

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

## ADOPTION OF ADDRESS.

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

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

## ADJOURNMENT.

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

## Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 24th July, 1902.

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

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

## PRAYERS.

QUESTION—COOLGARDIE WATER  
SCHEME, PIPE CAULKING.

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

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

QUESTION—RABBITS INCURSION,  
FENCING.

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

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

ascertaining its suitability for protection by a rabbit-proof fence. 2, This has been provided for in the draft Rabbit Bill which has been prepared. 3, The terms mentioned in the above Bill are, "That netting be delivered at the nearest railway station or shipping port to the applicant's holding, the cost of the netting to be repaid to the Government, together with interest at the rate of £4 per cent. per annum, in 20 equal annual instalments." 4, Twenty miles of netting and 28 tons of wire have been landed to date for the fencing now in progress. 5, There are no data available at present on which to estimate amount of fencing which will be required.

#### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL LANDS NEAR ESPERANCE.

MR. THOMAS asked the Premier: 1, Whether repeated applications had been made for land in the immediate vicinity of Esperance for agricultural purposes. 2, Whether these applications had been refused. 3, Whether the reason was that the land was at present held under pastoral lease. 4, If so, whether the Government intended compensating the holders of pastoral leases to allow of closer settlement on the portions applied for.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Some such applications have been made. 2, Yes, with the exception of some applications for garden blocks close to the townsite. 3, Yes, the leases being held under the Land Regulations of 1887. 4, Pending the settlement of a heavy claim from the pastoral lessees in connection with land already resumed, it is not the intention of the Government to make any further resumptions in this locality.

#### QUESTIONS—ESPERANCE RAILWAY PROJECT.

##### PROPOSALS FOR CONSTRUCTION.

MR. THOMAS asked the Premier: Whether any proposals had been made to the Government within the last two months for the construction of the Esperance-Goldfields Railway; if so, by whom.

THE PREMIER replied: Yes. By Messrs. Bewick, Moreing, and Co., and by Monsieur Céleste Joly.

#### SURVEY OF RAILWAY, HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS.

MR. A. E. THOMAS asked the Minister for Works: 1, For what distance the permanent survey of the Goldfields-Esperance railway line had been completed. 2, When the work would be finished. 3, In view of the probability of the early construction of that line, whether every effort would be made to complete the survey at the earliest possible date. 4, Whether any estimates had been prepared showing what cost, if any, would be necessary on the harbour at Esperance. 5, If no estimates had been prepared, whether the Government would employ some independent expert to report.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, The permanent survey has been completed for a distance of 30 miles from Coolgardie. 2, It is anticipated that at the present rate of progress the work will occupy another twelve months to complete. 3, Every effort is being made. 4, No. 5, It is not customary to call for independent expert opinion until the usual advisers on the question have first reported.

#### QUESTION—POLICE ALLOWANCE, GOLDFIELDS.

MR. RESIDE asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Whether it was true that the goldfields police only received an extra allowance of £5 last year. 2, If so, why they did not receive the £10 promised to them.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, The goldfields allowance has been increased by £10 per annum, but owing to the lateness of the date on which the Estimates were passed, the extra allowance was made to date from the 1st January, 1902, only. 2, It has never been the practice to make allowances retrospective.

#### QUESTION—HEALTH BOARDS (DIS- TRICT), ELECTIVE.

MR. RESIDE asked the Premier: 1, Whether he would introduce the necessary legislation (as promised by the Government last session) to make District Health Boards elective. 2, If so, whether he would see that the Bill was brought down early this session.

THE PREMIER replied : Yes, to both questions.

QUESTION—RAILWAY COMMISSIONER,  
TERMS OF AGREEMENT.

MR. DOHERTY asked the Minister for Works and Railways, without notice: Is he prepared to lay on the table of the House the agreement made between the Government of Western Australia and Mr. W. J. George?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS replied: The Government has no objection, and will place that agreement on the table.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

FOURTH DAY OF DEBATE—AMENDMENT.

Resumed from the previous day.

MR. W. B. GORDON (South Perth) : It is my intention to oppose the amendment of the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson), and I cannot compliment him on the speech he made or on the stand he took in reference to it. He appeared to me like one distressed. I might almost picture him as a man on a very hot day climbing a very high hill, knowing there are no refreshments to be had on the top when he gets there. It was a speech which, to say the least of it, was limp; and in laundry parlance, it wanted a lot of starch. I suppose he expects his supporters to supply that for him. I shall endeavour to do the mangling.

MR. DOHERTY: A washerwoman's job is just what you are fit for.

MR. GORDON: I shall call on you for meat, I suppose. The attack the leader of the Opposition made on the increased expenditure for the months of May and June last certainly seemed, on the face of it, to be strong; but the explanation made by the Treasurer cuts the ground from under the hon. member's feet, and shows that his objections are not worth considering. I may here, if permitted, quote some few sayings of the hon. member from a paper called the *West Australian*. I have cut out these articles, joined them together, and set them to scale [exhibiting columns of printed matter about three yards long]; and I find there is one yard of rubbish to one inch of sense. One of his remarks is:

Our railways are the greatest asset and the greatest security for our indebtedness.

That is practically the hon. member's text; that is his opinion; and that, as all recognise, is the a-b-c of politics in the Eastern States. The railways must be made to pay. The policy of running railways to endeavour to open up country and to induce settlement is out of date, much to the sorrow of the Eastern States.

THE SPEAKER: Do the quotations from this paper allude to debates which have taken place this session?

MR. GORDON: Yes.

THE SPEAKER: Then the hon. member cannot make use of them. He must not quote from a newspaper a report of debates which have taken place during the present session.

MR. GORDON: Very good, sir. I will supplement from memory the hon. member's remarks.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member can refresh his memory by them.

MR. JACOBY: It needs freshening up.

THE SPEAKER: He cannot continue to read, anyhow.

MR. GORDON: Taking that as the basis of his political opinions in reference to our railways, I should like to draw the attention of members to how the leader of the Opposition would use this wonderful asset of ours; and no doubt it is an asset, and a security for our liability to our British creditors. He would reduce the freights on all sorts of produce and other goods sent to the goldfields. He in fact advocates that to meet this idea of his, our railways should, if necessary, be run at a loss. He goes even farther: he advocates that we should actually enter into a war of freights with the British people in South Africa. He gives an instance, and says the Government of South Africa, who are practically the British people in that colony, are cutting their freights in the endeavour to induce settlement, and that we shall have to cut ours, else we shall not get settlement on the goldfields. What a beautiful position we are in! We might almost picture the hon. member, if he should ever sit on the Treasury bench, though I do not think that is probable—but more extraordinary things have happened: for instance, Mr. Moran is again in Parliament—

MR. MORAN: Is the hon. member in order in referring to a member by name?

MR. GORDON: No; I am not.

THE SPEAKER: No. He is out of order in doing so.

MR. GORDON: We can almost picture the hon. member having a private agent in South Africa and cabling, "What is the price of sardines?" Reply, "So, and so." Then the hon. member would say, "We shall have to lower them here." So, he would advocate a war of freights. What chance has this State in carrying on a war of freights with the British public in England or in South Africa? A war of freights is practically the policy he has enunciated.

MR. JACOBY: What are you talking about?

MR. GORDON: The interjections, the mutterings that come from the Opposition benches remind me more of the gibberings of an insane monkey.

THE PREMIER: I hope the hon. member will not introduce, this session, those expressions which led us so much into trouble last session.

MR. GORDON: I accept the suggestion of my leader, and withdraw all I have said. I apologise to all members on the Opposition benches; and I will make a clean sweep and apologise to the monkey, too. The leader of the Opposition, as I say, advocates that we should run our railways at a loss, and also, if necessary, that we should pay the loss out of revenue. I ask members here, as reasonable men, if we are going to run the railways at a loss and enter into a war of tariffs with the British public, where is the revenue to come from out of which that loss is to be made up? We have no possible hope of getting it; for, if we run the railways at a loss, where is our great asset in the railways which the hon. member talks about? The very thing that he points out we should cherish as a great asset he immediately cuts away by advocating that the railways should be run at a loss, and in doing so he seems to be offering a sop to the goldfields, though I do not think he would lower himself to try to get any goldfield members in this House to go over to the Opposition. He forfeits his political principle, the a-b-c of politics in the Eastern States, and appears here before sensible members trying to get, presumably, some votes. Another brilliant idea of the leader of the Opposition—and he is

brilliant, so much so that his brilliancy smothers any common-sense he has got in him—is that if it has taken several months or years to get the rolling-stock into disrepair, it should equally take several months or years to put that rolling-stock into good repair. That is almost word for word what he said, that it should equally take the same length of time to get the rolling-stock into repair again. There is a fine expression! I mentioned it to one of his supporters, immediately after he spoke last evening, as a most extraordinary statement. The supporter said the hon. member did not mean it. I do not think that, if he has the brains I take him to have, he meant anything in his speech. What does this mean? It means nothing at all, farther than that we should revert to the old system. If we were only repairing the rolling-stock for one year, there might be some argument in extending the expenditure over three or four years; but when in the next year or the next we have to go on repairing rolling-stock, we should only get relief under his system in the first twelve months. Fancy that! To attempt to palm off on this House clap-trap like that! We ought to extend the repairs as long as it took to get the rolling-stock out of repair! Yet in his speech, within two lines after he had said that, he went on to say we must look at our rolling-stock and see that it is kept in good repair for the safety of the public; although just before, he had been saying practically that engines which had been three years in getting out of repair would require three more years to get into repair! If the hon. member wore out his pair of boots in six months, would he take six months to get another pair? This argument seems to me to have nothing in it. He would revert to the old system of keeping the books as they have been kept. In fact, he proposes that we should adjust this stores account by book-keeping—that is what he says. There is a beautiful investment for the British public to lend money on! We are going to "chisel" them by giving them false balance-sheets! That is the policy enunciated by the leader of the Opposition—to adjust it by false balance-sheets put before the British public. I wonder how the country could possibly receive a leader such as he. Where

would we be? I would not like to say: I leave that to hon. members. The member for the Williams made some remarks last evening, and though I do not really think his remarks are worth taking any notice of, yet the position he formerly held as Commissioner of Railways entitles him to some consideration, even from such a poor debater as I am. What does he say? He says, as a matter of fact, that he knew the stores account was in the position it was in for years, and that he had recommended it should be altered, but he admits also that for years back he knew it and never while he administered the railways did he make an effort to put that stores account right. He is one of the big guns of the Opposition. They seem to have the same ideas. The leader of the Opposition says, "We will adjust this account." The member for the Williams admits that he knew it was going on for years, and he never attempted to alter it. That is conclusive in itself as to what sort of condition the finances of the country would be in under their management. In speaking also of the late Minister for Railways, the member for the Williams read from *Hansard* and said he was opposed to the appointment of three Commissioners, but that if only one were appointed some good would be done.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: I did not read anything from *Hansard* at all.

MR. GORDON: I am very sorry. Will the hon. member deny having said that? I am only touching on him lightly because of the position he formerly held, and not for what he said last evening. That is some credit for good nature, anyhow. He opposed the appointment of three Commissioners, and he opposes them still, but he thinks that in appointing one Commissioner some good might result. Having said that years ago, and never having made an attempt to get a Commissioner appointed, what is his position now? Whilst he was in office he was all right; but he was too tired to make a move. He knew it was a good thing to do, but he admits he was too tired.

MR. CONNOR: He was one of the hardest-working Ministers we ever had.

MR. GORDON: I do not deny that. He does work hard. He works hard in thinking of the good things he has done.

He touched on the Harbour Trust. He said he knew that was a good thing, that he was in favour of it, and that he initiated it years ago. He takes credit, as a matter of fact, for having brought about the Harbour Trust. I suppose I may touch on the member for West Perth (Mr. Moran). He comes among us with—what shall I say?—with the dew upon him direct from his constituency. We heard him last night. He charmed us with his wonderful witticisms, his resonant voice, and the eloquent flow of his language, which last night lasted for some forty minutes. But this eloquent flow of language consisted practically of nothing. It consisted of a string of words, as a sort of advertisement for the beautiful vocabulary he has. If I remember rightly, the member for West Perth poses as a man of figures; but he does not say whether it is a lay-figure or a figure in connection with pounds-shillings-and-pence. He leaves us to judge what sort of a figure it is. But I can hardly imagine it is in reference to pounds-shillings-and-pence that he poses as such a wonderful man of figures, because we heard him last night in that beautiful harangue talk of the ideal railway, the ideal traffic which we have, the long distance it has to run. He compared it to South Africa. The South Africans are, he says, the only other people who have such beautiful long distances for running. But this very advantage which he advocates is the greatest disadvantage the country is suffering from to-day in connection with our railway services: these long stretches without any intermediate traffic. I will put it this way: Take a stretch of 50 miles, with a station at each end and no intermediate traffic; that is the ideal railway of the man of figures! Then take 50 miles along where there will be a station at every eight or ten miles, with intermediate traffic. The latter is the railway that pays, and not the railway with long stretches and no intermediate stations.

MR. DIAMOND: Hear, hear. That is a good point.

MR. GORDON: I do not know how he worked this out in figures, but to me it seems most extraordinary for any man who has any knowledge of political life. We understand, and the country thinks, that the member for West Perth knows

something; but to come into this House and give us such a bogus argument—of course we know the whole of the language from the Opposition benches is altogether bogus—is completely out of reason. The hon. member was carried away with his flow of language. I will give him this much credit, that I do not think he knew what he was saying. He objects to the rates being raised on the timber: he will run the railways at a loss. There are three of the big guns of the Opposition who will run the railways, the asset which represents the security for the money we have obtained from the British public, at a loss. We will let the hon. member stop at that and let him run the railways at a loss, if he has an opportunity; but I do not think he ever will. The point which the member for West Perth really made in his speech, if there was any point in it, was the reference to the unconstitutional appointment of Mr. George. The point he endeavoured to bring out was that the country had never, as a matter of fact, had a say whether we should have a Commissioner of Railways or otherwise. I maintain that this subject was one of the very prominent questions placed before the electors at the last general election. I do not think there was one candidate who addressed his electors without having this question put to him, "Are you in favour of having the railways run by a Commissioner or run by the Government as at present?" I feel confident that a large majority of the members of this House are pledged to their constituents to support a Bill for the railways to be run by Commissioners. The clap-trap the hon. member attempted to throw on the public, that they ought to be allowed to have a say in this matter, is met by the assertion that the public had a say in it long ago, and the dictum should have been carried into effect long ere this. If we had been, as we should have been, true to our promises at the last general election, the Bill would have been introduced before and not left till now. The mandate has gone from the people, and I assert that the constitutional point so laboured by the member for West Perth is done away with altogether. Then we have the man of figures posing as—what shall I say—as a spendthrift. He applauded and upheld the loss of £44,000 in 11 years which the country

has made on the stores account, and said that we were very fortunate in not having a greater loss. The only conclusion we can come to on any question like this, when we find the hon. member for West Perth indorsing and approving of a loss of £4,000 every year—that is the least, and I believe it will be considerably more—is that he does not care whether we lose £4,000 every year. I wonder if this gentleman of figures has considered what this £4,000 a year may do for us. Has he considered for a moment that £4,000 a year would pay interest on £100,000? What could we do with this £100,000? and why should we lose this £4,000 a year? He thinks it is a very cheap "get-out." The gentleman of figures has fallen a long way in my estimation. The hon. member took occasion to twit us and others last night on changing our seats. I interjected that I was not aware he was coming back to Parliament. And after all is said and done, it was a very, very near thing. He might not have been back if that vacancy of the Premiership had not occurred. Would he have been here? Who can say? It is possible; but, after all, it was a very near thing. I do not want to say any more. I have said more than I intended to. Other members can farther explain. All the arguments that so far have been brought up by the Opposition against the Government have been absolutely worthless, there being nothing in them. I intend to oppose the amendment as strongly as I can.

