

THE PREMIER: I move that the House, at its rising, do adjourn until Thursday next.

Question put and passed.

THE SPEAKER: Do you wish now to move the adjournment?

THE PREMIER: I move that the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 7:42 o'clock, until the next Thursday afternoon at 4:30 o'clock.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 31st October, 1901.

Question: Arbitration Court, Absence of a Member—Goomalling Railway Construction, Produce Rates—Question: Zoological Gardens, Inspection of Animals, how made—Question: Railway Signalling, Southern Cross—Question: Railway Truck Charges, Kurrawang Syndicate—Question: Lunatic Asylum Attendants and Public Service Act—Question: Victoria Park Tramway and Perth Causeway—Question: Rabbit Fence, Dundas—Question: Liquor Inspection, as to stringency—Question: Railway Duplication to Kalgoorlie, Speed of Trains—Question: Railway Boiler, Kalgoorlie—Revenue Received, Statement by the Treasurer—Papers presented—Food Supply, Select Committee's Report—Motion: No Confidence in the Government (first day), adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—ARBITRATION COURT, ABSENCE OF A MEMBER.

MR. OATS, for MR. McDONALD, asked the Attorney General:—1, Whether the Government is aware that one of the members of the Court of Arbitration has left the State for an indefinite period, and that a case was called on October 15th inst., when a number of witnesses and solicitors were in attendance, and the case could not proceed in consequence of the absence of a member of the Court. 2, Whether the Government propose to take any steps to appoint another person on the Arbitration Court in place of the

representative of the employers who has left the State. 3, Whether it will be possible for the cases now before the Court to be heard before the expiration of the time prescribed by Section 76 of the existing Act. 4, Whether it is the intention of the Government to make provision in Clause 64 of the new Bill so that the Governor may remove any member of the Court who leaves the State. 5, Who will have to pay the costs of the sitting of the Court on October 15th.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, Yes. 2 (Sections 38, 55), No, there is no such power. The absent member will return if telegraphed for. 3 (Section 76), Yes. 4, This is before Parliament. 5, The Court will decide.

QUESTION—GOOMALLING RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION, PRODUCE RATES.

HON. G. THROSSELL asked the Commissioner of Railways: Whether, pending the completion of the Goomalling line, he will arrange for the carriage of produce at the ordinary rates over the portion now used for traffic.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: Whilst sympathising with the Goomalling settlers over the long delayed completion of their line, the Government do not consider they would be justified in deviating from the special rates charged for carrying goods on a line under construction, as a precedent would be created which might be quoted as establishing a right for similar concessions on other lines, possibly involving loss to the Treasury, which Parliament might be unwilling to consent to.

QUESTION—ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, INSPECTION OF ANIMALS, HOW MADE.

MR. WALLACE asked the Premier: 1, (a.) When instructions were given to the Chief Inspector of Stock to inspect and report on the animals in the Zoological Gardens, in consequence of a question asked in this House on 3rd September last. (b.) Whether similar, or any, instructions were given to the Secretary of the Agricultural Department, Mr. L. Lindley-Cowen, and the dairy expert, Mr. A. Crawford. 2, If not, whether he is aware that the two latter gentlemen did inspect and give reports which accom-

panied the returns laid on the table by the Premier, and are contradictory of that of the Chief Inspector of Stock. 3. Which report the Government has recognised. 4. Under what authority and permission the said gentlemen did so report. 5. Whether he considers the actions of the said gentlemen, Mr. Cowen and Mr. Crawford, conducive to harmony and general good working of the departments involved.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, (a.) On 5th September. (b.) No. 2, Yes. 3, That of the Chief Inspector of Stock. 4, Messrs. Lindley Cowen and Crawford reported, at the request of the Director of the Zoological Gardens, without authority from the Minister. 5, No.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SIGNALLING, SOUTHERN CROSS.

MR. OATS asked the Commissioner of Railways: Whether he is aware— 1, That nearly two years since a collision of two trains occurred at Southern Cross station, causing considerable damage to rolling-stock, but fortunately no loss of life. 2, That the collision was caused through not having a signal station. 3, That this has been promised several times by his predecessors in office. 4, Whether the Commissioner will give instructions that this work be done at once to avoid farther accidents.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: 1, A collision as described occurred on the 28th July, 1900. 2, No. 3, No. 4, The necessary expenditure for interlocking and signalling was authorised on the 5th January, 1900, by the then Commissioner of Railways. The material was ordered, but in the meantime more pressing works arose on which it was used. Fresh material was ordered, and arrived in the State during the present month, and no time will now be lost in carrying out the work.

QUESTION—RAILWAY TRUCK CHARGES, KURRAWANG SYNDICATE.

MR. HOPKINS asked the Commissioner of Railways: What is the approximate loss to the railway revenue occasioned by the amendment of railway rates on folio 48 of Railway Rate Book, as applied to truck charges in connection with the Kurrawang Syndicate.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: £5,494 17s. 6d.

QUESTION—LUNATIC ASYLUM ATTENDANTS AND PUBLIC SERVICE ACT.

