

## ADJOURNMENT.

The House at 4 p.m. adjourned until Friday, 13th February, at 3 o'clock.

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## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 10th February, 1891.

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Water-borer for use of Municipalities—Loan Bill: further considered in committee—Census Bill: in committee—Officials in Parliament Bill: in committee—Postage Stamp Act, 1889, Amendment Bill: in committee—Audit Bill: referred to select committee—Adjournment.

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THE SPEAKER took the chair at 2:30 p.m.

## PRAYERS.

### WATER-BORER FOR USE OF MUNICIPALITIES.

MR. THROSSELL, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works,—whether the Government were in a position to place a Water-borer at the disposal of Municipalities desirous of using it, and if so, upon what conditions?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied as follows:—The Government possess three Boring Machines, viz.—The Kaufman Borer (50 tons) capable of boring over 1,000 feet, the Tiffin Borer (20 tons) capable of boring over 500 feet, the small boring machine (1 ton) capable of boring over 200 feet. The Government will be pleased to loan any of these machines to Municipalities, on the condition that all conveyance charges, mechanics' wages, and expense of repairs, are defrayed by the borrowers. All three are now at Yilgarn. The Government will be very glad to confer with any Municipalities that may require any of these water-borers, with a view of meeting their wishes in the matter.

## LOAN BILL: £1,336,000.

The House then went into committee for the further consideration of this bill.

## SCHEDULE.

## Item 2:

*Railway from Eastern Railway to Yilgarn Goldfields, £324,000.*

THE TREASURER (Hon. J. Forrest): Mr. Randell—I have very great pleasure in rising to give the House some information with reference to this railway. The railway from Perth to Bunbury and the extension from Boyanup to Mininnup and to Busselton, which was passed last evening without a division, is a railway, as I then said, that will tend, in the opinion of this Government and of those who supported it, to the agricultural development and settlement of the land along the route of that railway. The main object we had in view in placing that railway before members for their approval was to encourage the settlement of the land and the cultivation of the soil, our belief being that the result of the construction of that line will be that in a short time the face of the country it traverses will be completely changed, and that instead of being sparsely populated it will be the home of a considerable population, engaged in the cultivation of the land. The railway I have now the honor of bringing before the notice of the members of this committee, while it has to some extent the same object in view, has not that for its main object. The railway that we passed last night traverses a country with a plentiful rainfall, with an excellent climate, and with all those adjuncts which make up a pleasant life. The country through which the Yilgarn Railway will travel, after we go some 30 miles from York, reaches a country which has not a large rainfall, and which at the present time, under present circumstances, is not largely developed. We believe, however, that this railway is one that should be carried out at the same time as the other line, and go hand-in-hand (if I may use the expression) with the railway to the Southern Districts. The main object of this railway to Yilgarn—although I believe it will also result in bringing a large area of land under cultivation—is to encourage the development of the mineral resources of

the country. We believe there is a goldfield at Yilgarn. I need hardly tell members that if the Government did not believe we had a permanent and payable goldfield there, this item would not have appeared on the Schedule of this Loan Bill. While, on the one hand, we are endeavoring to settle population on the lands of the colony, and to encourage the cultivation of the soil of the colony, it is necessary, in the opinion of the Government, that we should also encourage, by every legitimate means in our power, the development of the mineral resources of the colony, because by that means we will open up a large market for our agricultural produce. On the one hand we propose to build a railway to stimulate the production of the necessities of life and of the fruits of the earth; on the other hand we propose to build a railway to open up the mineral wealth of the country, and to attract a large consuming population. I feel sure that the only apprehension, the only fear, that members have at the present time—the only fear that can possibly occur to the minds of those who have any doubt—I believe there are not many of them now—but the only fear that can be entertained with regard to this railway to Yilgarn is, whether these fields are permanent or not. So soon as members can satisfy themselves that we have a permanent goldfield at Yilgarn, I am quite positive there is not one in this House who would not give his fullest support to this undertaking. That being so, those members who still have any doubts—I believe their number is dwindling away—I will ask them to listen to and be guided by the opinion of others who have seen these fields; or, if they will not do that, then I think they should go and see the fields for themselves. If they are so hesitating, if they are so careful, if they will not believe what others have to tell them about these fields, and who have reported upon them,—I say if they are so public spirited, if they are so anxious to guard the interests of the country before entering upon this railway, I think the least they should do is to take a trip to these fields and judge for themselves. The only two reports that I shall refer to to-day—I believe there are hundreds I might refer to, all of which would confirm what I am about to say—but the only two reports I shall trouble the House

with on this occasion are those of the Government Geologist, who has visited the fields on several occasions, and I shall refer to a report I made myself after visiting these fields. I find that the Government Geologist, in February, 1888,—I believe he had been there before; but in February, 1888, he visited the fields, and made this remark: “As a whole this country is very promising, and I hope that it will be thoroughly prospected as soon as there is rain. Rich alluvial deposits will probably be found both in the Golden Valley itself and in the South.” There was nothing particularly sanguine about that. A favorable impression, no doubt; still, the Government Geologist did not then commit himself to any very definite expression of opinion. He visited the country again in July, 1889—eighteen months afterwards—and it is to that report that I wish specially to refer. I will not trouble the House by going into the details of his report, in which he gives a very candid opinion upon every mine that he visited; but I will read the conclusion he arrived at, when summing up the whole:—“Not the slightest doubt exists “in my mind,” he says, “of the richness “and permanence, and of the ultimate “success of these fields, for they have “been proved to extend over an area of “eighty miles in length; and they will, “in all probability, be found to continue “to the South coast. But I consider “that it is essential that a railway should “be constructed connecting the fields with “the settled districts, for no real progress “can be made until there is a cheap and “rapid mode of transit established, not “only for machinery and stores, but also “to give visitors an easy access to the “mines, for possessors of capital are not “likely to undertake the journey by road. “I cannot see that the proposed telegraph line will be of any real assistance, while the railway would not only “be so, but would form the first section “of the great Transcontinental line.” That was the opinion of the Government Geologist with regard to these fields, and I do not propose to refer any further to his reports than that. I do not think it necessary to do so, for, after going through the whole matter carefully, that was the conclusion he arrived at. I find that I also visited the fields—when I occupied