MR. R. HASTIE (Karoona): I hope this debate will not last very long, and I would remind the House that when this amendment is disposed of we shall have the rest of the Speech to consider. I would like to say about the amendment that this debate is in no way peculiar, for the Parliament of every State in Australia every second year or so has a debate on the railway system. A very large number of people in every State in Australia always believe that the Government are making a mess of things. They always believe that those who have the railways under control are on the wrong road. That seems to be the case not only with us at the present time, but ever since I have been in Western Australia the States have seemed to be in a condition of great tribulation. The leader of the Opposition divides his indictment

into three portions. The first is that relating to the increase of freights. I look upon that as a particularly serious matter. I strongly agree with him that the manner in which the increase of freights was made was unpopular. The Commissioner of Railways found himself in this position. We are not used to cheap freights on our railways, and he himself must have known that any increase in rates and fares would always be strongly objected to, and more so in this State than in any other country in the world, for the great bulk of the people of Western Australia live very considerable distances from the metropolis, and they are far more dependent upon the railways than are other people. I cannot exactly say I believe with the leader of the Opposition, but I am prepared to see it shown by him or by others that it is quite possible for the railways of this State to be made to pay if there be reform in the manner in which they are conducted. I think that many people in this country have had practically a new burden placed upon them, and before that was done there should have been some kind of reform in the railway administration. I candidly admit that I am not able to lay my finger on the places where the changes ought to be made. I, like every other member of the House, would be glad to see the railways pay working expenses, interest, and sinking fund. I should like to see every railway, if possible, carry out that idea. But I have doubts, like some others, that it can be carried out in every respect. I agree with the idea of the leader of the Opposition that every railway should run upon its own, and the people say that the Eastern line should not be made to pay the losses on other lines in the State. We must admit that had the ex-Minister adopted that system he would have been criticised ten times more severely than he has been for the system which he did adopt. In that case all the people on the Eastern goldfields would have said that he was the wisest statesman of the lot, and the people who live in almost every other part of the State, including the good people of Northampton themselves, would have been particularly strong in finding fault with him. I admit the blunder which, in my opinion, the ex-Minister for Railways made. I much regret that before those

freights were increased the matter was not submitted to Parliament, when we might have had a say in the business. The ex-Minister increased not only the freights to the eastern goldfields—and candidly I admit that is the only increase to which I seriously object—but he increased the freights for such goods as jarrah timber, coal, and agricultural produce also. And I am bound here to say that so far as I understand the views of railway matters held on the eastern goldfields, the people there are practically agreed that, speaking generally, timber, coal, and agricultural produce were being carried too cheaply. I have not the slightest doubt that if freights on those articles had been made higher at the start, we should not see the agitation now going on. The Premier, in his recent policy speech at the Town Hall, told us we should have this session an opportunity of considering what freights were to be charged; that new classifications of freights were to be made and laid on the table of the House, and that the House could then declare on what basis the new freights were to be adjusted. I hope the House will by that time be in a particularly reasonable frame of mind. I have not any doubt that many of the freights must be raised above the figure which obtained before the recent increase; but I feel certain very many reductions will be made. The next indictment laid by the leader of the Opposition seems to me particularly curious—that the Government deserve to be turned out because they propose to bring in a Bill authorising the appointment of three Railway Commissioners. I should have thought it better to discuss that question when we had the Bill before us. It seems to me too much of a punishment for the Government to sit here for a long time listening to objections on that score. Let us rather discuss the Bill when it is brought forward.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. HASTIE: I can say frankly that if the proposal be brought before the House to appoint two additional Commissioners, I shall oppose it; and I believe it to be unnecessary and unwise. But I should not like to waste the time of the House at present in discussing the matter. We shall have it before us pretty soon. The last point of the mover

of the amendment is the appointment of Mr. George. Last night some members were particularly eloquent in declaring that this was unconstitutional. Well, I am one of the few people who admit they do not know what "unconstitutional" means. I observe that what is done by our side is usually considered constitutional, and what is done by the other side unconstitutional; and farther, I have observed that not only in this country but in Great Britain there is nothing that changes so much as precedent and constitution. And if this were the only objection to the appointment—that it was unconstitutional—I do not think it would be taken seriously; but there are other features which make us look very seriously at this subject. Caudidly, I do not like the principle of appointing members of Parliament to lucrative positions. On the other hand, as has been said by the leader of the Opposition, Mr. Paterson and Mr. Sayer, both members of Parliament, and both probably the best men in their particular lines who could have received such positions, were appointed to such positions in this State; and so far, no harm I have heard of has resulted. It is possible that the appointment of Mr. George, too, may do good; yet at the same time I see in it a very serious danger, and should have been glad had some other course been followed. At first, when the matter was mentioned to me, I did not take it seriously. My main objection was that Mr. George would not accept the position. Most members here credit that gentleman with great pluck. I think my words were that Mr. George had not sufficient pluck to take a position in which, as he knew, he would be the most severely-criticised man in Western Australia; that serious criticism would be felt sorely by any man who would take that position. I have been in other States. I remember that towards the end of the eighties in New Zealand, the Railway Commissioner was criticised in almost every part of the colony. The same thing took place in New South Wales when Mr. Eddy was first appointed, and for several years afterwards; and it was the same in Victoria, when Mr. Speight occupied a similar position. I was rather surprised when, a number of years after

that, I came into this House and found Mr. Speight was not only the most popular man with everyone in the Chamber, but that all those who might have been expected to criticise him severely joined in declaring he was absolutely the best railway expert in Australia. Criticism must be expected; and most probably that was one of the reasons which actuated those gentlemen who appointed Mr. George as Commissioner; because they saw clearly that the present system was unsatisfactory, and that some drastic change must be made. For instance, the other day every member of the House had put in his hand the report of the Coolgardie Water Scheme Royal Commission. After reading that report, I feel certain one thought must occur to us all: "Is it not possible, is it not even probable, that other public departments may be in exactly the same position as that water scheme?" And to make quite sure that does not apply to the Railway Department or to some of its branches, absolutely the best course we can take is to bring in new blood—a new head who is in no way tied to the system, and who will expose any improper schemes he may discover. I do not wish to be taken as reflecting on that department; but that particular report is so very strong that I shall not be convinced that all is well in other departments until examination is made. And largely for this reason. Last year, in this House, many of us submitted the Coolgardie Water Scheme to severe criticism. Several of us asked many questions. They were mostly asked by the member for Boulder (Mr. Hopkins). All those questions were answered by the then Director of Public Works (Hon. C. H. Rason). He replied to every question, and in fact to all subdivisions of questions. After reading that report, we see that all the information then placed before us was absolutely useless. And may it not be that in the Railway Department there will be some things which seriously require attention? When the late Mr. Leake and the ex-Minister for Railways (Hon. W. Kingsmill) had the question before them, they must have heard on all sides, "What we want particularly is a railway expert." [MR. JACOBY: Hear, hear.] And they saw they would have to shoulder the responsibility of making the selection.



They doubtless considered the matter very seriously. The question must have presented itself to them, "What kind of an expert do you want?" In a railway system there are three branches. There are the traffic branch, the mechanical branch, and there is the permanent way, or what may be called the general arrangement. And in all probability it was impossible to get a man who was an expert in the whole three branches.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. HASTIE: I do not know where such a man can be got. I do not for a moment believe he is to be picked up in London. Those of us who have lived on the goldfields, at any rate, know the value of experts from London.

THE PREMIER: Hear, hear.

MR. HASTIE: We have had bushels of mining experts, and hundreds of mechanical experts also; and our experience is that in three cases out of four they are frands. A great difficulty now presented itself to the minds of those Ministers. My own opinion is that had they very carefully considered the matter they would probably have been able to select a man against whom we knew nothing; and if a man had been selected against whom the House and the country knew nothing, he would, for a considerable time, have been perfectly sure of a peaceful reign. But, at the same time, we know the risks. Railway experts are as plentiful as financial experts—I mean those gentlemen who know most about the Bankruptcy Court—and quite as plentiful as political experts on constitutional law. In fact, if anyone wants them, I can supply him at any moment with a bushel. But I do not think there is any particular use in labouring this question. That the Government have sinned, I candidly admit; and I should like to see in what manner we can make them mend their ways.

MR. THOMAS: There is only one way.

MR. HASTIE: Only one way. That is unfortunately true. Because the question formulates itself: Who are to govern this country in the future? Shall the Government be composed of, say, the present occupants of the Ministerial bench, or of gentlemen like the members for Northampton (Mr. Nanson), for West Perth (Mr. Moran), for Toodyay (Mr. Quinlan), for Greenough (Mr.

Stone), and our friend the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas)?

MR. EWING: You omitted the member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby).

MR. HASTIE: It will probably be well to recommend the leader of the Opposition to make the member for the Swan an honorary Minister. The Government I have indicated would probably be as representative as we could wish. And this is not a laughing matter. We cannot conduct the business of the House unless we conduct it seriously. We want to see a fairly stable Government; we want to see things go smoothly; and I do not think it is an advantage for us to be continually playing the game of "ins and outs." My own opinion is, and it is the general opinion of the Labour party, that we have not much more to expect from an alternative Government than we have from the present Ministry. The question appears to us very plainly, What have we to do? Are we on the one hand to express our opinion of some sins the present Government have committed, and cause a political crisis; or should we on the other hand do our best to assist the steady government of this country? Personally, so far as I and my friends are concerned, I answer that it would be unwise to change, and that we should

rather bear those ills we have,

Than fly to others that we know not of.

MR. A. J. DIAMOND (South Fremantle): As it is apparently the intention of the Opposition not to go on with the debate farther; and as I have very little to say, I will seize this opportunity for making a few remarks. Acutely as I feel that this House is expected by the country and is virtually pledged individually and collectively to go on with solid and substantial business, I desire that as much as possible unnecessary discussion should be avoided, and that we should proceed to work as quickly as possible. It appears to me the question has been debated as fully as could be expected. In my opinion, the indictment made against the occupants of the Treasury benches is a very insufficient one. In fact, if we consider the speeches of the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson), of the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), and of the member for West Perth (Mr. Moran), and analyse them, we find those

members have said here three times as much in favour of the Government as they have said against the Government. That struck me particularly last evening, and I think it is a good sign that we shall be able to do useful work this session. I do not propose to go into many unnecessary details. The principal items in the indictment are the increase of railway rates and the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner of Railways. With reference to the railway rates, I am certainly not prepared to indorse in every respect the action of the late Minister for Railways and those associated with him. I have a fairly good knowledge of the details of the railway tariff, which comes into my daily avocation; and knowing as I do many details connected with the tariff, I cannot indorse everything which the late Minister for Railways has done. But generally, I will uphold the principle that the first duty of the Government of the country is to put the railways on an economical and sensible business line of working, to make them pay first of all, and then to consider the advisability of concessions. With reference to the gold-fields traffic, I look upon it that it will be absolutely necessary, within a time not remote, to duplicate the line to the gold-fields and to re-grade the line, more especially on the level country beyond Northam. There are little hills and valleys which increase very largely the necessity for working power in the engines; and when the re-grading of the line and the duplication have been made, the same engines will be able to conduct the traffic far more expeditiously and economically, and with greater satisfaction generally. I think the Government and the railway authorities are pretty well acquainted with the sentiments of this House; and it will be well for them to consider, even now, where some reductions can be made in the railway rates. Speaking not as one in the confidence of the Government, I am very much mistaken if the good sense of the Government will not induce them, when revising the rates, to make reductions in some lines of the tariff. As to the tariff for carrying articles of food and mining machinery, the greatest liberality should be shown. Many people are ready to say the rich mine-owners can afford to pay an extra pound a ton for their things carried to the goldfields.

That is a selfish view of the question, because many of the mines are only in the stage of development, and some of them are only being prospected; therefore will you increase the cost of carrying machinery necessary to develop those mines, and thereby increase the cost to the poorer men who are trying to develop their properties, merely for the purpose of getting something extra out of those capitalists who have the richer mines?

MR. MORGANS: 95 per cent. of the mines are not paying, you should remember.

MR. DIAMOND: I meant to say that many of the mines are not productive. With regard to the George incident, I will say at once that although I am a direct supporter of the Government, I reserve the right to myself to criticise them at any time. In appointing Mr. George, the Government, in my opinion, made a tactical blunder. If they had waited till Parliament met and then tried to pass a Bill through this House for that purpose—and I do not think they would have had difficulty in passing it, as many of us are pledged to the appointment of Railway Commissioners—there would probably not have been a word said about this appointment, if Mr. George had been one of those Commissioners. I had serious doubts about the advisability of the appointment at the time; but now I can see that no greater blunder has been committed than a merely tactical mistake, from which the Government will suffer more than anyone else. As to the capability of the gentleman appointed, I have not the slightest doubt; and my opinion has been very much strengthened by the work he is doing, with which I have come in contact. I know that already Mr. George is making some very good alterations, and doing good work.

MR. MORGANS: He has not had time to grasp the requirements.

MR. DIAMOND: It will take not weeks but months for Mr. George to get even a fair start in that work; but any trained business man can see, from the way a man starts to work, whether he understands what he is doing; and I hope and trust the appointment of Mr. George will turn out a success. A good deal has been said about getting the very best railway expert from England to manage

our railways. I differ from that view. In England the railway experts are trained, from boy upwards, to the English system of management, which is to earn the best dividends possible for shareholders; but managers of railways in Australia should know that railways are intended chiefly to develop the country, whereas in England the railway experts aim at earning the best dividends they can for shareholders. If we should go outside of Australia to get a railway expert, I should prefer to go to India or to Canada. I am of opinion that we should have three Railway Commissioners, and I shall vote for the Bill which is to provide for their appointment, as I have been pledged to the principle for some years, and I do not think we need go outside of Australia to get two other men as Commissioners. Another matter connected with railways that I find great fault with the Government for, and particularly with the Leake Government, is the cheap purchases of land made on the Swan River, apparently for railway purposes. I do not believe the Bill for authorising the construction of a railway there will pass this House; but in any case the representatives of the port of Fremantle will be able to show that the idea is a mad one. I shall be prepared, when the time comes, to show facts and figures for establishing my contention. At the same time, blunders of this description will occur in the best regulated Governments, as they have occurred under the supervision of the greatest statesmen the world has ever seen. Blunders occurred under the great Bismarck, also under the great Gladstone; and although no very serious blunders have occurred in the world lately, yet we know they do occur. For the few blunders committed by the present Government, I am not prepared to turn them out. There is a good deal said about the fettlers on the railways doing such good work now that they have obtained the shilling extra per day, and about the cost of their work being reduced. I tried to get that principle affirmed by this House some time ago, but only six members followed me in the division. I am now glad to see that the principle is established, and that men who are earning fairly reasonable and good wages will do better work than good men who are

underpaid. Remarks have been made in the Press, in this House, and amongst the public, on a matter which, in my opinion, is a great blunder; and as long as we persist in it, so long shall we have trouble on the railways. I am referring to the railway rates being regarded as taxation. Railway rates are not taxation, but are payment for work and labour done and for services rendered.

MR. MORAN: So is all taxation.

MR. DIAMOND: Until we place our railways on a business basis and make them a commercial concern, and until we reckon all railway revenue as taxation and our railway expenditure as ordinary expenditure, so long shall we have trouble in the railway accounts. The same mistake has been perpetuated in other parts of Australia for years past. The railway account should be a separate account, the same as a merchant keeps a separate account for his merchandise. When it is shown that a railway is properly and systematically kept and the repairs are done to the rolling-stock, which has been grossly neglected in the past, and that under that system the railways will pay, I for one will join members both on this side of the House and on that in making concessions when possible. I will always be found on the side of those who will bring railway rates down to the lowest possible extent, but I will not consent to the railway rates being reduced to a point where there would be a debit balance. It is my intention to vote with the Government.

MR. A. E. THOMAS (Dundas): I only mean to make a very few remarks on the amendment which has been moved by the member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson), but I intend mainly to devote myself to the increased railway rates as they affect the Eastern Goldfields. I have in my hand a Press cutting giving accounts of a reception at Kalgoorlie to the ex-Minister for Railways. I would like here to most heartily congratulate that gentleman, for I have had a great admiration for him ever since I have been in this House, and I have had a greater admiration for him since yesterday, when he showed so much pluck in standing up in this House and attempting, so far as he was able, to defend what he must have known in his inmost heart was a lamentably weak case. At Kalgoorlie, in reply

to a deputation, the Minister pointed out, it was reported, as to the freights, that there would be a deficit of over £53,000 owing to the lines on which matters had been worked, and the new increase in freights would affect other districts more than the goldfields. On that gentleman's return to Perth he was interviewed by the Press, and, at the conclusion of that interview he said the most pleasant feature of his trip was the fact that he practically heard no complaints about the manner in which the service on the Eastern Goldfields was conducted. Yesterday, that gentleman, in a very sarcastic manner, was referring to the meetings held in Kalgoorlie condemnatory of the raising of the railway freights. I think he was telling us one meeting was attended by 20 people, and another by 18. I would like to point out that a meeting was held at that time in Kalgoorlie, consisting of people who were the main customers of that railway. That meeting was attended by the following gentlemen:—Mr. Richard Hamilton, general manager of the Great Boulder and of mines in the north country; Mr. R. B. Nicholson, of the Ivanhoe; Mr. W. R. Feltmann, manager of Bewick, Moreing, and Co., who control the Lake View Consols, Hannans Brown Hill, Sons of Gwalia, Cosmopolitan, Great Fingal, and other mines; Mr. W. H. Rodda, Associated Northern; Mr. Graham Price, Hampton Plains; Mr. T. Hewitson, Associated; Mr. R. Nichols, Great Boulder, Perseverance; Mr. F. A. Moss, Kalgoorlie and Hainault; and Mr. N. Keenan, Mayor of Kalgoorlie. I think the House will agree with me that this was a fairly representative gathering of customers of our railway. To show that the hon. gentleman's statement that there were no complaints from the Eastern Goldfields was a totally erroneous statement, I will read the resolution which was arrived at at that meeting:—

That this Chamber of Mines of Western Australia is fully in accord with the object of the meeting to be held in Perth on Tuesday evening, condemning the gross disorganisation in the Railway Department; and whilst reserving its judgment as to the proper incidence of the increased rates of freight, the Chamber is firmly of opinion that the necessity for such increase chiefly arises from the palpable disorganisation which has hitherto existed in the

department, and which is clearly due either to culpable mismanagement or a defective system of administration. The Chamber is further strongly of the opinion that the time has now arrived when the Railway Department should be placed under the control of a board of commissioners altogether outside the sphere of political influence.

