

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 18th October, 1898.

Papers presented—Question: Collie Coal, Report on Further Discovery—Question: Aborigines and the New Department—Question: Outdoor Locomotive Superintendent, a New Office—Question: School Teachers, New Scale of Salaries—Bills of Sale Bill, third reading—Mining on Private Property Act Amendment Bill, in Committee, Division on clause 27; Bill reported—Roads and Streets Closure Bill, No. 2 (Bardoc, Beverley, etc.), second reading and remaining stages—Annual Estimates, in Committee of Supply; Public Works Department, Statement by Director; Works Votes passed, pages 44 to 48, inclusive; roads and Bridges Vote, Amendment to reduce amount. Division on adjournment (negatived), progress reported—Adjournment.

The SPEAKER took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Police Act, Regulations. Gold return, as ordered, showing amount and value of gold raised in and exported from the colony.

By the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: Menzies town lots, Return (as ordered) showing sale and prices.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION: COLLIE COAL, REPORT ON FURTHER DISCOVERY.

MR. SOLOMON, without notice and by leave, asked the Premier: Has he received any information in regard to the Collie Coalfield?

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: Yes; I received a letter yesterday from Professor McCoy, reporting upon samples of coal which I had sent to him, containing fossil leaves; and the report I received has been published in the morning newspapers, in the form exactly as I received it.

QUESTION: ABORIGINES AND THE NEW DEPARTMENT.

MR. HUBBLE, for Mr. Phillips, asked the Premier whether he was in a position

to give any information to the House with reference to the steps taken by the head of the Aborigines Department to look after the welfare of the aborigines, and whether any report would be presented to Parliament this session in accordance with the Aborigines Act.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—1, A report up to March 28th by the late Aborigines Board has already been presented to Parliament this session. 2, The new department has 50 agents north of the Murchison, and 65 south of that river. 3, Relief is being afforded to nearly 900 natives, who are reported to require assistance. 4, Pauperism among the natives has very largely increased during recent years, owing to the amount of funds expended being larger than was necessary. As a consequence, in the settled districts, the natives are unwilling to do any work. 5, Full particulars as to age, sex, and cause for giving relief are being prepared, and a full report will be furnished next session. 6, There has not been sufficient time since the establishment of the new department to obtain information for a report for this session.

QUESTION: OUTDOOR LOCOMOTIVE SUPERINTENDENT, A NEW OFFICE.

MR. SOLOMON asked the Commissioner of Railways—1, Whether, considering the falling off in the railway revenue, it was necessary to create a new office, namely, that of an Outdoor Locomotive Superintendent. 2, Whether there was no person in the Locomotive Department qualified to fill this position without importing a man from England. 3, On whose recommendation Mr. J. S. P. Main was appointed to fill the position. 4, What were his qualifications, and on what railways had he gained experience. 5, Whether he was a married or single man.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piessé) replied:—1, Yes, but there is no falling off in the gross earnings. 2, None considered suitable. 3, On the recommendation of the locomotive engineer of the Great Central Railway, England. 4, Many years' experience in similar work to that in which he is now engaged. The Great Central Railway, England, and South-Western Railway, Scotland. 5, Single.

QUESTION: SCHOOL TEACHERS, NEW SCALE OF SALARIES.

MR. LEAKE asked the Premier—1, Whether it was intended that the new scale of salaries to teachers in the State schools of the colony should come into operation on January 1st, 1899, as stated in the regulations of February, 1898. 2, Whether a sufficient sum had been placed on the estimates of the Education Department for the year 1898-9 to provide for this new scale of salaries. 3, If not, how the Minister contemplated meeting the increased expenditure which would be entailed by the payment of such new scale of salaries.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied:—1, If funds are available. 2, As far as can be at present judged, there will not be sufficient. 3, The whole matter will be considered before the beginning of the next year.

BILLS OF SALE BILL.

Read a third time, on the motion of Mr. ILLINGWORTH, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

MINING ON PRIVATE PROPERTY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

THE MINISTER OF MINES (Hon. H. B. Lefroy), referring to the interpretation of "lease," moved, as an amendment, that the words "gold-mining" be inserted, so as to read, "a gold-mining lease."

Amendment put and passed.

Definition of "claim":

MR. KINGSMILL: As to the definition of a "claim," it was desirable that information should be given as to the size of claims, the mode of pegging out by regulations, and so on.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Persons would have power to take up claims on private property; but he did not think they would do so. The matter referred to would be arranged by regulation, just as under the Gold Mines Act. The Government would bring the regulations as nearly as possible into line with that Act.