the position of Surveyor General—in June or July last year, and I felt myself able to make the following statement: "From my own observation I have no hesitation in saying that we have a goldfield at Yilgarn, and I feel confident that, having regard to the large area of gold-bearing country, in the early future this field will be largely developed." That was the conclusion I arrived at, at that time, and, following up my observation, the result has been that my colleagues and myself have decided to do something more to carry out the views I then expressed, and place before you this item on the Schedule. Members will, of course, clearly understand that at the time I wrote that report, and also at the time the Government Geologist wrote his report, neither of us could have had the slightest interest, not the slightest object, in giving a report other than what we thoroughly believed. Nothing could have influenced us to say other than what we believed was the truth with regard to these fields, as seen with our own eyes. My only object—I feel that members will give me credit for that—was to express my honest belief. We are also aware that there has been a considerable amount of money expended by the people of this colony in the development of these mines. I have a few notes here which I will read to members. I find from these notes that the amount of capital that has already been expended on these mines by the people of this country is something like £100,000. That may not be all, that may not be the exact amount, for it is difficult to arrive at the exact amount, but I find that something like £100,000 has been sunk in these fields by the people of this colony up to the present time. I find that 59 companies have been formed for working the fields, and that nearly £20,000 has been actually received for gold obtained there, some 5,000 ounces. I also find that the wages paid at the present time is something like £2,000 a month. I think, when we consider the distance of these fields from the centres of population, when we consider their isolation, and the difficulty of getting there to see for oneself—I think when we consider these things, we must come to the conclusion that the people of this colony at any rate must

have a very strong faith in these mines, otherwise they would not have invested so large an amount of capital in them. As we all know, the general run of the stone averages something like one ounce to the ton; but it is generally believed that it will be largely increased, with improved apparatus for securing the gold. I speak with some confidence upon this matter, having seen the fields myself. I was not prepossessed in their favor, when I started, and the discomforts and difficulties of the trip are not calculated to make one very hopeful. But the conclusion I came to, as I have already said, was altogether favorable to the permanency and richness of the fields. I will say more: all those who were on the fields, and who are interested in the fields, were of the same opinion, and full of hope as to the future. I do not know that I found anyone who was despondent; they were all buoyed up with great expectations, and, certainly, their surroundings, and the discomforts they had to put up with, were not such as were calculated to make one very cheerful. Still there was that hopeful feeling as to the future of the fields animating them all, and I could not help being struck with it at the time. I felt, myself, that we had a large area of auriferous country there, and a rich and permanent goldfield; and, believing that, I see no reason for delaying the prosecution of this work. If I had any doubt about it, if I thought the fields were not permanent, but merely a temporary find, and that in a few months or a few years it would be worked out, I would not be so foolish, I would not be so reckless—it would be political suicide on my part to advocate this line; because it must come back to me hereafter. It would always be said, "You did your best to ruin the country with your reckless policy in building that line of railway to Yilgarn, which has turned out a 'white elephant,' and does not pay for the grease on the wheels." I say it would be perfectly foolish on my part, and those associated with me, to advocate such a line unless we were fully satisfied it will ultimately pay, and be of great use and benefit to the colony. Members, I know, entertain the hope that in the future, and in the near future—and I am with them there—we shall have a Trans-continental line running between this

and the other colonies. I look forward to that great undertaking with every confidence, and believe that in a few years we shall have a railway from here to Adelaide. But I take it that this line is altogether a different matter to the Transcontinental line, which is uppermost in many men's minds, and in no one's more than my own. It appears to me that when that great undertaking comes to be dealt with, the question of gauge and many other questions will have to be considered. It will not be a question then of starting from Northam or from York; if we have to change the gauge so as to have the same gauge as the other colonies, as we shall have to, that line would start from Fremantle or some other large centre, and go right on to Port Augusta, Adelaide, and Melbourne, right through on the same gauge. It has been argued that we should delay this Yilgarn line until we decide upon the Transcontinental line, and have this to form a portion of it. That means delay. I take it that we shall have to settle this Transcontinental line in concert with the other colonies, and I hope it may be made a Federal question; and, while I look forward to the time when we may be able to start with it, it is not here yet. That is no reason why we should delay the more pressing local work now requiring our attention. I believe myself that the building of this Yilgarn line on the 3ft. 6in. gauge, in connection with our present railway system, will in no way militate against the construction of the Transcontinental line; on the contrary, I believe it will greatly assist it. It might be quite possible for us to take into consideration whether in building this line we could not lay down sleepers that would accommodate a wider gauge, so that the same sleepers would answer for a 4ft. 9in. or 5ft. gauge. But, as I said before, my own idea is that the two lines are entirely separate affairs. I do not say that if we were prepared at the present moment to go into the Transcontinental line, the two lines might not be made to work together; but it is clear that before we shall be in a position to undertake the intercolonial line, a considerable time must elapse, and we do not want that time to elapse before we have a railway

to Yilgarn. In our opinion the goldfields at Yilgarn require a railway at once to develop them, and to make them capable of supporting a large working population, and of supplying a ready market for our agricultural and other produce. Therefore we have not hesitated in this matter; nor do we desire any delay. We wish to commence this work at the earliest possible moment, and to do all in our power to encourage the development of the mineral resources of that part of the colony. I may mention, that apart from the mineral wealth of this district, there is a large area of excellent land between the Eastern Districts and Yilgarn, land capable of producing cereals. But the rainfall is not very great, so far as is at present known; but I believe it will be found to be sufficient for the production of wheat. Up to the present this land has not produced anything artificially. It is thickly wooded with salmon gum, and there is something in the salmon gum that is destructive to grass. The rain falling upon the gum trees runs into the ground, and there is something in it which is altogether destructive to vegetation; so it happens that very little, if any, grass grows on this land, although the land itself is very rich, and quite suitable for growing agricultural produce. If that land were cleared it would be found eminently suited for the growth of wheat, and my idea is that almost all along that railway there is rich land,—as rich land, I believe, as any in any part of the colony, and capable of producing more wheat if it had the rainfall. But even with the rainfall it has (which I think is about 10 inches) it ought to grow wheat, when the land is cleared. At any rate, wheat can be grown with a rainfall of 10 inches; and I believe that all along this railway we shall find that when the land is cleared it will be capable of a considerable amount of production, not only in the shape of wheat, but also grass for the support of stock. I need hardly point out how this would enhance the value of this railway. Apart from that, as I said before, we believe that we have a permanent goldfield at Yilgarn, and we also believe that the sooner that field is developed, the sooner it is thrown open and made accessible to the people of this colony and of the other colonies, the better. I feel certain that I