MR. McDONALD asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Why the attendants at the Fremantle Asylum were excluded from the operations of the Public Service Act. 2, Whether the fact of being removed from its operations interferes with the attendants who were appointed previous to the Act coming into force; and whether it debars them from any rights, prospects, or privileges which they were entitled to before being excluded therefrom.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, For the better administration of the institution. 2, No.

QUESTION—VICTORIA PARK TRAMWAY AND PERTH CAUSEWAY.

MR. YELVERTON asked the Premier: 1, Whether the Government has granted to the Victoria Park Municipality, or the Perth City Council, the right to run the proposed Victoria Park Tramway across the Perth Causeway. 2, If so, whether the Government has considered the great danger this will cause to vehicular and pedestrian traffic over the Causeway.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, The Victoria Park Public Tramways Committee was informed by the last Government that there would be no objection to a single line being constructed across the Causeway, provided the expense of strengthening the structure was borne by the promoters of the tramway. 2, The promoters would have to apply for a provisional order under the Tramways Act, 1885, under which opportunity is afforded for representation being made for or against any proposed scheme.

QUESTION—RABBIT FENCE, DUNDAS.

MR. THOMAS asked the Premier: What part of the Dundas constituency it is intended to include within the rabbit-proof fence about to be erected.

THE PREMIER replied: The small portion at the south-west corner of the electorate, as shown approximately coloured green on plan deposited herewith.

QUESTION—LIQUOR INSPECTION, AS TO STRINGENCY.

MR. THOMAS asked the Attorney General: Whether some more stringent steps cannot be taken to ensure that wholesome liquor shall be supplied to the public.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: Steps were being taken, and the matter would be inquired into.

QUESTION — RAILWAY DUPLICATION TO KALGOORLIE, SPEED OF TRAINS.

MR. THOMAS asked the Commissioner of Railways: Whether, seeing that the line is now duplicated, a quicker train service cannot be established between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: In reply to a somewhat similar question asked by the hon. member on the 25th ult., I informed him that the maximum speed is already maintained between these two places, and circumstances have not altered since then.

QUESTION—RAILWAY BOILER, KALGOORLIE.

MR. THOMAS asked the Commissioner of Railways: 1, Whether he is aware that at the Kalgoorlie railway station a boiler is being used which is not fitted as required by the Steam Boilers Act. 2, Which Department has to administer this Act. 3, Who has inspected this boiler, and when.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied: 1, This information is not available, but I am making inquiries. 2, The Mines Department. 3, See reply to No. 1.

REVENUE RECEIVED—STATEMENT BY THE TREASURER.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER (Hon. F. Illingworth) said: For the information of hon. members, I have to state that the revenue up to this evening, for the month of October, amounts to £287,745 9s. 10d.; and the total for the four months of the year, up to this evening, amounts to £1,104,558 15s. 7d.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: Return ordered, amount paid to Mr. Carruthers,

consulting engineer in London (moved for by Mr. George).

By the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Return ordered, appointment of engine-driver Trenowith (moved for by Mr. Daglish).

By the PREMIER: Return ordered, population of certain Magisterial Districts (on motion by Mr. Hopkins).

Ordered to lie on the table.

FOOD SUPPLY, TO CHEAPEN—SELECT COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

MR. HOPKINS brought up the report of the select committee appointed to inquire into the food supply of the State, with evidence.

Received and ordered to be printed; to be considered on the next Tuesday.

MOTION—NO CONFIDENCE IN THE GOVERNMENT.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Williams): In rising to move the motion standing in my name (applause by members).

That the Government does not command the confidence of this House.

I may refer to the fact that when the motion was tabled an evening or two ago, the Premier said he was delighted with it.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I am sure there is no one more delighted than myself at the fact that I have been able to table the motion; because being, like the hon. gentleman opposite, an active man, I also feel that a policy of inaction is not of advantage either to the country or to the party which I represent. I am glad indeed to have the opportunity of tabling the motion. I may point out that there is no possibility of misconception about the motion. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] It is a motion of direct want of confidence in the Government. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I think it is the first motion of that character which has been moved in this House. Numerous motions, amounting to motions of want of confidence in the Government, have been moved here from time to time; but they have been based on side issues. In this instance, therefore, I am moving the first direct motion of no-confidence.

MINISTERIAL MEMBER: You are a brave man.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Yes; I need to be. I desire to offer some explanation as to why the motion was not moved sooner. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] At the beginning of the session I said I would give the Government an opportunity of developing their policy—[MR. JACOBY: Hear, hear.]—and the party which I represent was entirely in accord with that course. I can claim that the Opposition have shown a degree of forbearance—[several interjections]—seldom equalled in any Parliament. [Laughter and interjections.] Standing here in my place, I say that I have taken into consideration the seriousness of the possible results of this motion. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I do not fear the result. If it be that we on this side of the House obtain that majority which we expect to obtain, we are prepared to accept the responsibility, which of course is well considered before such a motion as this is tabled. My desire is to test the feeling of the House. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] I say the time has arrived when the feeling of the House should be tested.