MR. VOSPER: It was necessary to have something more definite in the Bill than existed at present. If the whole matter were to be dealt with by regula-

tion, it would mean that the persons who took up claims would be, to a great extent, at the mercy of the Minister. Supposing alluvial were found on a private estate, and a rush took place, it might be very awkward unless the meaning of a "claim" was defined.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Clause 8 of the Bill said, "Any holder of a miner's right, who desires to obtain possession of a claim," might do so and so. The regulations would provide the size of the claim. Nothing more was laid down by our gold mines law. "Claim," in this Bill, meant "any private land occupied for the purpose of seeking for gold therein, by virtue of a miner's right, in accordance with the provisions of this Act and the regulations." This Mining on Private Property Bill did not affect the Hampton Plains property, which was owned by a company.

MR. KINGSMILL: The reason for calling attention to the matter was that it was possible to take up a prospecting area on private lands; but there did not seem to be the same provision for either reward claims or ordinary claims on private lands as existed in the Gold Mines Act.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: A reward claim should not be given.

MR. KINGSMILL: Why not? The opinion of the mining members of the House was that there was too much in the regulations, and not enough in the principal Act. He was far from wishing to obstruct the passing of the Bill, which he considered most necessary; but it should contain something more defining the status of the miner's rights under the Bill. However, he did not wish to press the point.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Bill should be complete in itself. He moved that after the word "regulation," line 4, there be inserted the words, "which shall be the same as those contained in the Gold Mines Act." Regulations which applied to gold mining on private property should be practically the same as for our ordinary Crown lands. No reason could be assigned why there should be a difference.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: We could not embody in this Bill the regulations in the Gold Mines Act in their en-

tirety; for this Bill was not dealing with Crown land, but private property, whereas the regulations in the Gold Mines Act simply dealt with Crown lands. Although a man might take up a claim on private property, he could not go there at any moment and prospect, as he could on Crown land.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was desirable to know what regulations were going to be made.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It was impossible to tell until the Bill was passed. It was, as he had said, intended to bring the regulations into line with those under the Gold Mines Act as nearly as possible; but, if we simply embodied the regulations of the Gold Mines Act as a part of this Bill, this expedient would render the Bill unworkable, because the method of going on private land was quite different, for a miner could not go on private land and take the surface, without compensation. Clause 28 provided that, "after the granting of any lease under the provisions of this Act, or after the occupation by a holder of a miner's right of any private land, the jurisdiction of the warden, and every other jurisdiction established by the Goldfields Act 1895 and any amendment thereof with respect to mining on Crown land, shall apply to any private land comprised in such lease." The jurisdiction was the same as under the Gold Mines Act.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why should not the size of the claim be the same?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: That was a matter of detail. He did not think anyone would take up claims on private land. Provision was made in clause 27 for prospecting on private land, which allowed a person, being an applicant for a lease, to take up a certain portion of the lease, not exceeding five acres, as a prospecting area. That was to say, a person could mark out a 24-acre block, and take up five acres, prospect on it, pay compensation only for the five acres, and then wait until he had tested the land before he paid compensation on the rest of the 24 acres. All these provisions would be arranged for in the regulations.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There would be some difficulty in introducing the amendment, and the Minister's assurance as to

making regulations was sufficient, after what had been said.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Definition of "Earth":

MR. MORGANS, referring to the definition of "earth," as including "any rock, stone, quartz, clay, sand, and so.,," said there had been considerable discussion on the same question while the previous Bill was before the House; and as the definition of "earth" given in this Bill was likely to cause difficulties, and perhaps disputes, similar to those which had occurred already, it was desirable to have a more exact definition. This definition really applied to quartz reefs.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The definition of the word "gold," which came next in the clause, included any earth containing gold, and therefore would mean rock, stone, quartz, clay, sand, and soil. If earth had gold in it, the word "earth" was included in the definition of gold.

MR. MORGANS: Did "earth" include alluvial gold? That was the point.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Alluvial gold was generally contained in earth, sand, or soil.

MR. MORGANS: The definition still appeared likely to create difficulties, for it seemed to mix up alluvial and quartz mining. If a man found gold in sand, he might claim the advantage of this definition and take up an alluvial claim on a lease. The Minister should try to find some way out of the difficulty.

MR. KINGSMILL: The definition was rather mixed, but any mixture resulting from the interpretation of "earth" would be removed by the fact that the whole spirit of the Bill was practically against the taking up of claims, and was in favour of granting an alluvial lease. This intention was shown particularly in clause 27. In localities likely to be affected by this Bill, persons were just as likely to find alluvial, which might be worked in small claims rather than in large areas.

Definition of "Lease":

THE MINISTER OF MINES, referring to the definition of the word "lease," moved, as an amendment, that the words "gold mining" be inserted after "a," so as to read "a gold-mining lease."

Amendment put and passed.