have the House with me in this matter, and I even look forward to this item passing through this committee with the same unanimity as the other line did last evening, without a division. If this and the important works on this Schedule are carried out, as I hope they will, it never can be said of this Legislature at any rate that it was not equal to the occasion, and equal to the responsibilities cast upon it at this juncture in the history of the colony. I believe the members of this House have faith that the members of the Government are only actuated by what they think is right and best in the interests of the colony, that they are animated by patriotic motives. Any other assumption, in the present stage of our political life, would be perfectly absurd. Probably when we get richer and more populated, and our resources more largely developed, —probably we may then find here, as elsewhere, a class of politicians actuated perhaps by less patriotic motives. But, in our case, with our personal interests wrapped up in the interests of the colony, it would not only be political ruin but material ruin to us to commit the colony to these costly undertakings, simply for the sake of spending the money. I say again it would be political suicide on the part of my colleagues and myself to ask you to enter upon this great undertaking unless we had every faith, every belief, in the permanency and richness of these Yilgarn goldfields. I think I need say no more. I feel sure we shall be supported by this House in our efforts to develop, as far as we can, the resources of every portion of this large territory.

MR. TRAYLEN: It will probably have been observed that some of the country constituencies assembled in public meeting to discuss the programme of the Government, and that two or three of them expressed opinions adverse to this particular item now before the House. It so happens that the constituency I have the honor to represent has not in open public meeting so expressed itself, but communications of a semi-official character have reached me, which convey to my mind the impression that they view with some alarm the expenditure of so large an amount of our first loan upon this item. I am bound to say that, to a certain extent, I sympathise with them. First, let me say that I think the Colo-

nia Treasurer made an excellent point when he said that the line, now under consideration, is to be viewed as a complement to that which was passed in this House last evening by a large majority. [The TREASURER: Without a division.] But, sir, may we not pay too dearly for the obtaining of the complement. I am as enterprising, I think, as other members here, and quite as willing that the colony should enter upon enterprises of this character as members generally. But I may differ as to the length that we can with safety go. And, perhaps, it would not be altogether inopportune if I were to refer to the action of the other colonies with reference to their borrowing, because it appears to me the other colonies are our truest analogies for these things. I think it will come somewhat as a surprise to hon. members, as I confess it did to me, to find that the colony of Victoria had 500,000 inhabitants—or nearly so—before her public debt amounted to £1,000,000; yet we, with a population of 45,000, not only already owe over a million, but now propose to increase our indebtedness by £1,336,000 at one step. Before the colony of South Australia entered into the market for so large a sum as one million at one time, she had a population of 283,000. New South Wales went into the money market for the first time to borrow £1,000,000 when her inhabitants numbered 200,000. When Tasmania first ventured to borrow a million, at once, she had a population of 137,000. Queensland—which is the colony that comes nearest to our own circumstances, but with a debt of only £120,000—first undertook to go into the market to borrow £1,000,000 when she possessed a population (as nearly as I can ascertain) of 70,000 persons. It will be seen that this is very much nearer our own circumstances than are any of the other colonies to which I have made reference. But even here there is a very wide difference between 70,000 and 46,000; and what would have been justifiable in their case, only owing £120,000, may not be justifiable in our case, owing over a million already. I do not intend to detract—it would be wrong, I think, in the highest degree; I do not say politically wrong, but wrong in the highest degree, to detract from the real value of the Yilgarn goldfield. There

have been many excellent specimens obtained—and not in one place only, but in several places within that area, that give good reasons to hope that some day there will be a large goldfield carrying on its operations there. All that I desire from the Ministry is this—all that I ask them is this: whether it is safe and right for us now to expend this second large sum out of this loan upon what is somewhat—I do not say very, but somewhat—speculative; because, after all, the goldfield is the only thing we have now before us. [AN HON. MEMBER: No.] We have discarded, as I understand, any idea of associating the Transcontinental line with this line. It is true the Colonial Treasurer has just suggested, in conjunction with that line, the idea of putting down longer sleepers than necessary for our present narrow gauge,—which, by-the-bye, was one of my own suggestions a few weeks ago. But looking at the map, and at the spot occupied by Southern Cross upon it, it will be seen that to take the Transcontinental line that way would take it about forty-five miles out of a bee line; and it is a question whether it would be worth while to make that deviation, when our object as regards the Transcontinental line must be to obtain the most rapid means of transit between here and Adelaide. Then comes the question of the area of what I may call useful land along this Yilgarn line. I am not going to say that those who have travelled to Yilgarn have not seen some good land; but let us look at actual results. Possibly there may be more than 10 inches of rainfall per annum; but who has been able to cultivate cereals to advantage in that direction? I say with advantage, because there have been efforts made. Mr. Adams is an illustration of failure or want of success, and it is Mr. Adams whom I have in mind as having made an effort in that direction. It is true he has succeeded in growing a little hay, and, when rain is falling, a few vegetables. But only in one year out of several, I believe, has he succeeded in getting back as much wheat as he put in the soil. There is another instance, not many miles distance from Mr. Adams, of a gentleman who can grow hay; but whether he can get further is, I think, open to doubt. Living, as he does, at the foot of one of

those enormous rocks that are to be found in that neighborhood; and having water, and being on one of those little fertile spots that can always be found at the foot of these rocks—with all these advantages in his favor, he can grow hay. But, so far, all his attempts to grow cereals have been characterised by failure. These, sir, as concisely as I can put them, are my reasons for voting, as I shall do, against this item.