MR. DAGLISH: Why did you not test it long ago?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The question to be decided is, which of the two parties shall rule in this House?—[MEMBERS: Hear, hear.]—I think there is no mistake about it. Therefore, it is my intention to-night to place before the House, as clearly as I can, the matters which I consider should be brought forward in support of this motion. I may mention that the motion was purposely introduced before the result of the John Davies inquiry was known. [Ministerial laughter.] During the sittings of that Board I refrained from dealing with the subject of its inquiry: I refrained from commenting on the case while it was *sub judice*. I mentioned this when I was speaking on the matter some time ago, and said I considered it my duty, while the case was *sub judice*, to withhold any remarks I might feel called upon to make in justification of my past career, and also in reference to certain matters brought forward by the Commissioner of Railways. I took the very first opportunity of tabling this motion when the John Davies inquiry had been closed, and before the report had been made public. I understand it was thought

that on Tuesday evening I was anxious to rise and give notice of this motion before the report of the John Davies Board was placed on the table. But I waited until the report was placed on the table of the House. Then I immediately rose and tabled the motion. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] My general course now will be an attack on the present Government's policy and administration. A great deal has been promised by the present Government; and among their many promises that of a thorough reorganisation of the public service was made the most prominent.

MINISTERS: Hear, hear.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: During the five months the Government have been in office, have they done anything in this direction? [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: No.] I say, they have done nothing, if their attempt to reorganise the Railway Department be excepted. The result of their interference in that respect has been to cause incalculable harm to the department. [Several interjections.] It has resulted in most serious trouble to this State.

MR. GARDINER: You have to pay freight now.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: No doubt the Government, in their wisdom, did their best, but their best—[MINISTERIAL MEMBER: Was right]—has proved disastrous to the country. If they have attempted to do that which they said they would do, namely reorganise, then they have shown themselves wanting in this respect. The present Government have sown the wind—[several interjections]—and those who come after them will have to reap the whirlwind.

MR. DAGLISH: Don't worry: you won't get there!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: We are getting there all right. I attribute the failure of the Government in this matter to the want of tact and knowledge of the present Commissioner in regard to railway administration. Undoubtedly, that want of tact, of knowledge, and of experience on the part of the present Commissioner brought about the recent strike. [Ministerial laughter.] I say, the recent strike was caused by the Commissioner's want of tact and of experience. What was the beginning of the trouble? I will go back to the earliest commence-

ment of it. The trouble began when in 1899 the hon. member who is now the Commissioner of Railways (Hon. J. J. Holmes) attacked me in regard to my administration of the Railway Department, and brought before this House communications which he had obtained through a disloyal servant of the State. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] He obtained that information, and we know that he obtained the information. I am certain the Commissioner cannot deny it. That information being obtained as it was obtained, was the first cause of disorganisation throughout the civil service. The bringing up of that information here was the initial cause of the trouble.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Was it true?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Again, the present Minister for Mines, for political purposes, moved a motion last year in regard to the introduction of the eight-hours day into the public service. The motion was carried by the House; and the railway employees naturally thought effect would be given to it. When that motion was passed, there was no condition attached to it as regards a reduction in rates of wages. The resolution simply affirmed that an eight-hours day should be uniformly applied. But what do we find? We find that when those men ask for a uniform eight-hours day, a proposal is made to reduce wages. I repeat, when the motion was passed by the House, no conditions were imposed in regard to it. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] The condition as to reduction of wages was not made, or even mentioned. I maintain that in this instance the Government have caused trouble. They have broken faith with the men as regards the resolution. They have caused a degree of irritation which no doubt is giving them trouble, and which undoubtedly will cause the country very serious trouble in the future; unless we are able to settle the matter by another method which I hope to be in a position to propose, namely through the Conciliation and Arbitration Bill. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] To go back to the beginning of the trouble, however, what do we find? We find that the present Commissioner, then a member of the Opposition, obtained certain information

through a disloyal civil servant. This disloyal servant—

MR. TAYLOR: Are you sure?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I am sure of it.

MR. DAGLISH: Can you prove it?

MR. TAYLOR: Can you prove it? We are sure about a lot of things concerning John Davies, though we cannot prove them.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: What happened was that the present Commissioner made a number of charges. I say nothing about those charges to-day, because I replied to them at the time; but I repeat what I said then, that I consider the means taken by the hon. gentleman to obtain that information was discreditable to any member of the House.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

HON. W. H. JAMES: His constituents did not think so.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The hon. member led the country to believe that if he came into power, he would carry out great reforms. He told the country, "I am the man to carry out these reforms."

LABOUR MEMBER: So he is.