The meeting asked me to represent the Chamber at the gathering in Perth, and to refer to the resolution, and express the views held by this institution. The letter I received giving a report of the meeting at Kalgoorlie proceeded:—

The present crisis is undoubtedly the result of serious maladministration, and the sooner the railways are placed in the hands of an independent board the better. Unfortunately, time will not permit me to furnish you with farther particulars (of which I could give you a good many), but I trust the outcome of the meeting in Perth, and the conference to be held here to-morrow, will be a searching inquiry into the whole business.

That conference was held, consisting of these gentlemen and also of the Municipal Council in Kalgoorlie, representing the mercantile interest there; and probably that is the meeting to which the hon. gentleman referred yesterday in his speech.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: No; he referred to a public meeting, and not the meeting called by the Chamber of Mines.

MR. THOMAS: Anyhow, the ex-Commissioner tried to show that there was no interest taken in this matter on the goldfields. He told members that there were no complaints, and he held up to ridicule the statement that there was any cause for complaint, as far as the goldfields were concerned. In 1891 the total exports from this State amounted to eight and a half millions, and gold was responsible for five and three-quarter millions of that amount. According to the last census the population of our Eastern Goldfields served by this railway was 52,975, and taking the ratio of the mean increase, the number has been brought up at the present time to, roughly, 54,250. Those people claim, and are entitled to, some little consideration, which they have been absolutely refused at the hands of the present Administration. It will be generally acknowledged, and the figures of our exports conclusively prove, that the mainstay of Western Australia is our mining. And yet we have a Government prepared

in railway administration to do everything possible to load that industry beyond its power in this State, and to cripple that industry. That is the only way in which I can read the recent actions of the Government in regard to the increase of freights. I will point out that during last year the total train mileage run in this State amounted to 4,126,208 miles, out of which the goldfields line alone had a mileage of 2,105,001. The member for the Murchison (Mr. Nanson) takes one-third of the northern traffic, but I take half, which I consider fairer. Taking one-half, it brings the total of our train mileage which the goldfields can supply to 2,673,170 miles, or considerably more than half the total train mileage of this State. We find that the Government have a very convenient way of hiding some of the losses over their other railways and of overburdening our railway to the goldfields. The whole cost of the maintenance of our railways is divided amongst the train mileage. We have station-masters, porters, fettlers, etc., on the railways of the State, and we take the total cost and divide it by the total train mileage. The cost of these ought to be divided by the number of miles of railway, then multiplied by the number of miles in each railway system, and then divided by the train mileage run over that system. If this is done, it will be readily seen that the overcharge on our railway to the Eastern Goldfields is very considerable. We have had everything we could piled on to that railway. As we know, the railway was built at a very low rate per mile, and yet our interest on that railway is charged at the amount which the Government see fit to capitalise it at, namely the average cost of all the railways in the State. The whole of the returns published in Western Australia since the goldfields have been opened have been prepared simply with this object in view—to minimise, as much as possible, the importance of the goldfields, and also to minimise, as far as possible, the losses on the other railways of the State. The leader of the Opposition gave the figures of the overcharge on that railway made to cover up the losses on other railways. If we have the Great Southern and South-Western Railways run at a percentage of working cost to revenue of

115 per cent. and 105 per cent., I certainly claim that the Eastern Goldfields should not be burdened with an increase of rates to make the whole system pay its interest and sinking fund. I urge that those lines should receive out of the public revenue the amount of losses incurred. And on the Eastern Goldfields line the rates should be reduced to a fair amount, so that the line shall pay its interest and sinking fund; and a population of 54,000 should not be forced to bear the burden of 200,000 people. I sincerely trust that in the next accounts presented to us with regard to our railways we shall see that the accounts are made up in the manner I suggest. I would like to point out that the burden of taxation which the mining industry has had, and is having, to put up with can only have one result. The State's ore, that is the ore raised from the mines throughout the State, is now worth £1 9s. per ton less than in 1897, and 17s. per ton less than in 1899. The Kalgoorlie field is held up as being the mainstay of our mining industry. The Kalgoorlie ore is worth, or was worth rather, at the end of the first three months of this year, £5 11s. per ton less than in 1897, £2 11s. less than in 1899, and £1 4s. 10d. less than in 1901. Since then, some of the mines have increased their stamping capacity and other mines are now preparing to increase theirs. At the end of this year we shall probably see that the Kalgoorlie ore is worth £2 per ton less than it was last year. One hon. member interjects asking what the value is now. The value of the ore at the Kalgoorlie fields in 1897 was £9 11s., in 1899 £7 1s., in 1901 £5 14s., and now roughly about £4 4s. per ton. We know what working costs are. We know that every economy has to be exercised to make the limited proportion of our mines that are paying, pay. And if we give the subject a moment's thought we must know full well that, if we pile any more burdens upon that industry, the limit of production is going to be reached and you are going to have a retrogression as far as your mining industry is concerned, the industry which everyone in this State is bound to agree is the mainstay of this country. I spoke on this matter last session on the Address-in-reply, and on every opportunity through

the session I spoke on it also. I have been in this country now for a good many years and have travelled from one end of the goldfields to the other, and I claim that I have, as much as any man in this House, the welfare of Western Australia at heart. I have the welfare of the mining industry of this State at heart; and I say, because I believe it to be true, that if we go on much longer as we have been going for the past few years—and the danger has been most seriously aggravated by the present Administration during the last 18 months—we shall have in the State no mining industry to protect. We have heard much of what the present Government will do for the working man, and what they will do for the people, and for the small man. I claim that they give no encouragement whatever to the small man on our goldfields, or to the small man anywhere. Small men going out back to open up properties, perhaps require from Fremantle merchants a little boiler and pump, or a small winding-engine weighing between one and a half and two tons. The Government, who wish to do everything they can to encourage the small man, have raised the rate on machinery for under four-ton lots from £4 19s. 8d.—the old rate—to £6 6s. 1d. If a man gets up from Fremantle, as a big mine can afford to do, a large quantity of machinery at a time—a few truck loads—he can get it up at the rate of £2 15s. 4d. a ton; whereas the small man, the prospector whom the Minister for Mines is so anxious shall increase in this country, has to pay £6 6s. 1d. per ton to bring up the same weight as a big mine can bring up at the rate of £2 15s. 4d.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** The small man usually buys his material from the big storekeepers, and they have it brought up from Fremantle at the rates paid by the big mines.

**MR. THOMAS:** Then you are compelling the small man to buy his goods from the local merchant, and to pay two profits; and you will not give him an opportunity to buy his goods here from the merchants, without employing a middleman.

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** You know better than that.

**MR. THOMAS:** I am stating the absolute facts. I say the difference

between £2 15s. 4d. and £6 6s. 1d. is absolutely disproportionate.

**MR. DIAMOND:** Such firms as Sargeant & Co. are middlemen, I suppose?

**THE MINISTER FOR MINES:** They have agencies on the goldfields, as the hon. member knows.

**MR. DIAMOND:** They have branches in Kalgoorlie.

**MR. THOMAS:** Yes; but you know as well as I can tell you that small men can buy cheaper when they do not buy from the middleman in Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie; yet you will not give them any opportunity of dispensing with the middleman. I should like to show the House the exact effect of these increased rates. Later on during this session I shall be able to give full details regarding the whole mining industry. The figures I shall now give are absolutely accurate as regards one mine; and it is competent for any man to say by what figure they should be multiplied in order to see what these increased rates mean to the mining industry in the districts served by the Eastern Goldfields Railway. These figures relate to one mine in Kalgoorlie. During last year, 6,162 tons of goods were hauled from Fremantle to the fields. The amount paid in freight was £11,793 19s. 5d. Under the new rate, the mine people would pay £14,388 14s. 10d., making a difference to one mine alone of £2,594 15s. 5d. per annum. That mine is treating from 90,000 to 100,000 tons of ore per year. Last year, the total production from the districts served by the Eastern Goldfields Railway was 1,416,564 tons; therefore, on the producing mines alone, the increase of railway freights is putting an extra tax of £40,000. This does not allow for any goods hauled over that railway for the supply of mines in the prospecting or developmental stage; nor does it include goods hauled over the railway at an increased rate for the supply of the people living on and in connection with the industry; so that sum of £40,000 has to be largely increased to get at the extra taxation of the goldfields through the increased freights imposed by the present Government. I unhesitatingly say the mining industry ought not to be burdened with that extra taxation. At Kalgoorlie, the ex-Minister for Railways told us that parts of the

State would be more affected than the goldfields by these increased freights; and yet we find the Government have given concessions to the timber industry and the agricultural industry. On their own showing, they are to-day carrying every ton of Collie coal at a loss of approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. per ton per mile.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Who told you that?

MR. THOMAS: Well, I shall not say "to-day." I shall say "last session"—when I asked for the return and it was laid on the table.

MR. DIAMOND: The rates have since been raised.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Certainly.

MR. THOMAS: Every concession has been granted to the agricultural, the coal, and the timber industries.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: No; not at all.

MR. THOMAS: And I claim that every concession should be given to those industries; but no concession whatever has been given the mining industry. We on the fields, instead of having anything taken off our burden, have had the rates increased; and notwithstanding our agitation, the Minister has absolutely refused to reduce them. If there had been any just cause, I do not think the mining industry would have protested, because the railways have to be made to pay; but I certainly claim there is no reason for increasing the old freights, which paid the railways of this State most handsomely. The cost per train mile under our present Administration has, strange to say, gone up tremendously. In 1894, the cost per train mile was 3s. 2-9d.; in 1895, 3s. 7-79d.; in 1896, 3s. 5d.; in 1897, 4s. 6-6d.; in 1898, 4s. 4-2d.; in 1899, 4s. 4-4d.; in 1900, 4s. 1d.; and at the end of 1901 it suddenly jumped to over 5s. If it go on at that rate, I suppose we shall find that for the year just closed it has been something like 5s. 6d. Since 1894 the average rate works out at 3s. 11-44d., including 1900, for which year the rate was over 5s.; but the average for the whole of these years was only 4s. 1-1d. Looking at those figures, I say that, in my opinion at least, there must be something radically wrong.

GOVERNMENT MEMBER: The result of building the goldfields lines.

MR. THOMAS: The goldfields lines! I think it will be agreed that in 1897 the goldfields lines were not in existence.

MEMBER: Some of them.

MR. THOMAS: The rate for that year was 4s. 6d. The rate for the next year—and of course the first year of running such new lines might be slightly expensive—was 4s. 4d.; in the following year it was 4s. 4d.; and then for 1900, when the whole of those lines had got into full swing, the rate had decreased to 4s. 1d.; so the opening of the goldfields lines cannot be responsible for the enormous increase in the figures I have quoted.

THE PREMIER: There are goldfields on the Murchison. You think all the fields are in the Kalgoorlie district.

MR. THOMAS: Every figure I have given refers absolutely to the goldfields served by the Eastern Goldfields Railway.

THE PREMIER: I was not aware of that. I thought you were speaking of the goldfields generally.

MR. THOMAS: Now with regard to the stores account, of which we have heard so much, I certainly maintain the railways should not in one year be debited with charges extending over a longer period.

THE TREASURER: Neither are they.

MR. THOMAS: We have had the present accounts debited with more than their fair share.

THE TREASURER: No!

MR. THOMAS: I would rather have seen the amount which is written off placed to a suspense account and distributed over a number of years.

MR. DIAMOND: That is what has been done.

MR. MORAN: I will give the Government my overdraft as well.

MR. THOMAS: I certainly maintain that this year has been debited with more than its fair share of expenditure, in order, as the ex-Minister of Railways stated yesterday, to start next year with a clean sheet.

THE TREASURER: Nothing of the sort.

MR. THOMAS: Now I think, by the few figures I have quoted, I have clearly and conclusively shown what the increase of freights means to the people on the fields. It means that our limit of production is being brought nearer; that our cost of production is being increased. I

may say the Minister for Mines (Hon. H. Gregory) was so anxious to encourage prospectors in this country that we had a Bill before us last session with that object. The backbone of the country is its mining industry, and the pioneer of mining is the prospector. We have now on the fields a large number of prospectors working for wages, pending the time when they save enough out of their wages to buy an equipment and to go out prospecting on their own account, to open up fresh fields and fresh mines on our existing fields. In order to encourage them, we largely increase the cost of their equipment and their cost of living. We do everything possible to prevent those men from attempting to find new mines for us. To encourage the prospector is better for everyone. It is better for the man himself to open up new "shows," as he can sell them at good prices; and it is better for the much-despised capitalists, because they have opportunities of buying. Now, the whole fault I have to find with the new rates and with everything connected with our railway administration, is that the Government have been trying to paint the position of this country in as black a shade as possible—have been trying to show the outside world that our railways are not paying. The ex-Minister for Railways (Hon. W. Kingsmill) told the House yesterday what will be the result this year. Every occupant of the Treasury bench knows full well that we shall have to go to London for a loan before we are many months older; and I would ask, is this the way to get a loan on the best possible terms—to stand up here and try to show how little our railway assets are worth to this country?

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** Is not your statement incorrect?

**MR. THOMAS:** To try to depreciate our assets to the utmost?

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** I tried to make a fair statement.

**MR. THOMAS:** I stated just now that in my opinion at least the railways were charged during this year with more than they should be called on to bear; and I say, if the overcharge had not been made, our railways would show better results than the ex-Minister told us of yesterday. In other States, Governments have attempted to open up new country by

means of railways, and to facilitate traffic and settlement. In this country, nothing of the sort has been done—[GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Oh, Oh!]  
—as far as rates are concerned. The Government wait to see how much they can put on so as to tax the mines, and of course the mines only. We have repeated instances, small in comparison with our goods, of the shortsightedness of the policy in regard to passenger rates where, instead of trying to encourage travelling by a low rate, they have put on a high rate and stopped a big amount of travelling that would otherwise have taken place. I have heard of railways being started in other countries in order to promote settlement, and where people in houses have been provided with free passes for twelve months or two years. [MEMBER: Where is that?] Railways in the neighbourhood of London. And this was done in order to create and encourage traffic. But in this State, if a railway shows a slight inclination to go off in its receipts, we immediately increase the rates instead of decreasing, and we do not lower the rates for the purpose of inducing more passengers to travel.

**THE COLONIAL SECRETARY:** Still, we have got about the lowest rates in Australia.

**MR. THOMAS:** I will refer the late Commissioner of Railways to an interjection made by a former Commissioner of Railways (Hon. F. Piessé); that is: "Look at the low cost of construction in this State." The rates prevailing in the other States have nothing to do with us; the rates in force in this State have everything to do with us; and I say that in order to encourage increase in traffic for both passengers and goods, it is our duty to reduce the rates to the utmost possible limit. It is our duty, in order to increase production, to render the cost of production lower. That can be done, and big quantities of ore lying idle to-day can be made available for treatment at a profit, if we do not continue this suicidal policy. In regard to the second point raised in the amendment, I must say I entirely disagree with it. I was returned pledged to the placing of our railways under non-political control.

**MR. MORAN:** That is just what this appointment does not do.



MR. THOMAS: I am referring to the statement made by the leader of the Opposition, when he argued that he was not in favour of placing our railways under non-political control. I am more in favour of that to-day than I ever was. The member for West Perth interjects that this appointment will not have that effect, and I agree with him; but the attempt made by the Government is a half sort of a measure, neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red-herring.

MR. MORAN: It is a bit of a red-herring, for drawing us off the track.