MR. PARKER: It appears to me that this is one of the items of the Loan Bill that ought specially to commend itself to the House. If there is one public work that will attract capital and population to this colony, it is the building of a railway to this Yilgarn goldfield. In fact, I look upon our present state of affairs to be this: had we not discovered our goldfields at the North and at the South—and especially these Yilgarn goldfields—I doubt whether our position would have justified us in borrowing more than a very small sum. I think that without the discovery of these fields, with all their rich promise, and the certainty that they will attract a large amount of capital and population to our shores—population that will eventually settle here and enable us to bear the burden of increased taxation which otherwise would be imposed upon us; had it not been for the discovery of our goldfields, I doubt whether we would have been justified in borrowing any money at all at the present moment. Had our position been the same as it was in 1886, with our small stationary population, with settlement slowly progressing, with the commercial outlook anything but bright, and with no goldfield—had that been our position at the present moment, I think it would have been a very grave and solemn responsibility to have borrowed any more than a few hundred thousand pounds at most. And I think, that unless this item is included in the Loan Bill, we must look forward to a further period of—I won't say slow progress, but of very much slower progress as regards the general welfare and prosperity of the colony than if this railway is to be included in the bill and carried out. The country, in fact, must look forward to this above all other works on this Schedule to give the colony that impetus which it requires. Unless

the development of our goldfields is made a cardinal feature in our public works policy, the effect of a large expenditure of borrowed money upon these other works can, in my opinion, only result in subsequent depression and in a considerable increase of taxation. In short, I look upon the development of our goldfields as the one principal item in this Loan Bill that ought to command our special attention and admiration, and one which above all others we ought to be thankful to the Ministry for bringing forward, with the express determination of carrying it out. I agree with the Treasurer that we ought to look at this line simply as a line to Yilgarn, and not as a line to be eventually carried across the continent. I believe with him, that if we construct a Transcontinental line it must be a line on the broad gauge, capable of admitting an express rate of speed, and of affording every comfort and accommodation for passengers by it. We may be sure that people who arrive at Fremantle in comfortable and luxurious steamers would never dream of submitting themselves to a passage across the continent by a slow and comfortless train, and the only way we could hope to make such a line a success and attract passengers would be by making it a line upon which people could travel with speed, ease, and comfort. Not only that, we must accommodate our gauge to the gauge of the other colonies, whenever this Transcontinental line is taken in hand, and at present we are not in a position ourselves to adopt that broad gauge. Moreover, that is a line which I think ought to be undertaken, not by Western Australia alone, but by a Federated Australia. Seeing that is not within the range of practical politics at the present time, I think the Premier is right in asking the House to regard this Yilgarn line as simply a line to the goldfield. I think it is not a matter of great importance to consider whether there is land along this line capable of cultivation, or whether there is a good rainfall; I think these are questions of minor importance. Our main object, and the great object to be kept in view, is the early development of these goldfields. Of course if it is found that there is land along the line adapted for agricultural or pastoral purposes, so much the better. I understand that

some land has already been taken up within about 30 miles of Southern Cross by a Mr. Marwick, an experienced cultivator, who says there are thousands of acres there suitable for farms, and he believes that by cultivating this land it may turn out a success. But, as I said, I consider this of secondary importance. We have large areas of agricultural land already opened up by railways, awaiting settlement; and we are passing this item not in order to open up more land for agricultural settlement, but for developing our goldfields, and to attract capital and population to our shores, without which Western Australia can never be sent ahead. We all know how the discovery of their goldfields sent the other colonies forward, and there is no reason that I know of why the same result should not be expected in the case of this colony. I shall certainly have much pleasure in supporting this item.

MR. LOTON: I agree in the main with the remarks that have fallen from the last speaker; I agree with him on the broad principle that if Western Australia is to progress as we want to see her progressing, and if we wish to find the large consuming population that we want for the surplus stock of our Northern areas, what we must depend upon is the development of our goldfields. The Government, who ought to be in the best position to know the facts with regard to these goldfields, have told us that they are satisfied as to their permanency, and also with the extent of them and the richness of them. I have read the report of the Government Geologist, of July last, but I should certainly have been better pleased if the Government at this stage had placed before us a later report from this gentleman, who, I understand, has quite recently visited these fields. When we have a scientific man like this in the employ of the Government, and at an important stage like this when a large expenditure of money is involved, to my mind it would have been considerably more satisfactory if we had the most recent report of this gentleman placed before us. Possibly we may have it before the House rises. In any case, this item on the Schedule stands in the same position as others, I hope, as regards the way they are viewed by the

Government; that is, if they find, before this line is actually taken in hand, that these goldfields are not so promising as they now believe they are, they will not proceed with it. I hope the Ministry will not raise all this money simply because this House has authorised them to do so; but that they will yet exercise a wise discretion in the matter, by the light of subsequent events. I again remind the House that it is intended to increase our indebtedness by over £25 per head of the population, and, although we are told by the Government that it is not intended to increase taxation in any way, I must say that the opinions expressed on this point fall very far short of convincing me that such will be the case. On the contrary, I feel quite satisfied that long before this loan money—if the whole amount is borrowed—is expended we shall have to resort to increased taxation. And the constituencies will have to thank their representatives for incurring this taxation. The Government have told us they intend to stand or fall by the main items of this Schedule. I am quite sure the Ministry are aware, and have been aware ever since they have been in office, that there is not the slightest intention on the part of any member in this Assembly to attempt to turn them out of office at this early stage of their political existence. My own intention and desire, at all events—and I believe I speak the feeling of every member in this House—has been to act in accord with the Government, so far as we could, in order that they may at once be in a position to push forward in their efforts to develop the varied resources which the colony possesses. If there is one item on this Schedule, as regards railway construction, that, in my opinion, ought to have the support of this House, it is this one:

