of the country, a man with from £20,000 to £40,000 worth of liabilities, but with assets worth from £60,000 to £70,000, might be looked upon as embarrassed; and the country has not only assets, but reproductive self-supporting assets to which we can look. Am I going to allow people to say that these assets are a burden on the country? Am I going to allow people to say that the railways we possess, which not only pay the interest but provide a sinking fund and more, are a burden on the country? I deny that these assets are a burden at all, and I repeat that if we acted in a similar way in our own private affairs, we would all be in a terribly insolvent condition. We have heard these financial geniuses talking about the population of 180,000, and then dividing the public debt of three years hence by that population. But we had all that sort of thing years ago, and I will show that those who make these calculations are altogether wrong. How could any reasonable man use an argument of the kind, only regarding the amount of debt in the future and dividing it by the present population?

MR. MORAN: Who did that?

THE PREMIER: I say it is a foolish thing for them to do; and those who take the public debt of the colony and do not make provision for the assets, the self-supporting assets, are misleading the people. There is another great work we all have our eyes on, and which has had great attention from some hon. members, namely the suggested purchase of the Midland Railway Company's property. There is a strong feeling throughout the country that this railway property should be acquired by the State, if it can be acquired at a reasonable rate. Do I understand the Opposition and the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) are opposed to our buying this railway on reasonable terms?

MR. MORAN: Absolutely.

THE PREMIER: Then I ask hon. members opposite if they say the same, though I do not expect they do.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It depends on the price.

THE PREMIER: But if we are in a state of insolvency, how can we buy any-

thing? There is no reason at all why this country should not buy the Midland Railway Company's land at a price that will pay. If the property were a burden on the colony, that of course would be another matter, but if we buy the lands at a reasonable price and settle people on them, who is to be afraid of the obligation? This is all a matter of debtor and creditor: if you have assets you need not be afraid of the liabilities, but if you have liabilities and no assets, then look out. It is known what views some members have in regard to the project; but I want to know if the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) and the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) are opposed to this project.

MR. MORAN: Buying it now? Yes.

THE PREMIER: And you are the farmers' friend.

MR. MORAN: Certainly.

THE PREMIER: And yet the hon. member is not in favour of settlement on the land by means of this project.

MR. MORAN: You are speaking untruthfully now.

THE PREMIER: You must not be annoyed, because you did say that.

MR. MORAN: I know all about it.

THE PREMIER: You criticised me, and I shall criticise you.

MR. MORAN: I am sorry for you. I am sorry to see you make a fool of yourself.

THE PREMIER: That is all right. I have already tried to buy these lands, but have not succeeded owing to the exorbitant price asked. If, however, reasonable terms can be arranged and I can see the country is going to gain, hon. members will not find me afraid to come to the House with a recommendation on the subject. I would like to come to a little closer quarters with some hon. members who seem all at once to be very much afraid we shall build these two or three lines—the Leonora line which will pay, the Norseman line which will pay, the Goomalling line which will pay. And there is the Fremantle Dock, which is an absolute necessity for any great port on the western side of Australia whether the work pays or does not pay. Hon. members are opposed to these works; but if such views as they possess had actuated myself and those who supported me in 1891, where would we have landed this country? In 1891, when the population

was 50,000 and there were, in fact, no goldfields to speak of, we embarked on a loan of £1,336,000, equal to £27 per head of the population. That was done at one bound, and hon. members might then have said, as the Opposition do now, that our indebtedness was at once £27 per head more than it was before we had borrowed or spent a shilling: such are the calculations of these financial geniuses! To at one bound make the indebtedness £27 per head was bad enough, but in 1896 we did worse—or better as I would say—when we authorised the borrowing of £7,100,000, raising the debt to £55 per head of the population. At that time my friend opposite (Mr. Illingworth) put this borrowing down as a public debt, and divided it by the then population; that was to say we owed all the money before we had borrowed or spent it. But I said to the House then that surely credit must be given for something being done while the money was being spent; surely some credit must be given for increase of population, and for the improvement of the condition of the colony during the time we were spending the money; that therefore it was not fair to divide the public debt as it would be by the population as it was. The Government were told then the same as we are told now, namely that the country was going to the dogs—that we would be ruined, and every disaster they could think of was preached to me and to those who supported me.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There is nothing like that in *Hansard*.

THE PREMIER: I can show it, and worse.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No; you cannot.