MR. DAGLISH: He has made a good start.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: In his inexperience, the hon. gentleman rushed to conclusions on certain matters of which he knew nothing at all. He did not know what he had taken up; and consequently, like a great many more people who are ready to rush into a breach without knowing the danger, he made promises which he afterwards found himself unable to fulfil. Discovering, on assuming office, that he had taken a wrong line in his criticisms, what did he do? Much more was expected of him than he could give. The people of this country, no doubt expecting a great deal from the hon. member, looked forward to a great deal being accomplished by him. Then, what happened? The hon. gentleman attempted by sensational, dramatic, and drastic steps, to catch the support and the plaudits of the country. He thought—and I will relate how, later—by taking a course which I think the country will consider he was not justified in taking—

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You test the feeling of the country!

MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: Test the feeling!

MR. GARDINER: Leave it to the country!

MR. GEORGE: Leave him (Commissioner) to the country, and there won't be much left of him!

THE SPEAKER: Order!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: He adopted the course of taking in as his intermediary the man who had before given him this information, information obtained from a tainted source. However, he obtained that information and used it to help him in his endeavours to carry out his desires. Now what do we find? We find, as a result of this, the hon. gentleman appointed to a position of confidence Mr. G. W. Davies, the man who had been his informant, who had given him information in regard to the matters I have referred to. What resulted from that? The result was the appointment of a board of inquiry, which eventually decided that Mr. G. W. Davies was not a fit and proper person to be the confidential officer of the Minister. Then, too, the Minister adopted this course: finding that the country would not have this discredited officer, he suspended the General Manager of Railways from his position. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] For what reason? For the reason that he knew the General Manager to be unpopular in the country. Why was the General Manager unpopular? He was unpopular because he did his duty. [Several interjections.] The Minister considered it a good expedient to place this officer in the breach, as it were, to be shot at, and so withdraw from public attention the man whose appointment he knew he could not possibly defend. Now that we have the reports of the two boards of inquiry before us, I say they confirm the opinion which was so readily expressed, that Mr. G. W. Davies was an unfit person to fill the position of confidential officer of the Minister. As regards the report of the board which inquired into the case of Mr. John Davies, it seems to me that if the Government do not intend to reinstate Mr. John Davies, there are only two courses open to them: they must either dismiss him, and the country must run the risk of an action for wrongful dismissal; or they must compromise with Mr. John Davies for his retirement; and whichever course may be taken, discredit

will be thrown on the Government. I say that neither this Government nor any other Government can expect a good, honest man to take service here, and run the risk of such treatment, such discrediting and humiliating treatment as has been meted out to Mr. John Davies. [Several interjections.] That treatment was the result of backstairs information obtained through a discredited public servant. I ask, why did not the Government take a more moderate course? They had the opportunity of taking a more moderate course, the course which I some time ago suggested should be taken, and which I think was agreed to by this House, namely a board of inquiry. If that board had been appointed, and the whole thing thoroughly gone into, that would have been much more satisfactory in many respects than the course which has been adopted.

THE PREMIER: You had the board, did you not?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That is not the board to which I refer. I suggested a board to thoroughly inquire into all those railway matters which were from time to time in dispute.

MR. TAYLOR: You wanted a wooden board.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The fact of the matter is that the Premier, with his usual dramatic instinct, desired to create a sensation rather than to adopt keen business methods. There is no doubt about it that was his course; and it is a rôle which he can play, and play satisfactorily, too. He has done this, what for? For the purpose, no doubt, of drawing from this (Opposition) side of the House some men to support him. But what has, so far, been the result? He has driven from his own side of the House one of the ablest of the men he had.

MEMBER: The man with the open mind.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Why was not this inquiry made? Why was this hasty course adopted by the Government? I say the Government were desirous of creating this sensation; and I may say, too, that they disregarded the interests of the country and the interests of the railways by adopting that course.

HON. W. H. JAMES: Prove that.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: They took away from the service of this country, at a time when he was most needed, the man who

was looking after the interests of the railways.

MR. GARDINER: Six of the officials were absent from the State at one time.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: By doing that, the Government left the railways in a condition in which they should not have been left. At no time in the history of these railways was there greater necessity for careful attention and supervision. And by adopting this course, the Government were not acting in the best interests of the country.

MR. TAYLOR: They were acting in the best interests of the railways.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I say that had the Commissioner shown ordinary tact, and a desire to settle the differences which had arisen in regard to these matters, he had an opportunity of showing what he was made of. But he has not taken that opportunity. With his determination to carry things with a high hand, in the same way as he did in the cases I have previously mentioned, where he brought these matters before the House and showed what he could do, he wished to make out that he had a "stiff back." What has been the result of that "stiff back"? We had the strike of railway men, and we had those other troubles which have come before us from time to time.

MR. GARDINER: Yes; the "other" matters especially.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I say, believing that he had the unanimous support of the House, in the provisions of the Conciliation Act Amendment Bill a clause was introduced by the Government which would be likely to cause farther friction: that clause dealing with the cutting up of the Railway Association into several distinct unions. I say that is a mistake.

MR. TAYLOR: You would have had no unions at all.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Because once you have recognised that association, it is far better to deal with one association than with several. That is very much better than to take the course the Government have proposed. In fact, I may say their course looks very much as if they were actuated by a spirit of vengeance: it looks as if the Government were determined to farther prolong this friction between themselves and the railway employees.