**MR. CLARKSON:** Mr. Randell,—I think the proposed line to Yilgarn is the most important item attached by the Government to their Loan Bill. It is admitted upon all hands that our great want is population, and I would ask what better means can we adopt for attracting population than developing our mineral resources, and what is more likely to do so as regards these goldfields than the construction of this line of railway? Some people say that the fields are not

yet sufficiently developed to warrant the construction of such a line; but we have the scientific opinion of the Government Geologist who has visited the field, and we have the practical opinions of scores of others; and I think we are quite justified in coming to the conclusion that the fields are now sufficiently developed to warrant the Government in undertaking this railway. I cannot agree with the hon. member for York that the question of there being agricultural land in that neighborhood is of no consequence. [**MR. PARKER:** Of minor consequence, I said.] I think the Premier has underestimated the extent of the good land along this line, and also under-estimated the rainfall. In dry seasons, perhaps, it might not be more than 10 inches, but in fair average seasons I believe the rainfall is considerably above that average. I have travelled over that country perhaps as much as any man in Western Australia; I had a sheep station there some fifteen years ago, and it is there still. Certainly the sheep do not increase very much, but there are certain reasons for that, at present; the country, as the Premier says, is thickly studded with salmon gum trees and other eucalypti which are destructive to vegetation. But I venture to say, if 5,000 acres of this land were cleared, that in twelve months there would be abundance of fresh water, and pasture would grow. There is a far greater area of agricultural land in that district than people are aware of; I think if I say millions of acres I do not over-estimate the quantity. I have seen better agricultural land and better grass land in that part of the colony than I have seen in Western Australia; and I have travelled it from Kimberley at the North to Esperance Bay at the South. There is a large area of land which could be made, in any case, available for pastoral settlement. The question of the route of this railway is a question to be determined by survey. An exhaustive survey should be made, and the most suitable line adopted, keeping in view the near approach, in my opinion, of the Transcontinental line. While on this subject, I should like to say that I am sorry that more provision has not been made for roads, in connection with this railway. The roads at present,—



**THE CHAIRMAN:** The hon. member must confine himself to the item before the committee.

**MR. CLARKSON:** I will only add that the country which this line will traverse presents no engineering difficulties whatever; after it leaves the Eastern Districts it is almost a dead level, so that the line ought to be constructed at a very reasonable cost. The item has my heartiest support.

**MR. R. F. SHOLL:** I do not think, as regards this particular item, that any member would doubt the expediency or the wisdom of voting this £324,000 for the construction of a railway between the Eastern Districts and the Yilgarn goldfields, if they were satisfied in their own mind as to the permanency of these goldfields. But I should have liked in the first place to have heard from the Government how they arrived at this £324,000 as the cost of this line; at present we have no information at all on the subject. I know we shall be told they have only been in office a month, but they have been long enough in office to propose a schedule of public works involving an expenditure of over a million and a quarter of money, spread all over the colony, from the far North to the far East of the colony; and I for one am not prepared to accept their estimate of the cost of this railway as correct until they have had an examination and a survey of the country. As I have already said, the whole question of whether this line is a justifiable work or not depends on whether these goldfields are going to be permanent fields, and whether they are capable of giving employment to a large working population. In my opinion there is nothing else that would justify this vote. The Government say they are satisfied; if so, the responsibility rests upon their shoulders. The future prosperity of this country, I may say, depends upon the development of our mineral resources, and I may say that the future development of our agricultural resources also depends upon a large consuming population being attracted to our mineral areas. We know, from the experience of the other colonies, that, in reefing districts especially, towns spring up in a wonderfully short time, with large populations. But, to my mind, at the present time, we are

hardly justified in jumping to the conclusion that we have a permanent field at Yilgarn to warrant us in going to this expenditure. I believe myself in its permanency, and that we have a very rich goldfield there; but I think that, as a matter of prudence, the Government ought not to jump at the conclusion, and I should have preferred to have had this item postponed until we get the latest report of the Government Geologist, who, I understand, is now on the field. If that report is favorable, then I think that without doubt this railway ought to be built. With regard to the gauge, everyone I think will agree with the Premier that the question of this line being the first section of the Transcontinental line should not be considered for a moment; for this, I take it, will be a narrow gauge line, and an inexpensive line. I think our only hope of a Transcontinental line is in some large town or city springing up between here and the South Australian border; I don't look upon it as likely to be carried out in our time, and this railway must stand upon its own merits. With regard to the country Eastward, I have been as far as Golden Valley, and no doubt there is first-class agricultural soil; the only question is that of the rainfall. If the rainfall is to be depended upon, no doubt the soil is equal to any in the Eastern Districts; but I think it will be discovered that the rainfall is so irregular that you cannot depend upon it for cereals. Our only hope in building this line is as to the gold mines, and the gold mines only; and I do not think we are justified at present in jumping at the conclusion that these are permanent; at any rate we have nothing to my mind that would justify us in spending £324,000 upon a railway, without a previous examination of the country. We are discounting the future too much in expecting a large influx of population; and I feel certain in my own mind that the Government before very long will have to look for fresh items of taxation. Things may go along smoothly, so long as this money lasts, and the Ministry will be very popular, no doubt; but when the money is all gone they will be glad to give way to somebody else, and get rid of the responsibilities which they have thrust

upon the country. I should be sorry to see this item thrown out,—

**THE TREASURER (Hon. J. Forrest):** Oh, you won't do that.

**MR. R. F. SHOLL:** The hon. gentleman is very bumptious, I notice, with a majority at his back; let him wait until parties are a little more evenly balanced, and the hon. gentleman will find he will have to be a little more guarded in his remarks. It is all very well to be brave and bumptious when you have a large majority at your back, a majority that you know will follow you blindly, and whom no argument will turn. I think before the hon. gentleman becomes successful as a leader of a party he will find he will have to learn to be a little more conciliatory towards those in opposition to his views, and not pass remarks like he now does, knowing he has a majority who would support him if he proposed to make a railway to the moon. I again say I should be sorry to see this item thrown out altogether; at the same time I think it would be better if it were postponed until we have a little more information on the subject, and we have the Government Geologist's last report before us. I also think we ought to have some idea as to how the Government have framed their estimate as to the cost of this railway. I believe myself that we shall want four times this amount if all these works are going to be carried out.