Definition of "Mining lease":

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the definition of "mining lease" be struck out. He said this definition was unnecessary in the Bill, though it might have been required in the Victorian Act, from which this was taken.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Was the Minister sure that power was secured to carry away gold when found on private property?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Yes. Power to grant a lease for gold mining implied the power to take away any gold found on that lease.

Amendment put and passed.

New definition, "Miner's right":

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved that the following definition of "miner's right" be inserted after the definition of "mine": "Miner's right means a miner's right issued under the Goldfields Act, 1895, or any amendment thereof."

MR. KINGSMILL: In clause 6 and in other parts of the Bill, the word "mine" was used in the sense of land for the purpose of mining. Would it be necessary to put in a definition of the word "mine" as a noun, the word being defined in the interpretation simply as a verb?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It did not appear necessary to define "mine" in the form of a noun, because a lease or claim would mean the same as a mine.

Amendment put and passed.

Definition, "Private land":

MR. LEAKE, referring to the definition of "private land," said it did not include town land.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: Mining on town lands must be carried on at a certain depth; and if there were certain buildings on the land, mining was not allowed under those buildings.

Definition of "Proclamation":

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed.

Definition of "warden":

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that in the definition of "warden," lines 4 and 5 be struck out, and the following words inserted in lieu thereof: "resident magistrate of the district within which the land in question is

situated." In districts on the coast in which this Act would probably chiefly operate, there might be no warden within 100 or 200 miles of the private land on which it was proposed to enter; therefore it was desirable to give the resident magistrate the powers of a warden, until such district was declared a goldfield.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Gold-mining leases on private lands:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: With what object?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The words were superfluous.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 6 and 7—agreed to.

Clause 8—Mode of obtaining possession or lease of certain land; certain land not to be entered, etc., without consent of owner:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that in sub-clause 6, lines 4 and 5, the words "the mining registrar or a resident magistrate" be struck out. The warden, who was the resident magistrate on a goldfield, should be the only person entrusted with this authority.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the words "registrar or resident magistrate," in sub-clause 6, be struck out.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the words "registrar or resident magistrate," in sub-clause 6, be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 9 and 10—agreed to.

Clause 11—Measure of compensation:

MR. KINGSMILL: What was the meaning of "consequential damages," and by what mode could such damages be assessed in respect of any agreement or payment which had to be made before entry?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The clause read:—

The compensation to be made to the owner, or to the owner and occupier aforesaid, shall

be for being deprived of the possession of the surface, or of any part of the surface of private land, as defined in section three of this Act; and for damage to the whole, or any part thereof, as the case may be, which may arise from the carrying on of mining operations therein or thereon, and for the severance of such land from other land of the owner or occupier, and for all consequential damages.

The resident magistrate or warden must decide the question as to consequential damages, on the facts brought before him.

MR. KINGSMILL: The difficulty lay in the fact that compensation had to be provided for at the actual time of entry, or before any mining could be done. How could the owner of the private land, or the would-be miner, or the warden, decide what damage might ensue from mining upon the land? How could such damage be assessed before it was done?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The provision would undoubtedly be workable.

Put and passed.

Clauses 12 to 14, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 15—Application for lease to be pursuant to regulations; not obligatory to grant lease:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the last two lines of the clause be struck out. The words in question provided that, if an application for a lease were refused, the applicant should be informed of the reason for such refusal. The necessity for this provision did not appear; but, at the same time, he had no desire to press the amendment if the Committee thought it desirable to retain the words.

Amendment put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 16—agreed to.

Clause 17—Lease to contain conditions re non-fulfilment of covenants:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council," at the end of the clause, be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 18—agreed to.

Clause 19—Mining lease may be surrendered:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 20 to 24, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 25—Re-entry by owner:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out of line 5, also out of line 6.

Put and passed, and the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 26—Priority may be given to applicants under 61 Vic., No. 33:

MR. WALLACE: Would the Minister explain this clause? It appeared to be a protection for persons who had made application before the introduction of this Bill.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: It simply provided that where anyone had pegged out under the Act now repealed, he should have a prior right over anyone who pegged out under this Bill. If there should be any difficulty about the matter, it would have to be fought out in the courts.

MR. KINGSMILL: Under the former Act, it was competent for a would-be miner to obtain a lease direct from the owner of the land, without reference to the Minister at all, and that appeared to have been a weak point in the Act. Persons acting *bona fide* could go to the owner of land and apply for a lease. The owner of the land was not bound to grant it, if the person did not happen to be a personal friend. On the other hand, another man, who might be a personal friend, would come along and make application possibly for the same ground, and have a lease granted. What position was going to be taken up by the Government towards the prior applicant, in a case of that kind?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The hon. member meant, he took it, prior applications that had been lodged some time ago.

MR. KINGSMILL: Exactly.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: In cases where the land applied for had been leased by the holder of the land to somebody else?