MR. TAYLOR: You would wipe out the union altogether.

MR. DAGLISH: You did not object, when speaking on the Bill.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: We have not yet come to that clause.

MR. DAGLISH: Yes; we have, on the second reading.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Judging by their past action, it is not at all likely that the present proposal made by the Government in regard to this clause will satisfy the railway employees; but I say that if we slightly altered the clause now in the Bill, and had a properly-constituted court of arbitration, our position might be made thoroughly safe in regard to this association.

MR. DAGLISH: You are blocking the settlement.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I should like to say, in regard to this G. W. Davies appointment, that I consider the appointment was made for political services rendered to the present Commissioner of Railways (Hon. J. J. Holmes), during the time he was a leader of the Opposition. I say, during the time he was a leader of the Opposition, information was given him by this man, G. W. Davies; and of course the man came round subsequently to ask for his reward. I say the Commissioner cannot deny that he obtained the information from G. W. Davies.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Mr. Holmes was not leader of the Opposition.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I say, too, that G. W. Davies has boasted of giving the information.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: To whom?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I say, too, that it is impossible for the Commissioner to justify the want of knowledge which he seemed to exhibit in regard to the disloyalty of this man. The Commissioner could not have been ignorant of his disloyalty, for the reason that the Commissioner himself was a party to that disloyalty. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] I say again, did he, before making that appointment, satisfy himself that there was no reflection upon the character of this man? It seems that he took a course which perhaps he thinks should have been taken; but in taking that course, he should certainly have sought the opinion of his advisers. But

he took the course, as he himself says, of sending for the files. No doubt those files did not disclose the whole of the facts in connection with the dismissal of G. W. Davies. But I say, do the files in connection with any dismissal, when it is considered there are matters which should be treated as confidential, disclose the whole particulars?

MR. TAYLOR: They ought to. There ought to be no confidential dismissals.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Then I say, in fairness to the officers of the department, was the Commissioner justified in promoting this man, G. W. Davies, over the heads of men already in the service? I say he was not. There were good men already there; and if we are to have the advantage of the Public Service Act passed last session, then I say these railway officers should certainly have been safeguarded under the privileges conferred by that Act upon them. If they were to be protected, then it was for the Commissioner and for the Government to see that they were protected. But the recent action of the Commissioner proves that the Act is either worthless, or that the Ministry themselves have adopted a course which is unconstitutional. Then again I should like to say, does the Commissioner consider that G. W. Davies was a man whom he could place in a confidential position; knowing, as the Commissioner did, the whole of this man's past history? I say there is nothing the Commissioner can say which will justify his making that appointment. There is another thing, too, in regard to this matter. G. W. Davies knew thoroughly and absolutely the cause of his dismissal, and that certain complaints had been made against him; but when the Commissioner spoke to him of the matter, G. W. Davies said the whole of the charges were upon the file, and that the file could be produced.

THE PREMIER: What was the cause?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I say, when G. W. Davies was dismissed, why did he not take the step open to him? There was the step available to him of appealing to the country and appealing to this House, if he pleased; or, again, he could have brought his appeal before the Government of the day. But no; he did not take that step. He waited until the present Government were in office, and then he

took the step of coming forward and asking the present Commissioner to help him. Why? The Commissioner must have known why. Because, of course, G. W. Davies had been the instrument which the Commissioner had used for his own purposes. Now I leave the House to judge whether this man, G. W. Davies, was a fit and proper person to be employed in the public service. In the speech of the Commissioner on the 27th August last, he said in regard to this man:

My opinion is that there was not a man in the service who could have been relied upon at that particular juncture to assist me.

Well, I say that this statement is an admission of ignorance, and is a reflection upon the railway staff. [MR. GEORGE: Hear, hear.] It shows, I think, that according to the Commissioner, he had no man in the service capable of filling that position. But I say the Commissioner was not justified in making that statement, because there surely should be men amongst that large body of employees capable of filling such a position as that. [Several MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] Now we take the case leading up to the suspension of the General Manager. What did the Commissioner say in regard to this matter, when he entered upon his duties? He told the House:

When first I assumed office as Commissioner of Railways, I interviewed the General Manager, Mr. John Davies, and told him that, as far as the past was concerned, I was prepared to close the book, and we would commence with a clear understanding, and that we would judge each other upon things as they transpired from day to day.

Well, did the Commissioner carry that out? No; he did not. He very soon departed from that course, and took another; for we find him shortly afterwards saying that he considered the General Manager was too clever for him; and in an instance which he mentioned he said that, if anything, the General Manager was a little too cunning, and that he had decided to keep him in his place. And he said:

I shall have to go in for level pegging; and that is what I did. Matters subsequently became so difficult that I consulted Cabinet.

What was the "level pegging"? It was the appointment of G. W. Davies. That was the "level pegging" which the Commissioner adopted, and the course he took. He also referred to another matter

which I shall deal with to-day, that is a matter which implicates me. He stated in the same speech, in regard to certain negotiations which he said had taken place between the General Manager and myself, that I had stated I would give the General Manager two years' salary.