**MR. A. FORREST:** Sitting as I do on this side of the House I intend to support this item. I think the House is fully aware, without any further information, as to the yield from these fields. They know as well as I do that there can be no doubt as to the permanency of the Yilgarn goldfields; and we all know that within the last six months we have had £20,000 worth of gold brought down from there, nearly the whole of which was from two or three mines. We also know there are four or five more batteries being erected there at great expense. What is now wanted to attract capital here from the other colonies, to be invested in these mines so as to develop them properly, is a railway to the fields. In South Australia, when the Broken Hill mines were discovered, long before a ton of ore was got out of the mines the South Austra-

lian Government built a railway 200 miles long, and a private company had built a tramway, to assist in developing those fields; and what has been the result? Those mines have saved South Australia from ruin, and been a great help to that colony. There is no goldfield in the whole of Australia at the present moment that has such prospects before it as our Eastern goldfields. You may go to Ballarat or Sandhurst and you will find that the results obtained there at present are nothing like, in proportion, to ours at Southern Cross. Very few of our mines that do not return an ounce to the ton, and some of them give more. If this railway is not wanted, then I think we ought to give up all hopes of building any more railways at all. I think we have waited long enough for it; if we wait much longer no one here will see much improvement in this colony. If any member objects to the line let him say so, and call for a division, and he will then see how things stand. The hon. member for the Gascoyne says the Premier has a majority at his back who will do anything he likes. I don't know about that; but I suppose the Premier knew that he must bring forward a progressive policy of public works if he expected to get any support at all. Members are not to be driven like a horse to water; the hon. member must not think that. We are quite as independent as he is, we who sit on this side of the House. I do not think his remarks were kind nor nice towards members on this side of the House. I cannot say that I agree with those who have spoken of the land in this direction as being suitable for cereals; but as our object in building the railway is for the development of our goldfields it will have my entire support.

**MR. PIESSE:** When this Loan Bill and the Schedule was first placed in my hand I was very much adverse to this Yilgarn railway, and also the railway that we passed last night; but having been assured by the Premier that he has every confidence in this goldfield and its permanency and future development, I think it is only fair to the Government to let them have an opportunity of developing these mines, especially as they say they are prepared to stake their reputation upon this line. Of course we

have to rely upon the reports that have been placed before us, and I must say they have been to a certain extent convincing. There is not the slightest doubt in my mind now that it is to an early development of our mines that we must look to add to our population, and, without this railway, it would seem we are not likely to see our mines developed as they ought to be. At the same time, I agree with the hon. member for the Swan,—we must not lose sight of the fact that it will require a very large amount of revenue to pay the interest on this loan. There is another thing we must not lose sight of: there will probably be some losses in the revenue. It is our duty to encourage local industries and local manufactures in every legitimate way, but we must not lose sight of the fact that we have already one factory established amongst us, the tobacco factory at Fremantle, which will cause a considerable loss to the revenue in respect of imported tobacco,—some thousands of pounds, I believe. Then, again, with the establishment of roller mills all over the colony, we are bound to import less flour, and there will also be a considerable loss on that item. At the same time, we all admit that although the revenue may suffer from these causes we are very pleased to see these local industries established, and, in the end, they must prove a decided gain to the colony. The loss of revenue may be met by giving a stimulus to agricultural settlement, and the opening up of land now locked up in connection with the land grant railways. As to whether the land along this Yilgarn railway is suitable for agricultural purposes, I do not think that is of importance. We have already two or three railways built ostensibly to encourage agricultural settlement. The Great Southern Railway was intended purely for tapping our agricultural lands, and I look upon the object of this Yilgarn railway as purely and simply the development of our mineral resources. I may, however, say, without prejudice to the Government—although a progressive man myself—I would have preferred to have seen this item deferred, and have had more time to consider it. But as it is necessary to help the Government through, and they are evidently very much in earnest, and have pinned their

faith to this bill, I feel bound to give them my support.

MR. KEANE: The hon. member for Greenough has referred to some public meetings that have been held in some of the Northern constituencies to protest against this railway. Such a meeting was held at Geraldton, and my constituents said they were not prepared to support such a line with the information they had. They wanted more information to satisfy them, and I think that information we have had to-day. When I see such cautious gentlemen as the hon. member for the Swan and the hon. member for York prepared to vote for it, I think that is quite good enough for me. The hon. member for Gascoyne says he would have liked to have seen the latest report of the Government Geologist on these Yilgarn goldfields. I do not know what that gentleman is going to tell us more than he did in his report of July last, except perhaps that some of the shafts he then visited are now down a few more feet, and that they look more promising. If we got his later report, I expect we should only find him expressing his belief in the field more emphatically than he did before. If the object of this line was to open up and develop more agricultural land, I would not vote for it at all; we have quite enough land already alienated for opening up our agricultural resources; what we now want is to open up our mineral resources, which, in my opinion, is the only thing likely to set this colony going. Therefore I am prepared to give the Government my hearty support in this matter. At the same time I should have liked to have heard the Treasurer stating that it is the intention of the Government, in order to stimulate this mining industry, to offer a bonus to induce the various companies to sink their shafts deeper than they are at present, so as to enable us to see how they are likely to turn out. If that were done, I believe that before the surveys of this railway are completed, many of these mines would be found to have gone 60ft. or 70ft. deeper than they are now. I throw out this suggestion to the Government; I think they will find it a very good one, and, if acted upon, would give a great stimulus to the proprietors of these mines.