THE PREMIER: However, we borrowed this money, or most of it, and no disaster or ruin has come upon us. Our affairs have gone on improving, and our population increasing with the developments of gold-mining. Large cities have grown up in this country where only the kangaroo, and very little of him, held possession; and all this, notwithstanding that we were told, as we have been told by the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) on the present occasion, that our debt was increasing, and that our population was going to remain stationary or decrease. All I can say is, that if that is what we have to look forward to in the future of the country, if we have to look forward

to the population decreasing and the debt increasing, why do anything? Why spend another cent or build another railway? Better stop short and wait our doom and let the doom come on us as we are: do not stir a hand or vote a penny, or do anything. Are we to act as if our population is never to increase? It increased by 10,000 last year, anyway; and I see no reason why it should not increase 10,000 this year, because, after all, this is the best country in the Australian group, and federation, if it breaks down the barriers, brings us into closer communication with our neighbours, and our interests become more identical; and then we may fairly expect, if all the good things which my friends opposite have foretold as the results of federation are realised—as I believe they will be, to some extent anyway—if that be the result, why should we not have just as great an increase of population during the coming as in the past year? There have been no adventitious circumstances during the year that is past; we have had a large deficit to pay off; we have been pinching and striving to keep down expenditure, and luckily we have succeeded in doing so. Are we to act as if the height of our aspirations were that only 180,000 people are to inhabit this great territory, the western side of the Australian continent? Surely we look forward to this country's being peopled by a large number of our countrymen from Great Britain and from Eastern Australia. Are we to act, here in this House and at this time, with all these advantages, as if we had no confidence in the permanence of our gold mines? In fact, are we to act as if we had no faith in our country or in its resources?

MR. MORAN: Tell us about the total loss of revenue under federation.

THE PREMIER: I think it is an extraordinary thing, but I have experienced it before, that I should have to stand up in this House as the mouth-piece, the advocate, of the goldfields of this country, which are represented in this House by at any rate six members who are opposing me.

MR. GEORGE: You represent the whole country.

THE PREMIER: Those six members are opposing the goldfields railways

which the Government desire to build in order to open up the auriferous resources of this country, to assist that industry which has made us what we are to-day, to assist the gold-mining industry, and to make this country prosper, because we never should have prospered but for the goldfields. The goldfields have been, and are at the present time, the backbone of this country's prosperity, not forgetting for a moment the great agricultural industry; but the gold-mining industry is in shackles and chains, and cannot progress unless it has means of communication. And here am I, supported by my friends, trying to give that great desideratum to the goldfields, and confronted by six goldfields members who say "We do not want you to give it."

MR. OATS: No, no!

THE PREMIER: What an extraordinary position! Ought it not to be the other way? Ought it not to be that I, charged by the whole people of this country with the responsibility for its finances—charged to be careful, to husband the public funds and to keep this country solvent, as I have done—would it not be expected that I should be cautious and not very anxious to do these works, and that those six goldfields members should desire to force my hand, and to make me do what they know to be to the advantage of the goldfields? But it is not so. I stand here to-night the mouth-piece of the goldfields, entreating this House to support me in giving the fields the facilities for transport which they desire, and which are their life-blood; and I regret to say I am opposed by those who have been specially sent into this House to assist, to promote, and to support the interests of the goldfields.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Our constituents will turn us all out at the next election.

THE PREMIER: I do not care whether they turn you out or not; but what I say is true, and no one can gainsay it. Who are trying to do these works? Why, myself and my friends; and you, the trusted servants of those goldfields, are trying to thwart and prevent us.

MR. GEORGE: I wonder what the *Kalgoorlie Miner* thinks of it?

THE PREMIER: I do not care what the *Kalgoorlie Miner* thinks of it: I am going to do my duty. If I were asking you to do any unreasonable thing, if I

were asking you to do some great work which would not pay, and would land the country in debt and bring disaster upon us, your action would be reasonable. But what am I trying to do? To give these means of transit, not to people who are to go there in the future, who are to come from other parts of the world and to go to those fields; but I wish to give these facilities to those who are there now, and who are doing their duty and doing a great work for all the people of this colony, in the interests of the farmer and not of the goldfields population only. I say the people in these goldfield centres are working in the interests of the farmers of the country, in the interests of the towns of the country, in the interests of Fremantle and Perth; I say the people in these centres are as much interested in those goldfields railways being sent forward as are the people on the goldfields themselves, because every mile of railway extended on the goldfields means more men employed there and more markets for everything the coastal districts can produce.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And more agricultural railways.