MR. THOMAS: With regard to the appointment of Mr. George to the position of Commissioner, I would like to say that even if Mr. George were the best railway expert in the world, and if every member of this House were agreed that he was the best possible man for the position we could find by advertising throughout the world during six months, then I say the Government were flying in the face of the people when they took the action they did in regard to the appointment of Mr. George. They have stated in the Governor's Speech, that to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr. John Davies it was necessary to make an appointment, and that Ministers have availed themselves of the opportunity to appoint Mr. W. J. George. We have had acting-Ministers and acting officers in this country for over twelve months, from acting-Premier down to acting-Traffic Manager; and I think we could have gone on for twenty days more with an acting-General Manager of Railways and an acting-Traffic Manager. The Government could then have come to this House with regard to the appointment of Commissioners, and with regard to the intended appointment of Mr. George as Chief Commissioner.

MR. JACOBY: It would not have been carried.

MR. THOMAS: The least the Government might have done was to put a provision in the agreement that it must receive the sanction of Parliament.

MR. JACOBY: Where is the agreement?

MR. THOMAS: We shall have it on the table of the House to-morrow, I suppose. Some members have said that if the Government had taken this action, they would have been accused of shirking their responsibility. Nothing more non-

sensical could be uttered, for they could have brought the matter before the House, and said they wanted to appoint Mr. George as Commissioner, believing him to be the best man, and asking the opinion of Parliament on it. They might have said they had pledged themselves to the appointment of Mr. George; but that, respecting the feelings of the people and the feelings of their representatives in Parliament, they had decided to give Parliament an opportunity of expressing its opinion, and if Parliament did not agree with what the Government proposed to do, then the Government could not appoint Mr. George, and they would take the decision of Parliament as tantamount to a vote of no-confidence. The Government might have come before this House—

THE PREMIER: Is there any instance in the British dominions where the question of the qualifications of a person to be appointed to an important office has ever been settled in Parliament?

MR. THOMAS: The whole appointment was a change of system, and, as the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) interjects, the whole system was wrong. As regards this appointment, I claim therefore that before making an appointment of this kind for five years, the Government ought to have come to us and asked our opinion regarding the matter, as to whether we would agree that our railways should be placed under the management of Commissioners, and whether we would agree to the appointment of a man out of our midst, from among members of Parliament on either side of the House, to fill the position of Chief Commissioner. That is liable to abuse, to say the least of it, and it creates temptation. If a motion is tabled shortly—and if it is not, I am prepared to table it myself—affirming the principle that no member of Parliament should be allowed to be appointed to a public position, whilst he is a member and during six months after, unless with the consent of Parliament, I would willingly support that motion; and if it is not moved, I will myself test the feeling of the House on the question. In regard to Mr. George as a man, I should not have referred to this point at all, but should have confined myself to the general principle, if the late Commissioner of

Railways (Hon. W. Kingsmill) had not talked about Mr. George as a man.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That was introduced by the leader of the Opposition in his speech.

MR. THOMAS: Two wrongs do not make a right. I remember that during the last no-confidence debate in this House the then Commissioner of Railways (Mr. Holmes) made a most virulent attack upon Mr. George, and we then had every Minister now sitting on those benches practically indorsing the words of Mr. Holmes in regard to Mr. George. We had him practically accused in this House of being nothing more nor less than a thief. We had the whole matter dragged up concerning the low rate for carrying contractors' plant on the railways, and about Mr. George carrying certain machinery as scrap-iron. In this connection I would suggest to the Treasurer that, in order to dispose of those obsolete articles he has in store, it may be advisable, before Mr. George finally severs his connection with his late business, that these articles in store should be advertised for sale as contractors' plant or as scrap-iron.

THE TREASURER: Give us something worthy of the subject.

MR. THOMAS: I have not the least desire to make any personal reflection on Mr. George.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: After you have done it.

MR. THOMAS: If the House places any such construction on the words I used, I must say I had no intention of conveying that meaning, and I withdraw the words, and apologise for having used them. Nothing was farther from my thought than to cast any personal slur on the character of Mr. George. I should liked to have seen, in regard to this matter, advertisements issued stating that we wanted to have a new General Manager of Railways, and calling for applications for the position at a much bigger salary than we are allowing Mr. George to-day; and let us have an opportunity of receiving applications, if we could get them, from railwaymen in different parts of the world who are thoroughly acquainted with the management and the running of railways. I do not believe in taking a man from this House to manage the railways. I think the principle is a bad one,

and should be absolutely disallowed. I am surprised that the Government should have seen fit to appoint Mr. George, after the things which Ministers themselves had thought fit to say about him in this House. I have stated that I meant no slur on Mr. George, and I repeat it. He is a personal friend of mine, for whom I have the highest respect; but the House knows full well that there are members sitting on the Government benches who, in the last session, did not show by their action that they regarded Mr. George with respect.

At 6-30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

MR. THOMAS (continuing): I have only a few concluding remarks to make, and if I had known it was so close to the hour of adjournment, I would have brought them to a close then. I would simply like to say this, in regard to the freights on our railway, which the Government think it necessary to make pay, that I for one would ask them what they think the result would be if we had a parallel line from Fremantle to the gold-fields in competition with them; whether we would not have every railway line in the country running at a very much less cost per train mile than at the present time. I do not like the Government policy in regard to the railways in this country. I have given my full views regarding the points raised by the leader of the Opposition when he moved an amendment to the Address-in-reply; but looking at the subject from a broader point of view even than that, I say we have a policy given to us by the Government regarding our railways which absolutely can be summed up in the two words: wait awhile. I have expressed my opinion in this House before, that we have big industries in this country which we want to foster and develop to the utmost extent possible. We have practically a third of the continent of Australia, and we have a small population approximating 200,000 people. We ought, in a big country like this, to be supporting a tremendous population; but I claim that we cannot get much more population in Western Australia unless we adopt a go-ahead policy for the development of the resources of this country. I would

like to see the Government look at matters of this kind more from a statesmanlike point of view. I would like them to advocate a bigger policy of railway extension for the opening up of our mining and agricultural industries, and an increased expenditure in any direction as long as the money is going to be spent for development of the resources and industries, and will pay interest and sinking fund on the amount borrowed. I certainly claim, as I have claimed before and will continue to claim as long as I am allowed to remain in this House, that the country is warranted in borrowing as much money as anyone will allow it to have, provided that the money is going to be spent legitimately and that the people lending it know it will be expended on works which will give not only interest and sinking fund but a handsome profit in addition. Railways are wanted badly throughout the length and breadth of this State. I have said nothing about a scheme which I myself am much in favour of. That will come before the House in good time, but I say that railways are badly wanted as far as our mining is concerned in this country. We want a railway to open up the Kimberley district, a district which did well in the old times but does not do so now, because people come down here where there is a greater chance of making money quickly, coming to the place which happens to be the fashion. A railway is, I say, wanted to open up the Kimberley district, where there is plenty of gold. We want a railway to open up the district represented by the member for Pilbarra (Hon. W. Kingsmill); we want a railway through there, we want one on to Peak Hill, we want one connecting the Cue railway with Lawlers, also one from Malcolm through Mount Morgans and Laverton to Burtville, and we want our own system to be extended from Leonora up to Lawlers to join the other. We also want a railway to our natural port, Esperance Bay. [Ah! General laughter, some applause.]

MR. EWING: Don't forget the Collie-Goldfields line. (Laughter.)

MR. THOMAS: I am sorry if I omitted to mention the Collie railway. I am simply dealing with railways in connection with the mining industry. I know we want railways to open up the

agricultural districts. I will not be content to sit in this House and give my vote for a policy of stagnation, because I can call it nothing else. If this country were boldly to ask the outside public for a big loan of money to carry out the whole of the works of this sort, I do not think for a moment there would be any difficulty in getting it, because the people would see then we are a small community anxious to develop the great country placed in our charge and given to us to account for. They would see that we are anxious to develop the resources of this country and do the best we can to increase the population of the State. I am certain that for reproductive works of that sort we would have no difficulty in getting any money we liked to ask for. The Government said at the beginning of last session that they did not intend to borrow any money; that they did not intend to go in for any public works. It appears again that they do not intend to go in for public works; and as long as they remain in power we shall be told the same, that we do not want to develop the country and put money into it. I think that the policy which has been carried out is fatal to the progress of this country, that the Government have made a big blunder in the increase of the railway rates, and that they have also made a great blunder in the appointment of Mr. George without coming to the House and asking their opinion; and, taking all these things into consideration, I feel compelled to give my vote in favour of the amendment. I notice that the leader of the Labour party, the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie), has gone as far as he could in his criticism of the Government. At the same time he practically says to them, "As you have appealed to us for mercy, we will give it to you this time, but don't do it again." The member for West Perth (Mr. Moran) in his speech referred to the fact that one of his opponents was pledged to the Labour platform, and that one of his opponents stated then that if he were returned to this House he would be compelled to vote for a no-confidence motion on account of that appointment. As that hon. member stated that some of the Labour members were on that man's platform, I think we have a right to claim that those Labour men whose prin-

ciple in politics is, I take it, "the government of the people by the people, for the people," should vote for the amendment. Those on this side of the House who have been accused all along of being a retrograde party, of being a party who do not want to see any progress, a party which could never be brought to introduce any democratic legislation, have asked to have the wishes of the people carried out. We have blamed the Government for not giving the representatives of the people a chance to have their proper say. We have found fault with them and condemned them for the action taken, and we find members of this House, whose one plank is, as I have said, government for the people by the people, prepared to vote with the Government who have flouted that opinion! I would like to say just this again. I have spoken many times in this House, and I have always tried to refrain from any personalities or from casting slurs upon anyone. I would not have said anything on this point, except that I still think there may be one or two who are under a misapprehension with regard to that matter. I simply said what I did in a purely joking way, and I ask the House to believe it. I intend to support the amendment.

**MR. MORAN:** He is like a Scotchman: he jokes without humour.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS (Hon. C. H. Rason):** I think the Premier must have had mingled feelings when he listened to the opening remarks of his good friend the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Nanson), who began by praising the Premier; for we very soon found that he came not only to praise but to bury him. I must confess that to my mind the remarks of the leader of the Opposition were in style worthy of a funeral oration, and that in point of accuracy they were as correct as most epitaphs.

**MR. DOHERTY:** You will find a coffin, presently.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** But the leader of the Opposition reminded the Premier that the only necessity, in order to secure stable government, was to frame a policy which would meet with the approval of members of the Opposition. Well, that is a somewhat extra-

ordinary statement to come even from the present leader of the Opposition. If nothing else be necessary to secure stable government but to frame a policy which will suit the present members of the Opposition, what about the country? Is the country to have no voice in the matter?

**MR. JACOBY:** You try a dissolution, and you will see something.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The hon. member speaks of a dissolution and an appeal to the country. I can assure him that none is more anxious than is every member on this side of the House that the country should give its verdict as soon as possible; and that verdict will probably be less welcome to the member for the Swan than to any other member of the House. But we are to accept a policy which is suitable to members of the Opposition! What might that policy be? Is it the policy of the leader of the Opposition — that kaleidoscopic policy which seems to change according to the hon. member's situation? Is it the policy he enunciates when on the goldfields, that which he enunciates when at Northam, or that which he enunciates when in Perth? Is it the policy of last week, or of this week, or the policy we may have in the week to come?

**MR. DOHERTY:** It is that of the time to come.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Is it, for instance, the policy of the Esperance railway?

**MEMBER:** If not, it ought to be.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Are the members of the Opposition of the same mind as their leader on that point?

**MR. MORAN:** Now listen to this, you goldfields men.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I wish simply to know if I can ascertain what is the policy recommended to the Premier as being so well worthy his attention, and which is absolutely necessary if he is to secure stable government. But the leader of the Opposition went farther. He said my chief had missed the opportunity of his life; that, if he had selected the proper Jonahs and cast overboard some persons other than the one whom I regret to say he selected, he could have secured from the Opposition side of the the House two members who would have been sufficient

to give to his Government every element of stability. Now, we can well imagine who those two members would have been. Of course the leader of the Opposition would have been one, and I presume his henchman, the member for the Swan—[Mr. JACOBY: Hear, hear!—would have been the other. Then we should have had, if you please, a stable Government! And there is this peculiarity which strikes one at once. The railway rates had been increased; Mr. George had been appointed; but still, if members from that side of the House had been taken into the Ministry, there would have been none of this bother; there would have been no trouble, no high principles at stake. Then all would have been well, but for the fatal mistake of the Premier in exercising his own choice—the choice he undoubtedly had, and perhaps a choice which the country will vindicate.

MR. F. CONNOR: Then you would have been again in Opposition.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: At all events, I feel assured no one on the Government side of the House has anything to fear from the verdict of the country. [MR. DOHERTY: Test it.] We are anxious to do so. The leader of the Opposition made some reference to myself—a reference which I should feel inclined to pass unnoticed, but perhaps I am bound to refer to it. And I refer to it only in these terms: the hon. member is essentially a dreamer of dreams. He dreams all sorts of dreams connected with politics and with other things not so material. Upon those dreams he builds his theories, from those theories he adduces arguments, and from those arguments he states in this House what he is pleased to call facts.

MR. DOHERTY: That is logic!

MR. JACOBY: No; he has the logic upside down.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I must confess I seldom or never hear the leader of the Opposition state facts in this House; but I do envy the hon. member his wonderful powers of imagination.

MR. CONNOR: It depends on the bench you occupy.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Coming to the attack made on the Government, the leader of the Opposition based it upon faulty administration,

and he divided that fault under two heads: first the raising of rates, and second the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner of Railways—the raising of the rates and the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner of Railways—not the appointment of a Commissioner. I carefully noted what the hon. member said at the time; and he said, with all due deliberation, the fault was the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner of Railways.

MR. CONNOR: No. That is not fair.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I assure the House I am speaking what is absolutely the fact. I am borne out by the reports, even that in the newspaper of which the leader of the Opposition is not at the present time a leading journalist, of which he is not the editor, of which he is only the business manager; though I am compelled to say, in regard to that paper, that if he had been a leading journalist, if he had been the editor, if he had been the sole proprietor, no paper could have been more faithful to the immediate interests of the leader of the Opposition than is that paper to-day. But even in that paper the hon. member is reported to have said what I have already stated. In support of his arguments the hon. member quoted figures giving the results of the working of the railways for some years past. I do the hon. member the justice to say those figures were perfectly correct till he came down to the year 1902, and then, unintentionally no doubt, he made an error. But with regard to the raising of the rates, the hon. member said it was very singular that the change in the rates was made at a time when the railways were earning more in proportion to the mileage than in any previous year. "Seeing that the railways were doing so well," etc.—

MR. DOHERTY:—Are you refreshing your memory by reading from a newspaper?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not ask the hon. member to stretch his generosity too far; but I do not think I shall unduly intrude on the privileges of the House. Now with regard to the railways doing so well in the year to which the hon. member referred, I think we might be, and ought to be, guided by those who are imme-

diately responsible for the management of the railways, rather than by the leader of the Opposition. And this shows how well the railways were doing in the period to which the hon. member referred. The report of the Railway Department for the year ending 30th June, 1901, states :—

The relation of working expenses to gross earnings during the past year showed a percentage of 77·19 as compared with 68·40 and 70·91 during the two preceding years respectively. This increase of 8·79 is so serious that I am disposed to go fully into the cause. In general terms, it may be said that it has resulted from expenditure on an enhanced basis, unaccompanied by any corresponding enhancement in the basis from which revenue is derived from the operations of the department. The items of increased expenditure consisted principally of increased wages paid to engine-drivers, firemen, and cleaners, under the new regulations, the excessively expensive conditions of working the Fremantle locomotive shops, excessively heavy expenditure on locomotive repairs due to bad water, and very heavy work entailed on locomotives and rolling-stock generally owing to the shortage of haulage power and wagons as compared with the demand, and expenses in unloading station-to-station traffic in order to enable trucks to be again used after ordinary time allowed to consignees had lapsed.

MR. MORAN : The old story which I have been telling the House for years.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : The old story which, as the hon. member says, he has dinned into this House year in and year out, and to which this House has turned a deaf ear every time; the old story which, had it been listened to in the past, would have resulted in the railways of this State being in a much better condition than they are. The report goes on to say :—

Therefore, if a percentage is desired by the Government less than that which is shown as the result of the past year's working, I can see only one way of reaching it, namely by increasing the basis of revenue to such extent as will decrease the percentage of working expenses in proportion to revenue which is desirable. Or in other words, to so alter fares and freights as to bring in an additional £296,000 during the year.

The report goes on to say :—

If I may be allowed to express an opinion on the subject, it appears to me that the almost chronic shortage of rolling-stock has arisen from the construction of extensions of the railway system without correspondingly providing for working them. It has been the practice for new lines to be handed over to this department to work, but at the same time they

have been bare of all means of transport, and it has always taken a considerable period to obtain the necessary authorisations for cost, to send on indents, and obtain the practical execution thereof in the shape of rolling-stock ready on rails for use; and as these new lines have had necessarily to be worked in the meantime, there has naturally been recourse to the rolling-stock on the previously existing lines to do the work with.