MR. RICHARDSON: As a representative of a Northern constituency I feel bound to make my position clear with regard to this item, and also my action. I regret, with other members, that there is not more information before us, more what I may call undeniable facts with reference to these fields. I do not mean that we require a great deal of information as to the estimated cost of the line, for we know that the country which it will traverse is very level country, presenting little or no engineering difficulties, and there are very few water courses that will require bridging; so that there ought not to be any great difficulty in arriving at an approximate estimate of the cost without any very elaborate surveys. But the point I would have liked more information about is as to the absolute permanency and absolute wealth of these fields. I know we have had some information given to us to-day, and I may say that before coming to the House I myself took the trouble to collect some information on this point. I find that at present there are six 10-head stampers at work on the field, each capable of turning out 70 tons of stone per week. The average yield of the mines as yet has been about one ounce to the ton, so that these six stampers would give a return equal to about £1,500 per week, or about £78,000 per annum. I am informed that within six months there will be four more 10-head stampers on the field, and, with the same yield, this would bring up the annual output to £128,000 worth of gold per annum,—which I believe very inadequately represents what there will be there. But taking it at £128,000 per annum, I ask myself this: what would this amount represent, if we made a railway to an agricultural country, for the purpose of opening up that country. About £2 an acre, I think, may be taken as a fair gross average return off land in an agricultural district—that is an average of 10 bushels of wheat to the acre, at 4s. per bushel. Then this output of gold (£128,000) would be equal in value to the gross return from 64,000 acres of wheat land. But that has to be discounted in this way: the general traffic in an agricultural country is rather more (excepting of course as regards passengers) than in a gold country pure and simple, because in the former there is the

traffic both ways. Allowing for this, let us reduce the 64,000 acres to 40,000 acres. I find that when we made 110 miles of railway to the Eastern Districts there were only about 15,000 acres of land in cultivation in those districts. Upon a moderate estimate, with an annual yield of gold of the value of £128,000, we propose to build a railway to Yilgarn; this railway if running into an agricultural country would require the product of between 30,000 and 40,000 acres of agriculture to give us the same return. So much in favor of the project. On the other hand, I regret we have not more definite information as to the absolute permanency and extent of these fields. I should have liked to have got the Government Geologist's latest report; for what we want to ascertain is whether these reefs maintain their surface yield as they go down, and are likely to continue to do so. But we have this safeguard. If the result of working these fields during the next six or twelve months, while the surveys of this railway are going on, should not justify the construction of this line—if instead of the field presenting a better show, it presents a worse and less promising show—I take it that the Government will stay their hand, and when this House meets again, will honestly acknowledge that their anticipations as regards this field have not been realised, and that they will ask this House whether, under the altered circumstances of the case, the line ought to be proceeded with. I think we may fairly ask that of the Government. I wish it to be distinctly understood, and to have it recorded in the report of our proceedings, that in voting for this item at the present moment, I am not committing myself to an expenditure of £324,000, with only such evidence as we have now before us. And I also wish it to be understood that in voting for this item, I do so on this understanding: that should subsequent events tend to show that these goldfields are not so promising as we now believe they are, the Government will stay their hands, and come to this House again, and ask whether we think they will be justified in going on with the work. I may say that the Northern constituencies are very much opposed to this very large expenditure of money on this Yilgarn

railway; and a good deal of that opposition is the result of the past action of the Government in regard to the apportionment of the money voted for the development of goldfields generally, and the scanty treatment which the Northern goldfields received at their hand; and I hope the Premier will give us an assurance, when we come to a later item on this Schedule, "Development of mineral resources," that a fair proportion of that amount shall be apportioned for the development of goldfields north of Geraldton.

MR. SYMON: Sir, from the figures that the Premier himself has given us, I am convinced in my own mind that the construction of this railway is premature. The hon. gentleman stated that there were 59 companies represented on the field—we were not told whether these 59 companies are actually working on the field; but, judging from the amount of wages paid monthly (£2,000), I am thoroughly convinced there is nothing like that number working at present. The hon. member for the DeGrey also gave us some figures, and said that the stampers at present on the field are capable of an output of 70 tons a week, and that there is every likelihood of there soon being 30 or 40 more head of stampers. I hope so. By that time we shall be better able to form an opinion whether this line ought to be constructed or not. The hon. member said we may then expect an output equal to £128,000 per annum,—I hope he has not over-estimated it. The hon. member for Kimberley was in error in what he said about Broken Hill,—that the South Australian Government built a railway to those mines before a ton of ore was extracted. The line of railway which the South Australian Government constructed to Broken Hill was not constructed before the mine was developed; and there were 10,000 inhabitants on the Silverton fields before that railway was started. I do not think we have had any statistics as to the population at present on the Yilgarn goldfields. I think in the present state of the development of these fields, a telegraph line would answer all requirements. It has been said that a telegraph line would not be of much assistance; but I maintain it would be of the greatest assistance, and that it would answer every purpose until the mines are

more fully developed. At present, I understand, there is not a shaft on the field that has gone down further than about 100ft. I think, until we have shafts down to a depth of 200ft. or 300ft., we cannot say that the field has been fairly tested. The Premier says he is convinced this line will be a profitable one. Looking at it from a business-like point of view, I cannot see how it will. It will carry some machinery and other requisites for the field, but there will be no back freight whatever. [AN HON. MEMBER: Sandalwood and gold.] The amount of gold that will be brought down will not require a railway to bring it. I believe it will cost about £40 to run a train from here to Yilgarn; and that really means £80, for, as I have said, there will be no back freight worth mentioning to reduce the cost. I am very sure of this: we shall not get £80 a day in the shape of receipts on this railway for very many years to come; and I am sorry I cannot support the Government in this matter.