THE PREMIER: That is what I told the people at Kalgoorlie—it is strange how two great men think of the same thing at the one time! I say again, however we go wrong in advocating the extension of railways which will pay, yet all the railways we have constructed in this colony, taking them altogether, have been beneficial; and it is not obvious why a railway to the best but one of our goldfields—the best outside Kalgoorlie—should be blocked. How can that railway to Leonora be other than a great benefit to all the people who live there, and to everyone in Western Australia? I can only say that if such ideas as seem to permeate some members of the Opposition, and these two members on the Government side (Mr. Harper and Mr. Moran) to whom I have referred, had influenced us in 1891 when we embarked on loan expenditure, when our population was less than 50,000, when we added £27 a head to the public debt at one stroke, or in 1896 when we added £53 per head to our debt—if such ideas had influenced us in those days, what would have been the result? There were the same objections raised then as now.

MR. MORAN: Not one. You were then in a solvent state.

THE PREMIER: Oh, then it is all owing to federation, I suppose? That is all right. Well, tell that to your friends the federalists, over there (in Opposition). If we had had those ideas in 1891 and 1896, where should we have been now? But these arguments have been used ever since; ever since the wail of the Opposition has been the same: "You are bringing this country into debt, and you will land us in ruin." But the ruin has not come yet. With the evidence we have before us as to the results of what we have done, I can come to only one conclusion, namely that if any one in this House holds those opinions honestly and sincerely, he can have no confidence in this country; and I say further that, if the same ideas have permeated any large section of this community, we are not worthy to have the control of this great western side of Australia.

MR. HARPER: We do not possess the control of it now.

THE PREMIER: Those who have been good enough to give the Government loyal support during all these ten years have had to confront the very same arguments time after time. Why, I have grown grey in talking here year after year to members of the Opposition.

MR. GEORGE: You are not colour-blind yet.

THE PREMIER: Yes; in my ten years in this Parliament, I say I have grown grey in the honourable service of this country: I do not mind telling the member for the Murray (Mr. George) that I have done so. I have been told, year after year, of the ruin and disaster which were coming upon us; and then the cry is varied to "disaster and ruin." That has been preached to us year after year, but still the colony forges ahead. The revenue is over two and three-quarter millions, the trade of the colony is eleven millions sterling, and we are now, I am glad to say, through the mail steamers coming to Fremantle, no longer out of the way, but are on the high road of trade and commerce and of civilisation.

MR. GEORGE: You had better get some new pilots, had you not?

THE PREMIER: If hon. members on this (Government) side of the House, or on the other, are not satisfied with the

progress and the development which have gone on in this colony during the last ten years, I think they are very hard indeed to please. The do-nothing croakers of to-day have been the do-nothing croakers of the last ten years. To hear, year after year, the wailing speeches of my friend from Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), one would think one was listening to the "Lamentations of Jeremiah." No doubt the people of this country, whatever they may do in the future, will do that which they think is best. But the people of this country have stood by us for ten years: they have not listened to the revilers and the defamers of the colony. In the near future it will be for the people to say whether they will support those sitting on this side of the House who by their knowledge, public spirit, and faith in the country and its resources have made Western Australia what it is to-day.

MR. KINGSMILL (Pilbarra): I must confess it is with great diffidence that I arise from amongst these gentlemen (in Opposition) who have been classified as the revilers and defamers of this fair land of Western Australia, to make the few remarks I have to make upon the Address in reply to the Administrator's Speech. I must first express my gratification that, after the threats which were hurled some few evenings ago by the Premier at this side of the House, I am in a fit condition mentally, morally, or physically, to continue the debate at all; but, as usual, we find the right hon. gentleman did not carry out his promises in that entirety of which he boasts. In fact, though he promised us a very severe verbal castigation, it was far from severe; and his speech, in my judgment, exhibited on that occasion, and I may say, too, on this, the old policy of intimidation which he has so often tried in this House. Of course it is not of much avail to try to intimidate the older members of the House: they are practically getting used to it.

MR. HIGHAM: Their hides are getting thicker.