Again, in this period of 1901 to which I have referred—perhaps I may hark back a moment and say it was somewhat ungenerous for the leader of the Opposition to refer to what occurred in 1901 as an illustration of the bad management of the present Government, when he must have remembered full well that the month of June 1901 had begun before even the Leake Government assumed the reins of office; and therefore, for whatever happened in the railway financial year ending the 30th June, 1901, the Leake Government could hardly be held responsible. The blame, if it attaches to anyone for the state of affairs which is illustrated here, does not attach either to the present Government or the one which immediately preceded it, but rather, if blame does attach to anyone, to the Governments which existed prior to that.

MR. DOHERTY : Which Governments you supported.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS : Which Governments I supported, and for whose actions I must take my share of blame. The report goes on to disclose this remarkable state of affairs :

A stock-taking of rolling-stock which has been completed during the current year revealed a deficiency of 101 wagons, estimated to represent a value of £18,620.

A deficiency of 101 wagons—there is a nice state of affairs! And now I will give some of the facts which have gone to make up the increased expenditure for the financial year ended June, 1902, for which some members wish to hold the present Government responsible :

It has been decided by you to write this sum off the capital debited from sources other than Loan.

It was not written off in 1901, but in the accounts for the financial year ended June, 1902, there is, in one act, a sum of £18,620 written off in June for the modest deficiency of 101 wagons revealed in the previous stock-taking.

MR. MORAN : What has become of the wagons ?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** They have gone. They have not been found to this day. I honestly believe some of them have gone to assist in building the Fremantle Harbour Works:

The question of locomotives sold at less than their original cost has also been gone into, and has shown that nine locomotives, of an original cost of £17,181, had been written off or disposed of at various times for a total sum of £5,826. The deficiency, £11,355, is to be treated similarly to the cost of the missing wagons above referred to.

So here is £11,355, if you please, to be added to the expenditure for the year ended in 1902, for which some members would blame the present Government:

The Chief Mechanical Engineer has also reported that 1,399 old or crippled wagons require re-building, or special repairs beyond ordinary maintenance, to a total value of £56,280 in order to bring them up to the standard of the latest types.

**MR. MORAN:** That applies to every year since we have had railways.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The hon. member has the railway reports at his disposal, and if he can refer me to a state of circumstances equal to this, I shall be surprised. I am dealing with the abnormal expenditure for the year ended in 1902, and am endeavouring to show how some of it is accounted for.

**MR. ILLINGWORTH:** Provided for in Supplementary Estimates.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The report goes on to say:

Half the amount in question, i.e. £28,140, has therefore been provided for in the current year's estimates.

There, at all events, is the first time any provision has been made for replacing the locomotives that have been worn out or that are becoming obsolete.

[**MR. MORAN** interjected a remark.]

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I will remind the hon. member that when he was addressing the House I did not interrupt him, and I think he should not interrupt me.

[**MR. MORAN** interjected a remark.]

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It will be new to members of this House when the hon. member ceases to make himself objectionable. These items go a long way to account for some of the increased expenditure which has been referred to. I should like also to refer hon. members to the Chief Mechanical

Engineer's report for 1901, the first paragraph of which says:

The condition of locomotives, carriages, wagons, vans, cranes, machinery, and general plant is most unsatisfactory.

This was the condition of the plant when the Leake Government took office and accepted the responsibility of administering the railways. The leader of the Opposition went on to say he hoped that when the explanation was given it would not appear, as it did appear at present, that in order to support the policy of increasing the railway rates, "an endeavour had been made to blacken the financial character of our railways, the greatest asset the country possessed, and the greatest security for our indebtedness." Here I may be permitted to say that one can appreciate in a debate of this kind the honest, manly utterances such as I have pleasure in referring to as having emanated from the member for West Perth (**Mr. Moran**). There was no insinuation in what he said, but what he did say was straight out. I cannot sympathise with a gentleman who says he has no wish to insinuate anything, and promptly insinuates it by saying somebody else said it. Would it not be better for the hon. member to say straight out that he thinks so, rather than say he has no wish to insinuate, but that somebody else said so and so? It seems to have been something awful, something iniquitous in the extreme for the Government of the day to have made any addition to the expenditure. But I should like to call the hon. gentleman's attention to what happened in 1897. The average monthly expenditure for the railways in that year was only £39,519, and I draw the attention of hon. members to this. But the expenditure for June in that year was £142,949.

**MR. MORAN:** What caused that expenditure?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The same causes as to-day, I presume. But the difference is that whereas it was right and proper then, it is now iniquitous in the extreme. That is the only difference. I have pointed out that although there has been an abnormal increase of expenditure in 1902 undoubtedly, and have pointed out that it was an heirloom from 1901, for which neither the present nor the preceding Government were

responsible, now I may point out that in 1897 there was an increase in the month of June over the average monthly expenditure amounting to £103,430; an increase of expenditure about three times the ordinary expenditure. That, at all events, is far worse than the state of affairs existing in 1902; and I can assure the House there has been this kind of difference in regard to every year.

MR. NANSON: Can you quote the figures for June in the other years?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I can do it if it will gratify the hon. member.

MR. NANSON: Will you read the figures?

MR. DAGLISH: Give him the returns, and let the hon. member read them for himself.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have them here, and shall have pleasure in handing them to the hon. member. In his speech he went on to say that if it had taken several years for the rolling-stock to get into disrepair—I believe this is a revised report, for he said it had taken seven years—then equally several years should be allowed in bringing up the rolling-stock to the proper condition.

MR. NANSON: What revised report?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The report appearing in the *West Australian* on the morning following the speech delivered in this House.

MR. NANSON: Is the hon. member in order in stating that a member of this House revises the report of his speeches before publication? If the report is revised before publication, it must be revised by the person who makes the speech.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think it is a question of order.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: However, it is immaterial whether it has been revised or not. The hon. member will admit that he made use of some such words.

MR. MORAN: But do not misrepresent what he said.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is here to speak for himself.

MR. MORAN: You should not mis-state what the hon. member said.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am quoting —

MR. NANSON: I rise to a point of order. Is the hon. member in order in quoting from a newspaper report of what took place in this House the other day?

THE SPEAKER: Certainly not.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then I have notes in front of me to which I have referred for the purpose of refreshing my memory, and if my memory serves me correctly, the hon. member made use of the words which I have just attributed to him. If the hon. member is inclined to say he did not make use of those words, I shall of course be compelled to believe him.

MR. NANSON: Repeat the words again, will you? I did not catch them. (General laughter.)

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member wishes me to be absolutely correct, I regret that again I shall have to refresh my memory. (Laughter.)

MR. NANSON: Will you hand me over the printed report? (Laughter.)

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: When I have finished with these notes, I shall be happy to hand them over to the tender care of the hon. member who leads the Opposition. If my memory serves me correctly, the hon. member said that as it had taken us seven years to get this rolling-stock into the bad state of repair in which it was, then it should take equally seven years to bring it back to a good state of repair.

MR. NANSON: I deny that. I rise to a point of order. The hon. gentleman is misquoting me. He takes my words absolutely from their context. If he quotes a portion, he should not stop at that portion, but go on in order to obtain the full sense of what I said.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member has accused me of deliberately misquoting. Have I your permission, Mr. Speaker, to hand him the report in the *West Australian* of what he said; and if then the hon. member will say I have misquoted, of course I shall be bound to believe him.

MR. MORAN: I will lift it across.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I should like other members of the House to compare that report with what I have said.

[MR. MORAN walked to the Ministerial bench, procured the report, and handed it to Mr. Nanson.]



MR. NANSON [to the Minister for Works]: Are you going to wait until I have perused this?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I will wait.

MR. NANSON: You might go on to another point. (Laughter.)

MR. TAYLOR: Euchred!

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Will the hon. member, with the report in the *West Australian* now before him, again say I misquoted what he said?

MR. NANSON: If the hon. member will exercise a little patience.

MR. MORAN: It has nothing to do with the appointment of George.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. gentleman seems to have some difficulty.

MR. MORAN: It is not the *West Australian*. There is no heading.

MR. NANSON: I do not know whether I am in order in intervening at this stage, but I do not see any reason to object to this report. It seems to me, seeing it for the first time, to be a fair report; but what I object to is that the hon. gentleman should only read one sentence instead of, as I said, reading the whole. I should like to be entitled to read the whole.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You seem to object to my reading a portion.

THE SPEAKER: It would be entirely out of order to read any portion.

MR. NANSON: I very much regret it.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then I take it the House will understand I did not misquote the hon. member.

MR. JACOBY: You did not quote enough.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am satisfied my memory did serve me correctly when I stated the hon. member had said that as it took several years to get the rolling-stock into a bad state of order, it should also take several years to get it back into a good state of repair; or words to that effect.

MR. NANSON: That is half the truth, and now go on and give the whole truth.

MEMBER: Nothing but the truth.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the hon. member will exercise a little patience, which he requested me to do, I will endeavour to satisfy him even on that point. The hon. member enunciated that policy, but was reminded by looks of consternation, I presume, by the

gentlemen who sit near him, and the laughter, I am reminded, which went up on all sides of the House, that he had made a mistake. The hon. member wishes me to continue to exercise my memory as to what he said, and I will endeavour to oblige him. Having seen that he had made a mistake, he attempted to remove the bad impression which that statement had created. I think it was the Premier who reminded him that the traffic must be attended to, or he interjected, "What is to happen to the traffic?" And the leader of the Opposition said that, of course, the traffic must be attended to, but that what he meant was the expenditure necessary to bring that rolling-stock back into repair should have been extended over a period of several years. Now I think I am doing the hon. member justice; and he said that the expenditure, after all, was merely a matter of book-keeping, and it could be easily adjusted. If that means anything, it means that the hon. member, if he were Minister for Railways, would feel it his duty, if rolling-stock got into a bad state of repair in seven years, to take seven years to put it right; but if he happened to hold the portfolio of Treasurer he would, I presume, by manipulating—if I may be allowed to use that word—by manipulating the accounts or adjusting them, wrap up the expenditure; not debiting the expenditure of one year, as ought to be the case, to that year, but by some miraculous book-keeping entry not show it, but carry it over to other years, until he, in the exercise of his wisdom, did show it. I do not know how the hon. member would meet the requirements of the Audit Act, but no doubt with ingenuity he would devise some means of satisfying even the Audit Department.

MR. DOHERTY: You have not satisfied them very much.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member said there was no necessity for raising the railway rates, but that on the contrary they ought to be considerably reduced; that if he had his way he would reduce the rates on the goldfields line because that line showed a profit on its working; that the other lines showed a loss, and that it was manifestly unfair the goldfields line should show a profit.

MR. NANSON: Not unfair.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Well, that it was not politically proper that the goldfields line should show a profit and the other lines show a loss, and therefore he would reduce the rates. May I ask the hon. member if he would reduce the rates on the goldfields lines only, or would he make a general reduction? If so, I would remind him that he would increase the loss on the other lines and decrease the profits on the goldfields lines; and I presume he would remedy that state of affairs by making up the loss out of the revenue which he would not have. But we are told that the railway rates of this State are altogether outrageous now, since this increase has been made; that they are ruining the agricultural industry, that they are absolutely ruining the mining industry, and that the poor, struggling prospector away out on the back blocks can hardly exist now, owing to the increase which has been made to these previously high rates.

**MR. TAYLOR:** They are feeling the pressure.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I would first ask that the hon. member should compare the rates now existing on the West Australian railways with the rates which exist to-day in other mining States. I presume Queensland and Victoria can be taken as fairly representative mining States.

**MR. MORAN:** There is the capital cost of the lines as well.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I will come to that directly. At this moment I intend to compare the rates. If we take Class A, the rate to-day in Western Australia, over a distance of 400 miles, is 35s. per ton; in Queensland, 34s. 7d.; in Victoria, 37s. 10d. The rate in Class B in Western Australia to-day is 46s. 8d.; Queensland, 51s. 4d.; Victoria, 65s. 1d. In Class 1 it is in Western Australia 103s. 4d.; Queensland, 109s. 2d.; Victoria, 110s. In Class 2 in Western Australia, 135s. 8d.; Queensland, 146s. 8d.; Victoria, 159s. 2d. In Class 3 in Western Australia—

**MR. NANSON:** What about New South Wales? Will you give us the New South Wales rates?

**MR. DOHERTY:** They do not suit.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** That is an unworthy suggestion. New

South Wales suits equally well. I have the figures here with regard to New South Wales, and I shall have pleasure in placing them at the disposal of the member for North Fremantle. It is only in order to save the time of the House that I quote Queensland and Victoria, and also because I believe them to be the most representative mining States. Coming to Class 3, as the last of the classes I quote—if I went farther the thing would be worse—in Western Australia the rate to-day is 167s. 11d., Queensland 208s. 5d., Victoria 220s. 10d.

**MR. NANSON:** In New South Wales?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Oh, New South Wales! The figures are here.

**MR. NANSON:** Why not give them?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I will give them to the hon. member.

**MR. NANSON:** Give them to the House.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** The figures are here at his disposal, and will the hon. member accept my assurance that there is no object in omitting New South Wales? The question naturally presents itself to anyone's mind, if it has been possible for Queensland and Victoria to develop their industries, including their mining industry, under these rates, why should it be impossible for Western Australia to do the same? Why should less rates than are charged in Queensland and Victoria be absolutely iniquitous, and high rates in those two States be perfectly right and proper?

**MR. NANSON:** They are killing their industries in Victoria. Victorians are coming over to Western Australia.

**MR. DOHERTY:** Queensland has a deficit of half a million.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** We have been told the increase in rates has had an injurious effect on the mining industry and on the prospector, and that it has increased the cost of living generally on the fields. Let us analyse that statement. Nearly all the necessaries of life are included in the rates known as Class A, Class B, and Class 1. The increase in rates in Class A amounts to 5s. 6d. per ton, equal to about 3½d. a cwt.; the increase in Class B is 9s. 2d. a ton, equal to less than 6d. a cwt.; and the increase in Class 1 amounts to 18s. 2d. per ton, or less than 1s. a hundredweight. Will anyone aver that an increase ranging from

3½d. to 1s. a hundredweight will make any appreciable difference in the cost of living?

MR. MORAN: It all helps.

MINISTERIAL MEMBER: Oh, oh!

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: How is the retailer who has to pay that increased rate of 3½d. a hundredweight to apportion that 3½d. in respect of a hundredweight of sugar retailed by the pound?

MR. MORAN: He could put on a penny a pound.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Nonsense! It is not sufficient for hon. members to say the cost of living has been increased unless they quote examples. I think we might take this as a guide: can any goldfields member point to a single boarding-house on the fields which has increased its rate for board since the railway rates were increased?

MR. CONNOR: That is not the fault of the Government.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is it or is it not a fact? If the increase of these rates has increased the cost of the necessaries of life, surely those who supply the necessaries of life must have increased their scale of charges? Surely there is a test; and I ask the goldfields members whether they can reply in the affirmative to that question.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Drinks are still 1s. on the fields.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: How do you know? The member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), who for many years controlled the railways of this State—who worked very hard as a Minister of the Crown, endeavouring religiously to do his best for the railways, and I believe for the State generally—laid down last evening as a principle that whoever was Minister for Railways should back up the opinions expressed by his responsible officers; and he blamed the ex-Minister for Railways (Hon. W. Kingsmill) for not backing up the opinion of his officers during his railway administration. I have read to the House the opinion of the railway officers in 1901, that if the railways were to be made to pay, the rates must be increased. The ex-Minister for Railways did, therefore, what a previous Minister says it was his bounden duty to do—he followed the advice of his responsible officers.

MR. MORAN: Without the consent of Parliament.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: He increased the rates. The consent of Parliament was not necessary.

MR. MORAN: It will be, in future.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I hope so. Neither had it been obtained previously. Earlier in this debate someone interjected that "history repeats itself." It does. I wish to quote from a speech of the previous Commissioner of Railways (Hon. F. H. Piesse) in 1900. Referring to the question of rates, he said:—

We kept that promise by introducing a new rate-book on the 1st July, 1896.