THE PREMIER: £3,000.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The Minister said this:—

I proposed to recommend that the Cabinet should give him one year's salary, £1,500, and that we should appoint someone in his place. I then discovered that he had been in negotiation with the leader of the Opposition (**Hon. F. H. Piesse**); and my terms did not suit, because it transpired in conversation that if Mr. Piesse came into office, they were going to abolish the position of General Manager, place the railways under a Commissioner, and give the General Manager two years' salary, £3,000. I was unable to make terms with the General Manager, and we decided to go on. I say emphatically that I did not make any promise of the kind. If those were the words of Mr. Davies, I deny them.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: And yet you say Mr. Davies is an honourable man!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: There is this about it: they are words put in by the Commissioner; they are probably put in the way in which he wished to place the matter before the House. I take this opportunity of saying in regard to this matter that, prior to relinquishing my position as Commissioner, I spoke to him in the office, and the subject was discussed as to the appointment of a Commissioner or Commissioners, because that was a matter which had frequently been brought before this House; and on that occasion Mr. Davies, who was spoken to about it, said he considered he should have compensation for loss of office if a Commissioner were appointed, for the reason that a General Manager would probably not be necessary. And there was a suggestion that £3,000, or two years' salary, should be paid to Mr. Davies. That occurred prior to my leaving office. That is the statement. But as to its having been made after I left office, and made then by me, I say it did not occur; and I deny that I was ever approached, or that I ever mentioned the matter to Mr. Davies since I left office.

MR. W. J. GEORGE: The Commissioner twisted the words to suit his purpose.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That statement by the Commissioner is most damaging to me; because it really means that it might be inferred—in fact, it has been inferred by many people outside this House, and by some members here—that this understanding had been arrived at; and I may say I have been written to from different places by people in reference to this very statement. I certainly at the time omitted to rise in the House and contradict the statement; but I take the first opportunity I have of now contradicting it, and I say the report as stated by the Minister here is no doubt a report he himself has given to the House in his own words.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You have confirmed it.

MR. GEORGE: No; he has not.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I may observe, too, in regard to the appointment, that he said:

If I had appointed a man from the service, I should have been called upon to ask the General Manager, in whom I and my colleagues ceased to have confidence, for an officer to be my secretary.

I say this shows bias which should not be exhibited by a Minister towards the head official of his department. He has given that as a reason why he did not ask for the information, that he had lost confidence in the General Manager. As I have already said, I think that in obtaining his information he took a course which should not have been taken, and consequently he cannot support his actions in the direction I have mentioned. In his speech on the 27th August the Minister said he had distinctly proved that a deliberate attempt was made to manufacture files. I think this was a statement he should have farther justified or verified in the House; and he made the statement frequently. There was no proof given here that such had been done; and this statement should not be made unless opportunity was given to the officers concerned to clear themselves. It is a cruel statement to make, that files have been manufactured; and in fact it would be criminal, I should say, to do so; therefore of course it is one of those things which should not be done. To put it in those bare words, as the Minister did, was most misleading; and I repeat that the statement should not have been

made unless it could have been farther justified.

THE PREMIER: Nearly as bad as destroying Executive Council records. [Ministerial laughter.]

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Yes; well — [Opposition laughter.] Having found himself, as I have said, in the position in which he did find himself with regard to these matters, having made all these statements about these people which he has not yet been able to prove, with regard to manufacturing files, and having made other statements which still require farther verification, the Minister found himself in a very serious predicament, and he had to adopt a desperate course; that course being the one I have just mentioned, that of taking into his confidence this man who had been discredited. I want to know what were the reasons, after he had taken in this man, for suspending the Manager. Why did he suspend the Manager without giving him an opportunity of clearing himself, or without formulating charges? An opportunity was not given. The charge was made and the suspension was notified, but it was not accompanied by particulars of the charges, as it should have been. What were the charges, when they came to be looked into? They were charges made in regard to mistakes which happened during the administration of this Manager. How many years had the Manager been engaged in this work? He had been engaged in it for ten years; and if you take any business concern after it has run ten years, you will find it is not free from mistakes or errors of judgment. Therefore, such a drastic course as suspending a man in an important and high position such as this Manager occupied should not be adopted without very serious reasons. Show me any business which is free from mistakes or errors. No doubt there are businesses carried on in this country which are not to be compared with this business in volume, and yet we find mistakes involving perhaps much larger loss than has been involved in many instances which have been brought under notice. It is easy to condemn a man when he is out of action; it is easy enough to condemn this man no doubt for many things which have occurred; but after all there may be errors of judgment, and I think that the course taken