MR. KINGSMILL: Not necessarily; I think the shafts do not carry so far. But one thing I did not like about the Premier's action was the way in which he treated a member who was practically just taking his seat. In this House, and I think in any other House of Parlia-

ment, new members are generally accorded some consideration and some courtesy by older parliamentarians. That consideration and that courtesy were very conspicuously lacking in the intimidation which was hurled at the unfortunate member for Geraldton by the Premier; and I must congratulate the hon. member upon the way in which he behaved under those circumstances. He answered the Premier in his own manner, and I am very glad of it. To-night the Premier referred to a subject which I should have thought he would have been most careful to avoid, that being the division on the debate which was closed the other night. As usual, he boasted about the majority; but if we come to analyse that majority, we find that his victory is not so creditable as he would have us believe. This House was asked to express an opinion upon the Forrest Ministry, and the Forrest Ministry was saved by a majority of six—22 to 16. I do not think that the Government has very much to boast of, considering that the Forrest Ministry supplied five of those votes, and that three gentlemen on the Government side of the House expressed themselves in accord with the views of the Opposition.

MR. MORAN: Eight.

MR. KINGSMILL: I am afraid I cannot indorse the statement of the hon. member. His figures have varied so much lately, from day to day—first they were eight, then seven, then perhaps they would go back to eight, after a while he would drop to two, and then there was the possibility of going to three.

MR. DOHERTY: He may throw a seven.

MR. KINGSMILL: I am glad to say he has never been able to perform that feat. This evening the Premier showed every inclination to do so, if he only had the power.

MR. MORAN: They are the good and faithful eight: they are all right.

MR. KINGSMILL: Again, the Premier is reported to have said that if two members on the Government side of the House had not crossed the floor in that division, he would have had a larger majority. That really is absolutely incontrovertible. The only thing I am surprised at is that the right hon. gentleman did not go on to say that, if the whole were unanimous, we should lose those exhibitions of par-

liamentary decorum which the Premier so often treats us to.

MR. GEORGE: Let him down lightly.

MR. KINGSMILL: It was a peculiar circumstance that I personally should have been the victim of one of those attempted intimidations which the right hon. gentleman indulged in. I think he classed myself and the member for Yalgoo (Mr. Wallace) together. He reminded one of the days of childhood, when very little children were playing together, and one said to the other, "Billy Jones, if you do so-and-so I will tell your mother"; only in our case he does not threaten to tell our mothers, but tells us that if we do not vote with him he will tell our electors. I am afraid the Billy Joneses in this instance are very stubborn, stiff-necked people, and not likely to be borne away by the threats of the Premier; although I may say I quail somewhat when I think of the anguish of the electors of Pilbarra on my bearing to them the news that the Norseman-Coolgardie line is about to be postponed, or perhaps—horrible thought—wiped out of existence altogether. I shudder to think of their outraged feelings when they hear of such a calamity to them.

MR. DOHERTY: They will have a drink, old chap.

MR. KINGSMILL: There is one subject upon which I feel a great amount of not only personal but political regret, and that is that the member for the Williams (Mr. Piesse) has had to sever his connection with the Government in which he has taken so large and so hard-working a part. I am sorry independence of character has once more proved incompatible with a seat upon the Treasury Bench. I regret that member has gone to join the long procession of Ministerial ghosts.

MR. DOHERTY: He does not look like a ghost.

MR. MORAN: There will be a resurrection in this case.

MR. KINGSMILL: Still, I am sorry for it. I am reminded of the words of a minor poet somewhere: the same old comet comes out of the mist, with a different tail behind it. The right hon. gentleman twitted members on this side with showing lamentable ignorance of the affairs of the colony. I maintain that he is to a certain extent responsible. I think

it is over a week back that the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) asked the Premier to give him the following information:—"1, The present indebtedness of Western Australia. 2, The amount available from loans and Treasury bills for the completion of works authorised by Parliament. 3, The amount which, it is estimated, will be required to complete these works. 4, The amount which has been reappropriated from existing authorisations." That is a nasty one: Also, "5, The manner in which the Government proposes to recoup these moneys thus reappropriated." If possible, that is still more nasty. That, I say, was put in the form of a question. For some reason or other which I do not know—possibly the right hon. gentleman may know—it now appears on the Notice Paper in the form of a motion for a return, and in common with other motions I suppose we will come across it some time during the next fortnight. I maintain that the right hon. gentleman, as Treasurer of this colony, should have had those answers at his fingers' ends, and been able to supply the information practically as soon as asked for. How can he expect members of the Opposition to know anything about the state of affairs in this country, when questions of this sort are shelved indefinitely until the debate which they most seriously affect is over? The only impression given me by the right hon. gentleman's slight touch on the question of the finances is that, in his opinion, as long as this colony has enough revenue to pay interest on its debts, it does not owe any money.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. That is his position.