That was reducing the previously existing rates on the goldfields line to the same rates as were charged on all other lines. He goes on:—

These rates were reduced; and we found in the following year the average per ton of goods handled, including live stock, came down to 11s. In 1898 the average per ton was 9s. 4d.; and we found, too, that the percentage of working expenses to revenue had gone up from 49·79 in 1896 to 77·11, simply because we were carrying our goods at too low a rate. We had to look round for the reason why there was such a difference between the revenue per ton of goods handled and the percentage of working expenses; and we came to the conclusion that the rates needed revising, with the result that the new rate-book was issued, coming in later on, and increasing the rates by about 14 per cent. all round. Not on all goods were the rates increased, but the actual gross increase amounted to about 14 per cent. We saw the result of that very shortly afterwards; for in 1899 we found that the average rate per ton of goods handled, including live stock, was 10s. 2d., and there was a reduction of percentage of working expenses to 70·91; so that the change began to tell at once. Although there was such a clamour at the time, it was absolutely necessary that such a revision should take place; but when it had taken place the tables began to turn again, and we went on the upward grade. The increase went on steadily, and in 1900 we found the average revenue per ton of goods handled rose to 11s. 5d., with a reduction of percentage of working expenses to revenue to 68·40. Members would agree with him that the course the Government adopted at the time was the right line to pursue. Had we not faced the difficulty, and a great deal of abuse, he might say, from people on the goldfields and other parts of the colony as to the change made in regard to the rates, instead of making such an amount of profit this year as we had done, the profits would have been much less; in fact, there would probably have been a loss.

Now it is strange indeed how "history does repeat itself"; for what the hon. member who was Commissioner of Railways in 1900 found it absolutely necessary to do, and what he takes credit for having done in spite of the abuse levelled at him, the Commissioner of Railways in 1902 found it equally necessary to do, and he meets with the same amount of abuse. Much has been made, especially by the member for Dundas (Mr. Thomas), of the increased charges on plant and mining machinery sent to the fields. Now the present rate for machinery to Kalgoorlie in five-ton lots, and I think members will admit there is very little mining machinery which is not carried in, at all events, five-ton lots, is £3 8s. 5d. a ton. The old rate was £2 14s. 8d. This iniquitous increase amounts to 13s. 9d. a ton. Now is it seriously argued that a difference of 13s. 9d. per ton for hauling mining machinery a distance of 387 miles makes all the difference as to whether a mine can or cannot conduct its transactions with profit? Is it not almost absurd to urge that such a difference is altogether iniquitous, and a serious attempt on the part of a vile, and I am afraid it has been suggested a corrupt, Government—

MR. MORAN: No!

MR. THOMAS: Distinctly, no!

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am glad to hear it. That is almost the only accusation that has not been levelled at the Government.

MR. MORAN: It would not be a very nice accusation.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If I may be excused for departing from the thread of my argument, I may say I am afraid the hon. member who interjected (Mr. Moran) has not followed the remarks of his leader (Mr. Nanson) when on the goldfields. If he had read what the leader of the Opposition said in regard to the Ministry—

MR. MORAN: I am referring only to what occurred in the House.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Ah! However, that is somewhat of an "aside," for which I shall be excused. It is hardly possible, with any degree of reason, to argue that an increase of 13s. 9d. will make all the difference in the world to the mining industry.

MR. THOMAS: It amounts to £40,000 a year to the producing mines.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: And I think it can hardly be argued that the rate per ton of £3 8s. 5d. for hauling mining machinery a distance of 387 miles can be regarded as an exorbitant or unfair charge. But I will admit that it might, for reasons of policy, be wise to carry certain sorts of traffic at a loss. That may be so; but is that loss to be directly borne by the railways? The leader of the Opposition referred, and rightly referred, to the railways of this State as being the greatest asset the country possesses, and the greatest security for our indebtedness. He urged us to do nothing that would in any way detract from the value of that security. Well, I entirely agree with him. I hope nothing will in any way be done to detract from the value of that asset. But I should like hon. members to imagine for a moment how those who have lent money to the State regard our railways, and how they test the value of that asset. Is it not tested in respect of its earning power?

MR. JACOBY: No; by its maintenance.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: How?

MR. JACOBY: It is all right if it be maintained—kept in good order.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: How do you test the value of any asset, especially such an asset as a railway? It is tested by what it can earn—by whether it can be conducted at a profit.

MR. JACOBY: Not necessarily.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: What is the value of an asset as a security, if the possession of the asset means a loss to the possessor?

MR. JACOBY: Is the South-Western Railway no asset because it costs £40,000 a year?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The value of our railways is taken as a whole; and that is how the man who lends us money regards them. The value of our railways as a security must be gauged by their value as a whole, which entirely depends on whether they are conducted at a loss or at a profit.

MR. JACOBY: There is only one earning a profit now.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The railways of this State, taken as a whole, at present represent that they can earn

interest, and an interest which makes them a valuable asset. It has been urged year after year, especially urged by a former Premier (Sir John Forrest), by whom it was a boast that the railways of this State were not only earning interest on the capital cost, but earning sinking fund and a profit in addition, and that they were a glorious security to those who had lent money to this State. Now are we going to lessen the value of that security by showing that our railways are conducted at a loss? It might be advisable to carry some descriptions of traffic at a nonpaying rate; but surely it would be a wise policy to directly compensate the railways for the loss by giving to our railways a direct vote, which could be shown as part of their earnings because they do earn it. If they have to carry freight for political reasons, or for the purpose of settling people in the country, or for encouraging some struggling industry, and in doing so have to carry freights at a loss, surely they should be compensated for that loss.

MR. THOMAS: Give them a bonus.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is what I say: give them a direct vote.

MR. JACOBY: That is our argument exactly.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If it is the argument of the member for the Swan, I am grateful to him, and at once acknowledge the favour. My argument is that if it is necessary that the railways should carry some descriptions of traffic at a loss, you should not for that purpose allow it to go forth that the railways cannot possibly earn interest on the capital spent in their construction.

MR. MORAN: The moneylender looks to the state of a country as a whole, and not to its railways only.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: In regard to the earnings of these railways, there is one other point to which I wish to refer. The leader of the Opposition said that in England no railway, even in the best of times, ever paid more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

MR. NANSON: I said in the best year. I may explain to the hon. member that I was quoting from *Ackworth on Railways*, and I said that in the best year the English railways had ever known they had not earned more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

I also said there are 58 millions of capital invested in English railways which have not earned any interest.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member will recollect that in his speech he said many things he did not really intend to say. He made several errors which he corrected at the time; but unfortunately this statement in regard to the earnings of English railways he did not correct at the time, though I understand he wishes to correct it now. He distinctly said that no English railway, even in the best of years, had ever paid more than  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.

MR. NANSON: I have denied that.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I accept the denial. I merely wished to say that for many years, to my own certain knowledge and perhaps to the knowledge of some members here, the North-Eastern Railway in England paid 7 per cent. year after year, and in fact "seven per cent." was a pass-word in connection with the North-Eastern Railway.

MR. NANSON: I am well aware of that.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am afraid the hon. member has been studying the authority which he mentioned, since he made his speech. I purpose now leaving the question of rates alone, except to say that the previous Commissioner of Railways (Hon. W. Kingsmill) has been accused, both inside and outside this House, of bad administration of the railways. I think that, from an undue sense of modesty, the hon. gentleman, when he spoke last evening, did not say much in his defence on that point; but I am sure that members of this House only wish what is fair and just, and when I remind members that the hon. gentleman only accepted charge of the railways in December, that from December to February he was engaged in parliamentary duties in this Chamber, that he had only from the end of February to June to effect any alteration in the railways, a short period of four months, they must see that he has been expected to do what previous Commissioners of Railways had attempted to do for years and failed or did not do. Some people blame the hon. gentleman for not having succeeded in doing, in the short space of four months, what other Commissioners failed to do in several years. I hardly think such a

degree of blame will attach to the hon. gentleman, when members of the House and the public bear in mind that he was called on to do a good deal in a short space of time. I now propose to refer to the second point in the attack by the leader of the Opposition, and that was based on the appointment of Mr. George as a Commissioner of Railways. He has also, outside of this House, referred to this appointment as "the most disgraceful episode that has ever blackened the political history of Australia." Here, too, I should like to say, with regard to another element which the hon. member referred to, the Spear-Parker case, that the leader of the Opposition, speaking last year, said in respect of four Ministers of the Crown, four of those colleagues in Parliament, that they stood far more in the dock than the journalist they had attacked. I do submit that is a regrettable thing to have said.

MR. MORAN: I rise to a point of order. We are not discussing the Spear-Parker case, but the railways of Western Australia.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member is out of order. The question before the House is that the words proposed to be struck out stand part of the motion.

MR. MORAN: And a general debate is in order?

THE SPEAKER: I think so. There is always more latitude given in a general debate on the Address-in-reply, than in a debate on a motion before the House.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The subject is quite as distasteful to me as to the member for West Perth. I submit it is regrettable that the leader of the Opposition should make "wild and whirling" charges of this nature for which, in his calmer moments, I feel sure he will be quite as sorry as I am that the words were used. I am sure it should be taken that no Ministry would make an appointment of this sort in order, as has been insinuated, to get rid of a political opponent. It has been insinuated that the appointment of Mr. George was made because he was objectionable to members of this (Ministerial) side of the House; that we wished to get rid of him or that, at the best, we wished to get rid of a political opponent. Although that has been said, I should like to know what would have

been said—and to my mind what would have been said with infinitely more justice—if the appointment had been given to a member sitting on the Government side of the House. What would have been said of us if we had selected for the post a member sitting on this (Ministerial) side of the House? We can only call on our imagination to supply the epithets which would have been levelled at our heads if we had taken that course.

MR. CONNOR: We have had a Minister for Works and Railways taken from this side lately.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: It should not be said that no member from the Opposition side should be appointed to an important position, no matter how fitted he might be. To some extent I agree with that, but not to the fullest extent. Members of Parliament are penalised to an extent already; and if, in addition to that, you are going to say that, no matter what merit, or ability, or fitness they may possess for some appointment in the State, the mere fact of their having served their country or the House in another position disqualifies them from being appointed to any such office. I do not think that should be carried to an extreme; but I do submit, absolutely, that if a member of Parliament is chosen for one of these appointments, he should be well fitted, and be absolutely the most fitted man for the position at the hands of the Government which appoints him. It has been said that the Government took no steps to get the services of a railway expert to take charge of these railways. The hon. member who was Commissioner of Railways knows that such was not the case. Every endeavour was made to secure a good and reliable expert. But it was found almost, if not absolutely, impossible.

MR. NANSON: Is Mr. George not an expert?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The leader of the Opposition does try to make points. He raises every little obstacle he can; he throws everything in my way he thinks likely to upset me; he tries to trap me in every way he can.

MEMBER: He does not like the lash.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I would ask if that was the sort of treat-

ment held out to him? The gentleman selected for this appointment, who was a member of this House, is, in my opinion, eminently qualified for the position he now holds; but it seems to be in the minds of members that Mr. George sought this appointment.

MR. MORAN: I know he did.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You know he did?

MR. MORAN: I know it personally.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Then I give to that statement a most unqualified denial. (Applause on Government benches.) On the contrary, I assure the House—and I ask the House to believe that I am speaking what is absolutely true and can easily be proven—that Mr. George had to be almost implored to accept the position.

MR. MORAN: Twelve months ago Mr. George told me he would like to be appointed to the position.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: He by no means sought that appointment, and it is apparent, or will be apparent to anyone who likes to make the inquiry, that Mr. George made considerable sacrifices in accepting it.

MR. MORAN: That may be so, but still he was after it a long time.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: One hardly finds, I am afraid, in this year of our Lord, people who are rushing about to make sacrifices to obtain an appointment.

MR. CONNOR: Our ideas change so much.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Undoubtedly; and undoubtedly there is a very great necessity for it. But I assure the House that Mr. George had to be begged, and almost implored, to accept this appointment. He did not seek it.

MR. MORAN: It was present in his mind.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: But he having accepted it, I rejoice to say that from what I have seen of him already he is giving an absolute, whole-souled attention to his duty, and I am convinced that he is the right man in the right place; that he will do good work, and is doing it already, and, if given an opportunity, he will do better still. No matter what the result of this debate may be, I am absolutely sure—and I have been sufficiently long in Parliament to

know that if I make a mistake it will be quoted against me religiously hereafter—that Mr. George's appointment will turn out an unqualified success. It has been said that we should not have made this appointment without first obtaining the consent of the House.

MR. MORAN: That is the principal point.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse), who ought to know something about the necessary qualifications of a man holding the appointment of Commissioner of Railways, has referred in very just and proper terms to Mr. George. He believes that Mr. George will do good work. He says he believes that if we had asked the House to approve of the appointment of Mr. George the House would have done so. He said so last night.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (in explanation): No; I did not say that. I did speak of Mr. George in terms of approval with regard to his ability and capacity, but I did not make the remark that if the House had been asked the House would have approved.

MR. MORAN: No more newspaper cuttings!

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course I will accept the hon. member's contradiction if he gives it. Do I understand the hon. member to assert that he denies having said something like this, that if the House had been asked to agree to the appointment of a Commissioner—

HON. F. H. PIESSE: That is right.

MR. MORAN: It is a big difference.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is it necessary that I should say, in spite of the interjection from the member for the Swan (Mr. Jacoby)—

MR. JACOBY: I did not speak. (Laughter.)

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is it necessary I should say—

MEMBER: West Perth, this time.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: A member says it was West Perth, but it was not West Perth at all. The member for the Swan less than a minute previously said loudly enough for me to hear, "Oh, never fear, he will misquote you right enough."

MR. JACOBY: Yes; I said that.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** That is the remark I object to. That is the remark I wish to call attention to, and I ask is it necessary for me to assure the House that I have no desire to misquote anyone; that, if I do, it will be unintentional at least, and no one will be more sorry for having done it than I shall be? [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] If I understood the member for the Williams correctly, he did say that if the House had been asked to agree to the appointment of a Commissioner the House would have agreed.

**MR. MORAN:** That is a different matter.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Undoubtedly, but that is correct at all events. The hon. member went on to say we did not ask the House, and we had shirked our responsibility by appointing Mr. George Commissioner of Railways. It seems to me that we cannot do right. At all events it is impossible to please members on that (Opposition) side of the House. If we ask the opinion of the House upon certain questions we do wrong; we are shirking our responsibility.

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** I said you wanted to get rid of your responsibility.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I am not now referring to the member for the Williams.

**HON. F. H. PIESSE:** You were just now.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** I am not referring to the member for the Williams all the time, at all events. I can easily give instances, if necessary, to show that if we refer questions to this House we are accused of shirking our responsibility; and if we do not refer questions to this House we are doing what is wrong and highly improper. What is an unfortunate Ministry to do? May I take it that if the House had been asked to agree to the appointment of a Commissioner they would have agreed, and that if, subject to that agreement, the Ministry had appointed Mr. George, that would have been right and proper? If that is so, why all this bother? The leader of the Opposition asks that the Government shall be turned out of office and that we shall have all the consequent turmoil, because the Ministry have done what they should have done subject to the approval of Parliament.

**SEVERAL MEMBERS:** No.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** Then I am afraid we can never arrive at premises to argue from. I understood it was agreed that had the House been asked they would have consented to the appointment of a Commissioner of Railways.

**MR. MORAN:** Whom did you understand that from?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It is not denied.

**MR. MORAN:** From one man, was it?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** It is so very difficult to know what to understand from the other side of the House, because the leader of the Opposition, representing the Opposition we may suppose, says one thing and gives utterance to one policy, and another prominent member of the Opposition very shortly afterwards gives utterance to something directly opposite. What are we to take as a guide? Surely we must take only the utterances of the responsible leader of the Opposition.

**MR. MORAN:** He did not say he agreed with the appointment of a Commissioner.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** If the member for West Perth is quite willing to be judged only by the utterances of his chief, I hail that with delight.

**MR. MORAN:** No.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** He is not willing?

**MR. MORAN:** No.

**MR. NANSON:** Do you mean that the House would approve of the appointment of Mr. George?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** No; a Commissioner.

**MR. NANSON:** Why not get on to Mr. George?

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** There is no necessity to get on to Mr. George. The leader of the Opposition got on to Mr. George for all he was worth, and I intend to leave Mr. George alone, after saying about him what I have said. But I am afraid I am wearying the House, and I intend to conclude my remarks by referring to the appeal which the member for West Perth made to members sitting on this side of the House. The member for West Perth is an old parliamentary hand. He knows how to play the "game," and he plays it for all it is worth.



MEMBER: That is out of order.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not think it is. I do not think it is accusing the hon. member of anything improper. Rather do I think I am paying a graceful tribute to the hon. member to whom I refer. If we take away from the arguments of the leader of the Opposition and other members who have spoken on the Opposition side of the House, the sophistry with which those arguments have been surrounded, the position boils itself down to this, that there was an opportunity, so the leader of the Opposition thought—an opportunity which he hailed with delight—of upsetting the Government, and this House is asked to plunge the country into all the turmoil, all the disquietude, all the necessary evils which follow upon the appeal of any Government, for what?—in order that the hon. member and his colleagues, whoever they may be, may take our places. That is really what it amounts to. The member for West Perth appealed to members of the House to have regard only to the appointment of Mr. George and to the flagrant breach that had been committed in not consulting the House before a Commissioner was appointed. Undoubtedly he was within his rights in making that appeal, but unless I am very much mistaken members on this side of the House, and I believe on that also, will take a broader view of the position than that. I think that they will ask themselves a question which involves far greater issues than that; that they will be equal to the occasion. I have no doubt they will say to themselves that they absolutely decline, at the wayward whim of the leader of the Opposition, to plunge this country into all the evils which would necessarily follow, if the hon. member had his way. I feel assured that every member on this side of the House can leave the issue in the hands of the Assembly with perfect confidence; that members on both sides of the House will have regard, and have regard only, not to what is best in the interests of either that party or this, but to what is best in the interests of the country as a whole. (Applause.)