was not justified or warranted. If we come to take the history of the railways in regard to their working, and the difficulties which have had to be faced during the many years we have had these railways under control, we find that during the past five or six years there has been a tremendous impetus given to traffic throughout the country, and as a result there has been great trouble in regard to the working. In regard to the condition of the railways, I have been charged with much of the loss which has occurred from time to time, and no doubt it will be alluded to later on when this matter is dealt with. I assert that no matter who may come in, no matter who may take management or control, be it the Ministerial head or the General Manager, in all concerns such as this there will always be difficulties confronting him. He will have difficulties to overcome which are inevitable in any great concern. Therefore due consideration should always be made in regard to such matters as these. When we come to look at the work which had to be accomplished in those days, let us consider the service. Have we any instance on record where the service has been stopped owing to the want of water or fuel? There has not been an instance, but the greatest effort was made by these men to carry on the service satisfactorily, and they succeeded, but with very great difficulty; yet notwithstanding all this, innuendoes are cast upon them, charges are made against them, and against others concerned in the matter which, when made, appear to be serious sometimes and which require explanation; but we can justify the steps taken, and they can doubtless be justified by those who are concerned. The fact of the matter is, that it was not the question of the management of the railways or the way in which they were carried on, but the action taken was adopted with an object; the object which the Government had in view being to drag these permanent officials into the vortex of party politics. When they found they had to undertake a work such as this to reform the railways, they took the course of bringing these men in, and of making it a party, a political question. That is the course which they seem to have adopted. As I mentioned before in speaking on

this matter, if such a course as that is to be adopted, no public servant is safe. After all, these permanent heads are the men to whom we must look for the success of our concerns; and when we put men in charge, I take it they should be well paid, and they should be men who can carry out the work satisfactorily. Doubtless they should be men of repute and men of experience, and we should as far as possible protect them from such a harrowing and humiliating position as that into which we have seen them thrown recently. We have heard a good deal about the question of this management not being too satisfactory. I say, as I have said before, that I consider it has not been too satisfactory. As I have often said, I do not defend many of the things which have occurred from time to time, where no doubt matters could have been improved; but I repeat that an inquiry into this matter certainly should be made, and it would result in clearing up many of those accusations which have been brought before us from time to time.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The "best managed and the best equipped railways in Australia"!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That, I believe; but I qualify it. I say that of course there are difficulties cropping up in every place, and those difficulties were more apparent here than in most other places. There was a great rise consequent upon the gold-mining industry, and there were all these things to look at; therefore difficulties have been experienced which after all this country should have taken into consideration when dealing with the question of the railways. The blundering on the part of the Commissioner points to the fact that the country has lost confidence in him. He has taken, as I have already stated, most drastic measures, and has brought about trouble in connection with the working of the railways. There has been a strike which resulted from the untactful way in which he handled the matter; and then, too, we find that he was not able to deal with this matter in a manner which would have been commendable to the House.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: You had a strike.

MR. GEORGE: Who brought it on?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: The Minister entered upon his duty with a bitterness

which was evident throughout. There is no doubt he has carried that bitterness into the working of the department, and he has shown that he is incapable of dealing with the subject in the manner in which it should be dealt with. Going back to the time to which I have referred, when I mentioned the matter in connection with the information he obtained from a source I have mentioned, we find that he has exhibited the same bitterness. He has, I repeat, shown a bitterness throughout in regard to the railways, and he has proved himself unworthy to fill the position. In regard to the general policy of the Government, a change was asked for by the country, and the object of asking for that change was to place a Government in power to improve matters. The Government who have been placed in power have not improved matters. They have been most apathetic. They have not during the period of their existence done anything for which they can take credit, except, as I stated, creating this disturbance, and it is evident they have caused very much trouble to the country, which will eventually result in a serious loss to the State. Why have not the Government improved the conditions? Simply because the Premier knows nothing of the industrial life of the country; and those who are associated with him, with the exception perhaps of one or two, know very little about it. They have shown incompetency, which in my opinion is deplorable; and in regard to matters generally, no interest is taken in them. What do we find? We find that we can get any amount of legislation brought down here, legislation dealing with domestic matters, no doubt, and this is legislation to which I do not take exception; but, as I pointed out the other evening, the Government have flooded this House with a volume of such legislation when we have important matters to deal with. Let us deal with these important matters which are before the country. As I said just now, we have had the question of reorganisation, but have the Government shown any desire to attempt to deal with that? As I have pointed out, the Government have only attempted to deal with these matters in connection with the railways. Doubtless the course adopted has been taken for political reasons, and no doubt they pay best. In dealing with the few

matters with which he has dealt, and which are not of great moment to the country, the hon. gentleman (the Premier), as I have said before, has shown himself the supreme "actor" of Parliament. Throughout it has been a question of "acting," and he seems to be thoroughly callous to the best interests of the country. Take the course of the Premier in regard to the sliding scale. He admits that he is pledged to retain the sliding scale, but he promises to offer a weak opposition to its abolition. Therefore, really he is inviting an attack on the sliding scale. These were the words of the Premier a few nights ago: "If it were the wish of the House, the matter should be left entirely to the House." That is not the action a statesman should take, because in a matter of vital importance like this, he should tack his colours to the mast and decide what course to take; and having decided upon his course, he should stand or fall by it. The Premier says: "I will leave it to the House." The hon. gentleman has often twitted those who have filled the position he now holds with having adopted a similar policy; but he is not now improving on it.