MR. KINGSMILL: I do not know on what system the right hon. gentleman conducts his operations, but between you and me, Mr. Speaker, I am seriously beginning to doubt the existence of any system whatever. I fancy it is a case, as a rule, of expediency and opportunism.

MR. GEORGE: Let him down lightly.

MR. KINGSMILL: I may point out to the hon. member that I am endeavouring to be as nice as possible with the right hon. gentleman, and I hope I am succeeding. There was one word in the Premier's speech which struck me forcibly, that word being "basis." He said the Fremantle Harbour Works and the Cool-

gardie Water Scheme were being constructed—I think he said constructed—on the same basis. I do not know much about the Fremantle Harbour Works, and all I can say is that, if the basis of the Fremantle Harbour Works is no sounder to-day than the basis which was put forward in 1896 for the Coolgardie Water Scheme is now, heaven help the Fremantle Harbour Works!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.

MR. OATS: Amen.

MR. KINGSMILL: Again, and touching on the same subject, the right hon. gentleman indulged in a little prophecy regarding population. I may tell this House in confidence that I do not place very much reliance upon the Premier as a prophet. The right hon. gentleman's prophecy in former times, looked at in the light of events of later days, does not satisfy me of his right to assume the mantle of an Elisha or Elijah, or any of those gentlemen of ancient times. Listen to a few little figures which occurred in a speech the right hon. gentleman made on the 21st July, 1896.

MR. MORAN: Be merciful.

MR. KINGSMILL: With regard to the Coolgardie Water Scheme—

MR. MORAN: We did not think you would find that.

MR. KINGSMILL: The right hon. gentleman said:

Seeing that this is going to be a reproductive work—

Which is altogether an *ex parte* statement, I see little reason to consider the question of indebtedness.

The same argument, that if we have enough revenue to pay the interest on our debts, we do not owe any money.

Still I can easily prove—

He can easily prove most things!

that it will not affect the indebtedness of the colony unless the scheme does not pay, which, in my opinion, is impossible. Our present indebtedness, in round numbers is 4½ millions, and our population is something like 123,000. It has increased by 33,000 during the past 12 months—a very great and agreeable fact—and if during the next three years it increases the same, which I do not think is an extravagant estimate, the population will be nearly a quarter of a million. I see no reason why it should not. I see no reason whatever why the population—

He is getting warmer now.

I see no reason whatever why the population should not increase more quickly than during the last 12 months; and, if that is the case, we can afford to borrow during the next three years about four millions of money, and yet not materially alter our indebtedness from its present amount of £37 per head.

MR. MORAN: It is two and a half times that now.

MR. KINGSMILL: It is somewhat instructive to see what our present position is. In 1896 we occupied the position of having the lowest indebtedness per head in Australasia, but to-day we have the highest debt per head in Australia; very much the highest. Again, since 1896 our indebtedness has increased by practically something over three times. Our revenue during the same period has increased between 50 and 60 per cent. The revenue then was £1,858,000, whereas to-day it is £2,850,000. Our population, which according to the estimate of the Premier would in July, 1899, have been 222,000, and in July, 1900—at the rate which he does not think an extravagant estimate—258,000, is to-day 180,000, or 78,000 short of that number.

MR. DOHERTY: I hope you do not hold the Premier responsible for that.

MR. KINGSMILL: I do not hold the right hon. gentleman responsible for anything, after those statements. I absolutely refuse to place any responsibility upon his shoulders, because I take it he is absolutely unfit to bear it.

MR. MORAN: That is the other side of the question.

MR. KINGSMILL: I have but few more remarks to make on this question. The only point is with regard to some of those railways or at all events one of those railways, proposed in the Administrator's Speech: I refer to the Coolgardie-Norseman line. Some time ago the right hon. gentleman informed this House—no doubt to its astonishment, or at least to the astonishment of certain members over here—that six goldfields members on the Opposition side of the House always had been in favour of this railway. Where he gets his information from I do not know. Probably from the same source as that from which he obtained the information I was referring to just now. For my part, I have much pleasure in denying that statement. I have never hinted at taking a favourable view of the Coolgardie-Norseman line.

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

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

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

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

MR. DOHERTY : What is the matter ?

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

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

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

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

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

THE PREMIER : You do not represent the Opposition.

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

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

MR. MORAN : Yes.

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

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

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

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

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

THE PREMIER : Do you want to adjourn ?

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I want to get done.

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

Motion for adjournment put, and passed on the voices.

ADJOURNMENT.

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

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 5th September, 1900.

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

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

PRAYERS.