MR. MORAN: Ministries always say that, you know. We have heard that before. The man who is in has always a horror of elections.

MR. S. C. PIGOTT (West Kimberley): When the amendment moved by the leader of the Opposition was first tabled, I took it as a challenge to the present Ministry to defend their railway administration. Naturally, looking at the question from that point of view, I expected to hear, at least from the Ministerial bench, an eloquent defence of the position the Government now occupy. But with what result? First of all, the Colonial Secretary attempted, not to defend the action of the Government, but to make some paltry excuses for falling into a very awkward hole. I was indeed surprised to hear his speech. I thought that on the question of the increase of railway rates we should have received from him some valuable information, some reason why the rates should have been raised; but I am certain no one can say the hon. member has given us any reason for altering our opinion of that increase. He did not attempt even to justify it. Again, with respect to the appointment of a railway commissioner, this appointment was made, as we know, within a few days, I may say, of the meeting of Parliament. The action taken by the Ministry in regard to this also demanded some justification. From the lips of the Colonial Secretary we have heard no reason for that. But when we listened to the able speech of the present Minister for Railways (Hon. C. H. Rason), we found he simply apologised for the ineptitude shown by the Colonial Secretary. I need deal no farther with the speech of the Colonial Secretary, who has admitted before the House and before the country that he has not been able properly to administer the State railways. The next speaker on behalf of the Government was the Treasurer. He dilated at some length on the management of the Stores Department. The information he gave was certainly of great use to this House; and I have no doubt members on both sides will heartily approve the action he has taken in regard to the stores account. But as to defending the actions of the Government and their railway administration, I appeal to him and to all other members, did he say anything in defence of the Ministry?

MR. MORAN: He did not deal with the question.

MR. PIGOTT: To my mind, he spoke with more eloquence than anyone who

has yet spoken in this debate, when he remained absolutely silent. The first attempt at defence we have had was that by the member for South Perth (Mr. Gordon). I do not think there is any occasion for me to attempt to criticise him; and I think the less said about his speech the better. The next speaker was the late leader of the Labour party. [LABOUR MEMBERS: The present leader.] He says he cannot in anyway approve either the appointment of Mr. George as Commissioner, or the raising of the rates. Without any qualification at all, he gave it out that he, as leader of that party, was quite in accord with the amendment proposed, and that he could not say the administration of the Government had his approval.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. He did say that, but he will not vote against them.

MR. PIGOTT: He spoke not for himself only, but, I take it, for every other member of the Labour bench; otherwise we should ere this have heard some of them contradict him.

MR. DAGLISH: You have not yet given us a show.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. That is good news.

MR. PIGOTT: I take it that from the speech made by the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie), the Labour party are to-night in the most precarious position they have ever occupied since they came here.

MR. J. M. HOPKINS: They are qualifying for Kimberley.

MR. PIGOTT: I take it they are to-night in a position they would very much like to get out of. They have my entire sympathy. [MR. DAGLISH: Thanks.] And I can imagine how much better it would have been for these gentlemen if this question of railway administration had not been brought before the House in the shape of an amendment to the Address-in-reply. [MR. DAGLISH: Not at all.] If it could have been brought forward, we will say in the form of a motion, by our eloquent friend who has just interjected—"That, in the opinion of this House, the time has not yet arrived when the control of our railways should be handed over to Commissioners and taken entirely out of the hands of members of Parliament"—

MR. DAGLISH: But you would have opposed that.

MR. PIGOTT: Also, "That, in the opinion of this House, it is inexpedient to raise the railway rates at the present time"—which way would the votes have gone then, if the question had been a motion which did not, in the event of its being carried, take away the life of the James Ministry? I say unhesitatingly, every member of that Labour bench would have voted in support of it.

MR. DAGLISH: And you would have voted against it.

MR. DOHERTY: You (Mr. Daglish) are afraid to face the country. You contest North Fremantle, and I will stand for Subiaco.

MR. PIGOTT: We hear from the hon. member that he utterly condemns the railway administration of the Government. We hear that he is absolutely in accord with the terms of the amendment; and yet he says, "I will not vote for the amendment."

MR. MORAN: And the member for the S.W. Mining District (Mr. Ewing) says the same thing.

MR. PIGOTT: Other gentlemen on the Government side have said the same. We have had no defence from the Government benches; no defence of their actions from any of their supporters. One and all of the Government supporters have spoken in a condemnatory style of the Government, and yet they say they will vote against the amendment. Now I take it to be the duty of the House not to hurry over this question. Let us take our time. I consider it the duty of every member present to state his own definite opinion on this matter. When that is done, there will be one satisfactory result. Each member will have stated his policy, at any rate with regard to the railways. He will have put himself on a firm footing respecting that subject. His opinion will be known, and known not only here, but outside the House; and when he backs down from that opinion the country will know him.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. Let us have no shufflers.

MR. PIGOTT: I have heard much said to-night of the appointment of Mr. George; and it has been stated that if the appointment had not been made, and the proposal had first been referred

to Parliament, it would have been thrown out. The remark may have been passed, as I have previously passed it myself, that the Cabinet were shirking their responsibilities. I have made that charge against the predecessors of the James Ministry, and I will make it again against the present Government. And when the House was sitting some months ago, a very small item was brought before us in the shape of the compensation to be paid to the late General Manager of the railways, Mr. John Davies. I then strongly objected to that.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. Cabinet did not take the responsibility that time.

MR. PIGOTT: I thought the matter then under consideration was entirely a Cabinet matter, and said at the time that whatever Cabinet might have decided to do in the way of remunerating Mr. Davies should have received the support of the House; because I believe in Cabinet taking their own responsibility.

THE PREMIER: You are always prepared to support what they did not do.

MR. PIGOTT: You say so. Now, I am very glad the Government have seen the error of their ways, and have decided to accept the responsibility. But what is the result? The result has come about exactly as I thought it would. On the very first occasion when these gentlemen accept their responsibilities, they make such a huge blunder that they condemn themselves, not before the House only, but before the people of Western Australia in general; and that will be proved. I have heard it said, both inside the House and out of it, that the people of Western Australia have no confidence whatever in this House as it now stands.

THE TREASURER: You are reflecting on yourself.

MR. PIGOTT: I may be reflecting on myself, but it is a charge which every member of this House should endeavour to meet: we should attempt to prove that we are deserving of the confidence of the country. I want to know why such an interjection should have been made. Perhaps the hon. member cannot help it, but the time will come when he will see that he is wrong. I cannot understand any man accepting a seat in this House after having pledged himself to the people whom he represents that he will do the best he can in their interests and in the

interests of the whole country, yet voting with the Government on this occasion. The member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie) has told us in plain words that the present administration of the railways is not in the interests of the people.

MR. HASTIE: No.

MR. PIGOTT: He has told us that he utterly condemned the administration, but he was going to vote for keeping the Government in power.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. A somersault.

MR. HASTIE: Allow me to explain that I never said anything of the kind.

MR. MORAN: No. He is fully in favour of the increased rates.

MR. PIGOTT: I have not got the means of "refreshing my memory" as certain other members have done this evening, and I will accept the denial of the hon. member; but I remember his saying distinctly that he did not approve of the administration of the railways.

MR. HASTIE: I said plainly and clearly that I did not approve of several acts done by the Government; but I said nothing about the railway administration. I never mentioned it.

MR. PIGOTT: My memory must be very bad, but I am confident as to what he said, and I know the opinion that was formed by many members in the House after he had spoken. He led us to believe that he did not approve of the administration of the railways nor of some other acts of the Government, but that he was going to vote to keep them in. The hon. member said "I am, to a very great extent, in sympathy with the amendment."

MR. HASTIE: I said nothing of the kind.

MR. PIGOTT: We will see, to-morrow morning. His speech led me and led others to believe that he is in sympathy with the amendment, but has not the pluck to support it. I understood from his speech that the only reason why he could not support it was that he could not see what benefit would result from the present Ministry being turned out, as he could not see where another Government was to come from. But I would say here that we need not form a Ministry from the present members.

MR. MORAN: Hear, hear. A general election.

MR. PIGOTT: The hon. member does not want it, but it will come sooner than he expects. The tenor of his remarks was that we should "put up with the devil we know, rather than the devil we don't know." These were the sentiments of the hon. member. There are many members in this House who are undoubtedly pledged to do the best they can for their constituents and for the people in the country, as I am pledged to do, and particularly those members on the Labour bench who represent working men on the goldfields, who have admitted that the increased railway rates press most heavily on the workers they represent. I want to know what will be the result when those representatives go before their constituents again, if they vote against this amendment.

MR. DOHERTY: Annihilation.

MR. PIGOTT: At any rate, they have now to decide whether they are pledged to the Ministry or are pledged to the people. It is not a question of the Opposition at all. Do you think this amendment was brought forward without a purpose? [MINISTERIAL MEMBERS: No.] We brought it forward with the distinct purpose of making certain members on that Labour bench, the bulk of them, besides some other members on the Government side, take a firm stand on this question, once for all. We leave it to those members to vote according to their consciences. The cry has gone forth from the people, both inside and outside this House, that Parliament as at present constituted does not enjoy the respect of the community. Now has come the occasion to give the people at large an opportunity of speaking, through their representatives, on this question. By the time the question goes to a vote, many members I think will cast their vote for the amendment. When they have considered this matter over, they will realise that it is a question of protecting the people. They have been influenced to some extent by the tactics used on the Government side to deter them from giving a vote which may overthrow the Government; but I may say it was for that reason only, for compelling them to give a straight vote, that this amendment was brought in. If they vote according to the way the people who sent them here expect them to vote, then the result

will be the overthrow of the present Government.

MR. RESIDE: And an appeal to the people of the country.

MR. PIGOTT: You don't want it.

MR. RESIDE: I do want it as soon as possible.

MR. PIGOTT: Why do they wish to keep the James Government in? Is it for the reason given by the member for Kanowna that there is not a sufficient number of gentlemen on the other side of the House to form a stable Government if the present Government are turned out? I have not been authorised by the leader of my party, but I say conscientiously that the bulk of the members on this side will, if this amendment is carried, be quite prepared to hand to the Speaker their resignations to-morrow. If this question is looked at in the light in which it ought to be viewed, then the amendment will be carried by an overwhelming majority, because the chance has been given to the Ministry to defend themselves, and they have been found wanting. The question now is, does this Parliament as now constituted contain members who are capable of administering the different departments of Government? I say that as long as I have been in this House there has not been good government; and if the question is put to the people, I believe my opinion will prove to be right without any possible doubt. We thought that when it came to the present Minister for Railways to state his defence, we should hear from him some reason why the railway rates were increased. But I do not remember any one cause which he pointed out as a reasonable ground for having increased the rates. He told us that in June, 1901, the working expenses of the railways in proportion to revenue amounted to 77·19 per cent., and that they had been mounting up two years previously. He did not distinctly say, but led the House to infer, that because this percentage has increased, it naturally follows that the railways are not paying as well as they were paying in a previous period. I do not know about the previous administration of the railways, but I do not see that this is an argument which can be carried to any definite conclusion. He gives us figures, the figures of either the profits or the losses made by the railways. I think everyone in this House

will agree that the population of this State is increasing day by day; and that being the case, we must have more work for our railways. A time will come, unless we keep on extending our railways for ever and a day, when the proportion that the sum for working expenses bears to the revenue must decrease. There is no doubt about that. If we double the revenue derived from railways, that is the gross income, would we not have a much better profit than we have to-day? I point that out only with the object of showing that the ex-Minister has not, to my mind, given us any just cause to believe there was a necessity for raising the rates. As to the appointment of a Commissioner, I have waited until I am tired for some explanation of this; I have waited until I have given it up as a bad job, till I am absolutely convinced there is no reason why the Government should have chosen Mr. George to safeguard the railways. It was not on account of his qualifications, for, if it had been so, those qualifications would have been mentioned to us. But they have not been stated. We have not been told that Mr. George has had any experience in railways. We have been told that he is a strong man, that he is a man of capabilities, that he has had charge of construction of many works; but I hold that he is not, because he has been intrusted with the work of construction of railways, more entitled to be given the position to which he has been appointed than any ordinary mechanic who has assisted in the construction of one of His Majesty's ships would be entitled to be appointed an admiral of the fleet in the British navy. In concluding, I again wish to express my opinion that members should vote according to their consciences. The question is not one whether the House should dissolve or not. It is simply a question whether this amendment to the Address-in-reply is justifiable. I hold that it is. I am perfectly confident that there are many members on this (Opposition) side who entertain the same view. I want to hear what members on the other side have to say on the matter, and unless they can give me better reasons than the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie) has supplied, I shall accuse them of breaking faith with the people. (Opposition applause.)

MR. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco): I have to congratulate the last speaker on the serious manner in which he got rid of those jokes which have so delighted the Assembly to-night, and I can assure him that the seriousness of their delivery added much to their effect. We have been gratified on this (Labour) bench by the amount of consideration devoted to the Labour party by members on the Opposition side of the House. We have been specially delighted by the sympathy from such unexpected quarters as the member for West Perth and the member for West Kimberley; sympathy as unexpected as perhaps it was undeserved. However, we appreciate it all the more because we feel our want of merit in the matter. I am sorry to see the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) is not sympathetic, but at the same time I thank him for the challenge he was good enough to throw out to me that we should both contest the two seats; but as one seat is quite enough for me—

MR. D. J. DOHERTY: I never interjected anything of the sort. I told the leader of the Labour party that if he would resign I would fight him in the labour constituency of North Fremantle.

MR. MORAN: That is a generous offer. You ought to take it.

MR. DAGLISH: I am sorry indeed it is made under a misapprehension. I have the misfortune not to be the leader of the Labour party, but if the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie) wishes to accept the offer, I will not present any objection. The sympathy from members of the Opposition reminds me very much of the tears which the walrus shed before devouring those oysters which formed so delightful a repast for him as narrated in "Alice in Wonderland." I think there is just about as much genuineness about it. I am rather indebted to the member for West Kimberley (Mr. Pigott) for urging that we should vote as his conscience dictated.

MR. PIGOTT: Your consciences.

MR. DAGLISH: He said not as my conscience, but as his conscience dictated.

MR. PIGOTT: I object. I did not say that.

MR. DAGLISH: I am quite willing to give the member for West Kimberley the benefit of having said "as our consciences dictated"; but then he told us

what our consciences dictated, which amounted to stating what his conscience dictated, and putting it down to us. The hon. member on this, as on a previous occasion when a no-confidence motion was under discussion, has simply taken upon himself to lecture all others in the House as to how they should vote; but I for one object to being dictated to, as the hon. member now appears to be so serious in the matter, because I am quite prepared to take the responsibility of my vote in this or any other matters. I am quite prepared to do so without being challenged to give a vote in accordance with the wishes of my constituents. I face my constituents every day and, seeing that they are almost at the door of the Assembly, I can declare that I am not afraid to face them. I am within their reach at any time, and therefore present to be attacked if I have done anything deserving of it. The member for West Kimberley is not in the same position, but unfortunately, or fortunately for himself, he has the advantage to represent constituents who do not take much interest in political questions, but whose politics are usually formed for them by the member who chances to represent them. The member for West Perth (Mr. Moran), lecturing the Labour party on what they should do, spoke of "our masters." He spoke of the Labour party as though they had more masters than members outside that party. I recognise as my masters only those electors whom I am sent to Parliament to represent.

MR. MORAN : No. The Labour caucus.

MR. DAGLISH : I recognise none but my constituents as being entitled to dictate to me regarding my actions in this House. From them I draw the breath of my political life, and to them I am responsible for any political action I take. The member for West Perth is as directly responsible to those who sent him here, the only difference being that in my case I have more masters, inasmuch as a larger number of electors did me the honour to send me to the House.

MR. MORAN : How they have changed since!