THE COLONIAL TREASURER: Was it a statesmanlike attitude they adopted?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I will take the words which the hon. member used in the Queen's Hall:—

The sliding scale really had the effect of making them pay double duty. Owing to his promises, he could not move to abolish that scale, but if any party took the initiative, they would probably find that his opposition to its removal would not be so strong that they could not get over it.

Those are not the words of a man who has the interests of the country at heart.

THE PREMIER: I still say it.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: If the Premier has the interests of the country at heart, he should certainly say whether he means to stick to the sliding scale or not. The fact of the matter is this: the Premier tries to throw the responsibility upon the farming community; he is really making a scapegoat of the farming community, by saying "It is only in your interest that I am favourable to retaining the sliding scale, because of the promise I made."

THE PREMIER: Quite right!

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I do not agree with the Premier in making these remarks. He is not consistent in his action, nor is he genuine. The question that is uppermost in his mind is not the question of the farmers, but the income which is likely to result from the sliding scale. I do not think the Treasurer will agree with the Premier in his desire to abolish the sliding scale, because the Treasurer knows that for some time to come we must have this sliding scale, and in his calculations the Treasurer has taken into consideration the effect of the sliding scale with regard to the revenue. I mentioned just now what I thought in regard to the Commissioner of Railways and his propensities as a detective; and, if we read the remarks of the Premier on a certain occasion, I can show that he is desirous of creating disturbance and trouble in the departments. We find, on reference to *Hansard*, page 2426, of the 1898 debates, that the Premier said:—

Unfortunately members on the Opposition side of the House were not at liberty to question Government officials, and if they were, they would not get information they needed. If we could only set a few of those gentlemen against one another, there would, he thought, be some very startling discoveries. He would like to get at the bottom of a great many rumours afloat with regard to the administration of the Public Works Department and the Railways Department.

It seems to me that this detective business was in the mind of the hon. member in those days. It is not right to encourage this disloyalty; and I now come back to the Premier's own words. The Premier, only a few nights ago, said that if disloyalty was proved, the individual must suffer. He seemed to impress the House with the opinion that he was opposed to information being given in this way; yet he really encourages it by the words that he uttered. He said, "If we could set these men one against another!"

THE PREMIER: You cannot read the meaning.

MR. G. TAYLOR: He can read it all right.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I think such a statement should not have been made.

THE PREMIER: It was made, and has not been withdrawn.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I think it was not a desirable remark to make.

THE PREMIER: Why do you not get on with the no-confidence debate?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: What the country has asked for is practical administration. The present condition of the country needs greater attention in regard to the finances, and in other particulars than the domestic legislation which I have mentioned. The disturbed state of the customs revenue needs the most careful attention.

THE PREMIER: May I draw attention to the state of the Opposition benches? Hon. members are not listening to the speech.

MR. J. M. HOPKINS: You cannot blame them for it.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: To sum up, I say the incapacity displayed by the Government to manage the railway business, and their incapacity in regard to other matters brought before the House, proves that they should no longer retain the confidence of the House. I have shown that the Government are slow to carry out the promised reforms. At present what is needed is careful administration to cope with the affairs of the country, to have administration of a practical character; therefore great attention is required in all directions. What I want to say is this: I consider the Government so far have shown an utter disregard for many matters which might have been considered, and the chief question I think they have failed in is the railway administration.

HON. W. H. JAMES: How did you succeed?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I think——

HON. W. H. JAMES: Answer; how did you succeed?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I think the railways are not a credit to the present Administration. If support had been given to me when I asked for it——

MR. TAYLOR: There was no union then.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: We should have had much better results to-day than we are receiving. The working expenses had fallen considerably at that time, a great improvement had taken place; but since the assumption of control by this Government, the expenses have practically risen and reached the state we see them in to-day. I consider the support of the House should be given to my party. I

think, too, as I said in my remarks at the outset, that we should settle this unrest. If anything is to be done, let us know what the numbers are to be, and what shall be done in regard to the future. It is better to do that now, and get on with the general business of the country: far preferable than to remain as we are. We have far greater numbers on this (Opposition) side, and we have a greater desire to carry on the business, but we have been prevented from doing so from time to time by the Government.

MR. HOPKINS: You have divided the time.

MR. GARDINER: They have monopolised the time of the House.

MEMBER: This is humour.

MR. RESIDE: Give him a chance.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I consider we should deal with the question finally; we should consider it once and for all. I thank the House for having listened to my remarks; and I may say, in accord with the substance of what I have stated, that the Government do not deserve support.

MR. HOPKINS: Is that all?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I have much pleasure in moving the motion I have brought forward.

MR. M. H. JACOBY and MR. W. J. GEORGE rose to second the motion.

THE PREMIER (Hon. G. Leake): I do not know whether any hon. member on the other (Opposition) side of the House desires to speak. If it is not so, I desire to move the adjournment of the debate. The reason is that I cannot place before the House at present a printed copy of the evidence taken in the John Davies inquiry.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 20 minutes to 6 o'clock, until the next Tuesday.