MR. THROSSELL: Sir, I entertain a very strong opinion, not altogether against this railway itself, but that the time has not yet arrived for embarking upon this costly undertaking. But, from what I can gather as to the intention of the Ministry, it is their intention to take steps for the further development of the fields before constructing this railway. I take it that twelve months must elapse before this line can possibly be constructed, and that during that time the Government will be expending a portion of the £100,000 down on this Schedule for the development of our goldfields. That removes the main objection I entertained towards this line. I feel sure that every member will be with me when I say that this is the work of all others on the Schedule that we should wish to see attended with success, seeing how much the advancement and prosperity of the colony must rest upon the development of our mineral resources, and, in connection with it, the development of our agricultural resources. Looked at in this light, the importance of the line cannot be over-estimated. Even now, in my own district—I may say the chief agricultural district of the colony—a great impetus has been given to our farmers even by the cartage or haulage

to these fields; and I take it that this railway is not going to be constructed for the benefit of Southern Cross alone, but also to tap an extent of auriferous country North and South of the proposed terminus. As to the land, very much of it is equal to the far-famed Northern Area of South Australia, and, I regret to say, with the same objection—that is, an uncertain rainfall. But the experiments that have been going on during the last three years, since the field started, have convinced me that we may look forward to an extension and development of agriculture within a reasonable distance of Southern Cross itself. If it is asked why has this land remained undeveloped up to the present, I answer there have been special and obvious reasons why agriculture should not even be attempted, much less prosecuted, at a distance of 150 miles from any centre of population, unless there are some cheap and easy means of transport. Now, however, that there is a prospect of a population being attracted to this locality, I am in a position to say—and the experiments of practical and experienced men justify me in saying—that we may expect a large and important spread of agriculture in that direction. I do not for a moment say it will become a wheat-producing country, but that there will be found a sufficient rainfall for the production of horse corn and hay. The traffic has been steadily increasing, and has been very largely benefiting the district I have the honor to represent. Only this moment I received a telegram from our district stating that a firm there was loading up its ninety-ninth team during the last twelve months. Each load represents £25 in carting alone, and I think I may honestly say that, with the value of the load, it represents about £80. Again, this railway will tap a considerable area of sandalwood country, and each team will bring down its load. In fact, the wealth of the colony has been considerably enhanced already by these fields. I should, however, oppose this railway had it been going to be started in two or three months time; but I think the policy of the Government has been well thought out, for we find they propose to make other provisions for the development of these fields and other mineral areas. I hope the project will

succeed, for the well-being of the colony is largely dependent upon it. Under the circumstances, I give my hearty support to the scheme.

MR. QUINLAN: I am prepared to support the Government in this item of the Schedule; but, like the hon. members for the Swan and the DeGrey, I hope, if it is found before the line is actually commenced—which I suppose will be another twelve months hence—that these fields are not likely to realise the expectations now formed of them,—I hope the Government will not proceed with the work. I have that confidence in the present Ministry. But from present information, I am convinced, like other members, that there is a payable goldfield there, and the sooner it is developed the better will it be for the colony. Unless we have mineral wealth to back up the colony, I do not see what else is to attract population here. The development of agriculture will not do so by itself; but, if we have a large consuming population on these goldfields, it will give a stimulus to agriculture and to every other industry. I am quite aware that this loan will entail extra taxation, but I think that will be more than met by the increase of population it will bring to our shores. If we double our present population, as we hope to do if these goldfields and our other mineral resources are fully developed, we shall not be taxed more than we are at present, although we double our indebtedness. Under all the circumstances, I feel bound to support this particular item.

MR. PEARSE: I do not know that I can contribute anything further to the discussion. I have listened with very great pleasure and interest to the debate; and, with all who have spoken on the subject, I think we must in a very great measure depend upon the development of our mineral resources if this colony is to make any progress at all. After what has fallen from the Premier, I feel sure that between this and the commencement of this railway, which I presume will not be for another year or so, we shall know something more about this goldfield than we do at present; but I have this much confidence in the Ministry that, if they honestly think this field is not going to prove the success they now expect it will, they will not come down

to this House with a bill to authorise its construction. Holding these views, I shall give my support to the item now before us.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. W. E. Marmion) said that in view of the generally favorable tone of the debate he should not have felt called upon to say anything, except that allusion had been made to the absence of the latest report of the Government Geologist on the Yilgarn goldfields. Acting under his instructions as head of the department, Mr. Woodward had proceeded to Yilgarn some three weeks ago, and he had been instructed to give a full report upon the prospect of the field. He was expected to return to Perth in the course of a few days, and immediately upon his return his report would be printed and laid on the table of the House for the information of hon. members. He did not know that there was any necessity for him to continue the debate upon this item, but, with regard to the Transcontinental line, he took it that when that line was constructed it would follow the route which they proposed this Yilgarn line should take. As to the land in the direction of Yilgarn, he might say that applications had been made for large areas of land with the view of starting agricultural pursuits, and there was every prospect, he was informed, of the experiment being attended with success. This was within 30 miles of Yilgarn. Perhaps, if he had the honor twelve months hence of occupying the position he now did, he would have the pleasure of informing the House that there was a promising future for the district not only as regards the yield of gold but also as regards its agricultural and pastoral capabilities. As to the Northern goldfields, and the allegation of the hon. member for the De Grey that these fields had been neglected by the Government in the past, he might say that the present Government looked forward with confidence to the construction of this line of railway to Yilgarn and the development of our Eastern goldfields to enable them to liberally assist in the development of our Northern fields as well as any other fields that might be brought into light.

MR. TRAYLEN said it had been suggested by several hon. members that they

should pass this item now provisionally, but that in the event of the prospects of the goldfield becoming less promising between this and the completion of the surveys that they should stultify themselves a few months hence by declining to proceed with the work. Surely that was coming to his own argument, that they should for the present postpone this item.

Item put and passed, *nem. con.*

Progress reported.

#### CENSUS BILL.

This bill passed through committee, without comment.

#### OFFICIALS IN PARLIAMENT BILL.

This bill passed through committee *sub silentio*.

#### POSTAGE STAMP ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

This bill passed through committee without discussion.

#### AUDIT BILL, 1891.

On the order of the day for going into committee on this bill,

MR. PARKER moved, as an amendment, that the bill be referred to a select committee.

Agreed to.

A ballot having been taken, the following members, in addition to the mover, were elected to serve on the select committee:—Hon. J. Forrest, Hon. W. E. Marmion, Mr. Canning, and Sir J. G. Lee Steere.

The House adjourned at ten minutes past 5 o'clock, p.m.