MR. DAGLISH : Quite so. They have doubled since; but apart altogether from this question I cannot help regret-

ting that the amendment brought forward by the leader of the Opposition has been tabled. I am quite willing to admit that I would sooner it had not been tabled, not because I have any hesitation in voting upon it, but because it is a simple waste of time, in my opinion, being merely an attempt to harass the Government, and to prevent the work of the Government from being carried on, causing two debates to be held on the Address-in-reply where one debate would do. The country requires us now to get on with the arrears of legislation and with the work of putting all our departments on a proper footing. I am quite satisfied that even on the Opposition side there are few who will deny my accusation. The country is crying aloud to have honest political work done in this House, and it is much to be regretted that members have not recognised this cry, owing probably, in many cases, to the distances and the small numbers they represent. I can understand that the member for West Kimberley may be anxious for a dissolution. He may be anxious for a dissolution before there is a Re-distribution of Seats Bill passed, for the simple fact that if such a Bill is introduced it will doubtless contain drastic provisions with regard to the electorate of West Kimberley. [Interjection by Mr. PROCTOR.] In that case this House will have the opportunity of appealing this year, instead of three years hence, for getting the views of the public on the connection of the two Chambers, and that will give us direct representation of the people a little earlier than we should otherwise get it. I cannot help drawing attention to one of the remarks made by the member for the Williams (Hon. F. H. Piesse) yesterday in regard to the cost of the eight-hours system on the railway. I was much surprised to understand from that member that he had, as far as I had been able to make out, overstated that cost for the purpose of an argument. It seemed to me a very improper thing that any member should have to admit that he had been guilty of that. Proceeding to the discussion of the administration of the railways, I am willing to admit that the railway policy of the Government so far does not altogether give me satisfaction, but I am not, because there are certain evils in the

Railway Department, therefore prepared to introduce greater evils in every department of the State. I recognise that the carrying of this amendment would have, as far as I am able to judge, that effect. In regard to the increase of rates, our railways ought to be made to pay working expenses, interest, and sinking fund, and I am quite prepared to support this or any other Government in making them do so.

MR. PIGOTT: Can you show why it is necessary to make them pay? No one has offered any explanation. Members have not told us why they are not paying. They have not told us anything about it.

MR. DAGLISH: I hope that my standing up will not prevent the hon. member from going on with his speech. I shall have pleasure in sitting down if he desires it, to listen to his farther enlightening the House. If the hon. member has finished his second speech, I shall go on until he wishes to speak again. I would urge that the House is not qualified to discuss the details of railway rates, and I think the statements made by some members of the Opposition that the rates should not be altered until the House have been consulted is absurd.

MR. MORAN: That is the proposal of your own side. Read the Governor's Speech.

MR. DAGLISH: I think the proposal to put intended alterations on the table of the House before they are made is not at all wise; but though we as a body are not competent to revise the rates, we are competent, after they have been revised, to express our opinion with regard to the revision adopted. I am not prepared to-night to go into this item of railway rates and freights, but I am prepared to say that proper railway management being secured and the department reorganised, then the railways, economically administered, ought to be able to pay legitimate charges, including sinking fund, and that with this object a scientific adjustment of the charges on the various lines should be made. I should like, if it were possible, to see each line treated separately, at all events in the annual reports of the department.

MR. MORAN: That is always done.

MR. DAGLISH: Quite so. But we have as yet no figures for last year. I contend it ought to be possible, imme-

diately the financial year is ended, to have in this House a statement of expenses and receipts of each separate line for that year; and we ought to be in a position to-night to discuss the Railway Department with a full knowledge of the receipts and expenditure for the last 12 months. Then again, I think the capitalisation of the railways should be on the basis of the average cost. I do not think it would be reasonable to treat each line separately in that respect; because some of the lines have been constructed in very exceptional circumstances, and therefore would have a material advantage over other lines constructed under normal conditions only. For instance, the Southern Cross to Coolgardie section of the goldfields line was constructed in exceptional circumstances, viz., at a rate far less than for any other line in the State. But I do not think it would be fair to charge that line with only its nominal cost of construction. That would not be reasonable.

MR. MORAN: That is what is done.

MR. DAGLISH: Well, I am not here to justify anything that is being done or that has been done. I am here simply to express my opinions—

MR. CONNOR: And to vote.

MR. DAGLISH: And to express them as they come to my mind, independently of the existing or any past Government—[MR. DOHERTY: Or of the Labour party]—and independently of even the member for North Fremantle. [MR. DOHERTY: Do not consider me.] I think, however, if we give assistance to certain of our industries, we should give that assistance by having the cost of such concessions paid to the Railway Department by the Treasury, after our scale of rates has been scientifically adjusted; and then the country would know how much its agricultural industries were costing, and so with the coal and timber industries. The country would know exactly what it was paying for each industry, and the railways would get the benefit of their full earnings. If we had that system, then we should not be in danger of starving our railways in order to grant concessions to certain industries, nor of cutting down the wages of men working on the railways, nor of increasing their hours of work, in order that we might build up certain industries at the expense

of this small section of our people. Such concessions should, I contend, be paid for out of consolidated revenue; and the country should not be asked to grant concessions the value of which it is impossible for either the country or the House to estimate. Then we should be running the railways and our railway bookkeeping on a fair commercial system; we should know precisely what our various industries are costing, and what value, in proportion to the number of men employed, we receive from those industries. If there be special consideration given to any industries, I think the industries on the goldfields should receive more than others. I think gold-mining deserves great consideration, and that if there be any difference in rates on the lines it should be in favour of the goldfields lines. I do not think the goldfields people should have imposed on them the duty of supporting our whole railway system. I question whether it be wise that the rates should be uniform, because I think we should give some consideration to the distance our goldfields residents are from the port at which their goods arrive. And if we do that, I think we shall not hear very much about the necessity for constructing the Esperance line. And this is a question the House will have to face: whether some concession of that sort could not at an early date be made to the goldfields. It would be far better to grant some such concession, so as to give the people on the fields freightage at a rate that would be equal to the cost of carrying goods by rail from Esperance to the goldfields. I say this question should receive consideration from the Government when they are dealing with the rates generally. In regard to the appointment of a Commissioner to manage our railways, I am quite prepared to express the opinion that we as a Parliament should retain the absolute control of our Railway Department. I am quite prepared to say we, as representatives of the people, should not allow the control of that big asset of the people to pass out of our hands, and that the proposal to constitute a non-political or independent board to control the Railway Department savours simply of a want of confidence in the two Houses. I do not know of any benefit that has accrued to the

Eastern States from those non-political boards that we have any need to seek after. So far as I was able to judge from my observations in Victoria, the establishment of a board of Commissioners there was not satisfactory; it did not conduce to the economical working of the railways; and as we all know, the Victorian board of three Commissioners was abolished in favour of one Commissioner. As regards the present proposals of the Ministry, they seem to me to have been very materially modified from what was originally suggested, as far as we can judge from the newspaper version of the intentions of the Leake Government in this matter. So far as I can learn, the original proposal was to constitute a board entirely free from political control. But the present proposal is to have a board with a fair amount of political control retained over it. In regard to the board, I think if we are to have a railway Commissioner, one is enough. If we have three, and there be a difference of opinion, it is the fiat of one man that will carry the day. In any question on which there is a difference in a board of three, it will be settled by one man. We know experts continually differ; and if there be differences, there is always danger of friction between the members of the board, or else of one man's getting a preponderating influence. And then, if the others, as a board, merely register the decisions of the chairman, of what use is the board? We are simply creating unnecessarily cumbersome machinery.

MR. PIGOTT: You do not believe in a board?

MR. DAGLISH: I do not believe in a board.

MR. CONNOR: Then you are speaking in favour of the amendment.

MR. DAGLISH: I shall refer directly to the extent to which I will support the amendment. At present I am dealing with the board. But apart altogether from the question whether we are to have political or to have non-political control, there is the vital question whether Parliament should or should not have been consulted in this matter; and I unhesitatingly say the Government had no right to propose such an important change as this without first consulting Parliament—(OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear)—that the Government had no right to



appoint any Commissioner without first obtaining the sanction of Parliament; that, in my opinion, the alleged technical, legal right the Government may have under the Railways Act is not one that should seriously be propounded. I have little doubt, also, that this right was discovered after the appointment was made. At all events, it seems to me to have been brought forward as a very weak justification for an obviously wrongful act. No one would seriously contend it was a justification for the appointment. I do not think the Ministry themselves would rely to any great extent on that section of the Railways Act. We know it has been allowed to become a dead letter; and seeing it has not been acted on for I do not know how long in the past history of this State, I say the fact of its being ignored for so many years practically proves that custom did not warrant the Ministry in bringing the Act into force without first consulting Parliament. The action of the Government was equivalent to an absolutely new departure, and to establishing a new law without parliamentary consent. I am quite certain that not ten members of this House were aware of that section in the Act, even if Ministers, or some of them, knew of it. This important new departure, however, according to the Governor's Speech, practically amounts to a change of title only: and if it were to end there—if it simply meant appointing Mr. George as Commissioner of Railways, with the title of Commissioner, but to fulfil the functions of a general manager—I confess the matter would not seem to me to be one of very great importance.

MR. MORAN: But the Government promise a Bill to make two more Commissioners.

MR. DAGLISH: Quite so; and when they bring in that Bill, I will assist my friend in opposing it.

MR. MORAN: That also will be a vital question; and to throw out the Bill will be taken as a vote of want-of-confidence.

MR. O'CONNOR: He (Mr. Daglish) will withdraw that statement.

MR. DAGLISH: In regard to the personal aspect of the appointment, I shall not express an opinion one way or other; but I may say I think it unreasonable that a member of this House should have been selected for any permanent

appointment in the public service. I think, if it be contemplated by the Government to appoint a member of Parliament to a position, he should first retire from Parliament and remain outside for a few months before the appointment is conferred upon him. I am quite satisfied there was no intention to weaken the Opposition; but I can understand the Opposition objecting to losing one of their most prominent members.

MR. CONNOR: We have not lost; we have gained.

MR. DAGLISH: Perhaps they would not be sorry to lose our friend the inter-jector.

MR. CONNOR: Oh, no. They could not do without me.

MR. DAGLISH: However, besides the question of the administration of the Railway Department and the Ministerial railway policy, we are called upon to weigh the question whether the action of the Ministry in this matter justifies us in removing them from the ministerial bench. And even if we came to the decision that so soon as the Ministry could be satisfactorily replaced, we should be justified in removing them, then we have the farther consideration: can the Ministry be satisfactorily replaced at the present time? Now in regard to the first question—are the Government deserving of removal on account of their railway policy—I am prepared to say, no. As far as I am able to judge, the Government are in this matter at a certain disadvantage. The Premier, at all events, was not *particeps criminis* until the matter had advanced to a certain stage.

MR. DOHERTY: In his Perth Town Hall speech he said he would take over the sins of the Leake Ministry.

MR. DAGLISH: Quite so. I admire the Premier for his boldness in saying so. I think his bravery and his candour deserve our praise and commendation rather than to be twisted into a farther attack upon him. I recognise the Premier was unfortunate in the fact that he came into office just before the appointment was consummated. Had he achieved office just after the consummation, members could not have attacked him because of it. He came in when the whole business had been practically arranged.

MR. MORAN: He could have stopped it.

MR. DAGLISH: And I think members are bound to support him. I think the Ministry were morally tied, and that it was the duty of the Premier to fulfil the obligations entered into by his predecessors.

MR. DOHERTY: That was not your opinion on another subject under the same conditions. You have changed very rapidly.

MR. DAGLISH: On what other subject?

MR. NANSON: Concerning the Throssell Government.

MR. DOHERTY: Yes; you did not "barrack" for their fulfilling their obligations.

MR. DAGLISH: Well, the hon. member will not expect me to contrast the two occasions at this stage, when one is ancient history.

MR. NANSON: Truth is always good.

MR. DAGLISH: If the Speaker will allow me, I am prepared to show that the cases are by no means parallel; and the hon. members interjecting know they are not parallel. We have to consider that if this amendment were carried a new Government would be placed on the Treasury benches; and while we have heard a great deal about errors in policy and administration on the part of the present Government, no indication is given to us as to what would be the policy of the new Government. What, for instance, are we to expect when each member of the Opposition who has spoken has enunciated a different policy, and when they have shown that they are no more united than a rope of sand?

MR. CONNOR: We are not led by caucus meetings.

MR. DAGLISH: The hon. member is not led at all. I understand he is the leader of a party, and that he is the one follower. If the hon. member would propound his policy, it might meet with my approval. What would be the policy of the Opposition if a new Government were formed from that side? I have heard members of the Opposition speak strongly in favour of the removal of our railways from political control, that being said previously to the present session; yet every member on that side who has spoken to-night is in favour of political control

of the railways. The member for the Williams had the grace to admit that he advocated at a previous period the appointment of a board of Railway Commissioners, and we know other members on that side had done the same. What would they do now, if they took control? Would they remove Mr. George from the position of Commissioner of Railways, and what would they do in regard to railway administration?

MR. DOHERTY: The policy of the Opposition is to go the country.

MR. DAGLISH: As far as I am able to judge, the policy of the Opposition is bluff at the present time, and that is the only policy on which they are unanimous. At present we have a Government possessing all the elements of stability, and with a reasonable amount of experience. The member for West Perth, speaking outside the House, described the Government as composed of political youths; but I would point out that the leader of the Opposition is as young as the youngest member of the present Ministry, that his principal lieutenant is equally as young, that his second lieutenant, the member for West Kimberley, is younger still; and looking to the older members of the party on that side, like the member for the Williams, we find that what they have got in experience they have lost in public estimation, that where they have been tried they have failed. We find that where the present Ministry have been tried, they have at all events shown elements of possible success; but I am prepared, with the member for Kanowna (Mr. Hastie), to say we would

rather bear those ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of.

I wish to see, above all things, a stable Government; and I believe the present Ministry have all the elements of stability. There is no great party question dividing the House at the present time, and I shall protest now, as I have always protested, against what appears to be a struggle of the outs to obtain office at any cost. If the Government had not adopted the railway policy which has been so much complained of, the Opposition would have brought in an amendment based on some other minor question, perhaps on the Spear-Parker case. The country is tired of the struggle between the ins

and the outs, and is demanding strong and able administration; therefore I say we should give to the present Ministry time to do that which the people expect of them and what the country wants.

On motion by Mr. CONNOR, debate adjourned till the next sitting.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:22 o'clock, until the next Tuesday afternoon.

### Legislative Council, Tuesday, 29th July, 1902.

Address-in-reply, Presentation—Papers presented—Question: Midland Railway, to enforce recommendations—Question: Experimental Farm, Cold Harbour Estate—Pharmacy and Poisons Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Return ordered: Northam-Goomalling Railway, particulars—Leave of Absence—Convict Prison Site Trust Bill, first reading—Transfer of Land Amendment Bill, first reading—Friendly Societies Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Public Service Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Adjournment.

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

#### PRAYERS.

#### ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

At 25 minutes to 5 o'clock the PRESIDENT, accompanied by honourable members, proceeded to Government House to present the Address-in-reply to the opening Speech of His Excellency; and having returned, the PRESIDENT reported that

HIS EXCELLENCY had been pleased to reply as follows:—

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL,—

I thank you for your Address in reply to my opening Speech, and for the assurance of your desire to deal with all questions that may come before you in such a manner as to promote the advancement and welfare of this portion of His Majesty's dominion.

#### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the MINISTER FOR LANDS: Reports (annual) of Rabbit Department, Lands and Surveys Department, Stock Department; also Railway Rates for merchandise, live stock, passengers and parcels, wharfage and berthage dues; Permission to construct Timber Tramways; Report of Conference of Statisticians, Hobart; Blue Book, 1901; Statistical Register, 1900.

Order: To lie on the table.

#### QUESTION—MIDLAND RAILWAY, TO ENFORCE RECOMMENDATIONS.

HON. G. RANDELL. (for Hon. J. M. Drew) asked the Minister for Lands: 1. If the Government has taken any steps to enforce the whole of the recommendations of the Joint Select Committee on the Midland Railway Company which were approved of by both Houses of Parliament? 2. If not, why not?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: The recommendations are receiving the attention of the Government and are being dealt with at the present time.

#### QUESTION—EXPERIMENTAL FARM, COLD HARBOUR ESTATE.

HON. W. T. LOTON (for Hon. R. G. Burges) asked the Minister for Lands: If the Government intend to reserve a portion of the Cold Harbour Estate for an experimental farm, namely, that portion on the banks of the River Avon?

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: Probably not. To establish experimental farms upon estates purchased under the Agricultural Lands Purchase Act would place too great a burden upon the purchasers of estate as to price.

#### PHARMACY AND POISONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by Hon. M. L. MOSS, and read a first time.

#### RETURN—NORTHAM-GOOMALLING RAILWAY, PARTICULARS.

HON. M. L. MOSS (West) moved:

That a return be laid on the table of the House, showing—(a.) The total cost of the Northam-Goomalling Railway, including engineers' and supervisors' salaries. (b.) The cost of formation of the line. (c.) The cost of rails and fastenings used in the work. (d.) The cost