MR. KINGSMILL: Exactly.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The Government did not propose to go outside the law as it stood; and if the owner had the right to lease this land and it

had already been applied for under the old Act, the Government did not propose to alter that. We could not attempt retrospective legislation such as that. People would have to claim their rights under this Bill, or under the other Act, if they had any, and the court would have to settle the question.

MR. WALLACE: Then this clause was unnecessary.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: In his opinion, it was not unnecessary. A number of claims had been marked out on Blackboy Hill, and they had been surveyed; applications for these leases had been lodged in the Crown Lands Department by certain persons; and it was proposed under this Bill to allow those applications to hold good. If the owner had leased any of this land held under application, the Government did not propose to deal with that. If the prior applicants could show that the land had been leased illegally to the present occupants, then their claims would be upheld; but unless they could do that, the department could not uphold the claim.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 27—Lease of prospecting area and reserved area of private land:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "for quartz mining purposes, and ten acres for alluvial mining purposes," in lines 4 and 5, be struck out. The clause would then read, "Any person being an applicant for a lease of any private land under this Act, and being desirous of testing such land, may in his application apply for a prospecting area of such land not exceeding five acres, together with a reserved area of the remainder of the private land applied for by him." Of course the Government might make regulations to specify the size of the prospecting area; but this prospecting area was an area inside a lease.

MR. KINGSMILL: Was it obligatory upon anybody, before taking out such prospecting area, to pay the rent for the lease? It ought not to be necessary for any miner to pay the rent on, say, a 24-acre lease before he was allowed to peg out a prospecting area of five acres. This would have a directly hampering influence on the prospector.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: If a person applied for a 24-acre lease, and then applied for a protection area within that 24-acre lease, he would have to pay rent for the whole of the lease; but he would have to pay compensation to the owner only for the prospecting area, and compensation would probably be the chief amount he would have to pay under this Bill; not rent. If he took up five acres to prospect, and after paying compensation found there was not sufficient inducement to proceed further with his search on the rest of the land, he would simply throw it up, and would have no further compensation to pay.

MR. KINGSMILL: It would be far better to allow a man to take up a prospecting area without the formality of pegging out a lease.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It took about 20 years to get any rights of mining on private property in Victoria: and not until, as was supposed, every safeguard was placed upon property and practically every mining right stifled was the Act passed. That was not the kind of legislation he would like to follow. He saw no reason why a man should not take up a prospecting area of five acres without having to pay rent to the Government, or compensation either for his lease. [Dissent from several members.] Of course he must pay compensation on the five acres, and pay for any consequential damage that might accrue from his working those five acres; but would the Committee say he should pay compensation on 24 acres of land, the greater part of which he had not touched, and perhaps never intended to touch?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: A person would pay compensation only on the five acres.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But it was only a deferred payment as regarded the 24 acres.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: A man could not pay it until he used the land.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why should he take up 24 acres?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: He need not. A person could take up ten, six, or five acres, if he liked.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was proposed to compel him to pay rent on the 24 acres.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The reason he had to pay on the whole 24

acres was that he should have a title to the 24 acres; otherwise somebody else might go in and peg out a lease alongside him. If he only wanted a claim, he could take up a claim.

Amendment (by the Minister) put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as further amendments, that in the phrase "Governor-in-Council" the words "in Council" be struck out of sub-clauses 2, 8, and 9.

Put and passed.

New sub-clause:

MR. KINGSMILL moved that the following be added, to stand as sub-clause 12:—

Any holder of a miner's right may apply for a prospecting area, and prospect thereon and thereunder, upon paying, or agreeing to pay, such compensation as may be fixed by the warden.

The object was to allow prospecting to be as free as possible on private land. It was a great disability that a miner should have to mark out and apply for a lease before being allowed to prospect at all; and the fact of his having to pay compensation to the owner should be enough of a handicap, without also having to pay the rent of a lease of perhaps 24 acres.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The definition of the size of a claim, to be made in the regulations, would provide for this; and the size of a claim could be made five acres, or any size the Committee might consider suitable. This provision in the clause should be tried in practical operation, before attempting to amend it in that direction.

MR. KINGSMILL: The amendment would not damage the private owner, because the compensation had to be agreed upon before the miner could go on the ground at all. There were objections to making the claims too large. It would be iniquitous to unduly increase the size of claims, as the effect would be to benefit the few at the expense of the many. The miner would obtain authority from the warden to enter on private land, believing it to be payably auriferous; but he could not know whether it was payable, nor in what part it would be payable, until he tested it. Therefore he could take out a prospecting area, and, after finding out whether the ground was

payable, he could then take out a claim. It would not be right to compel him to take out his claim straight away. If the Minister considered this clause not a suitable place for adding the amendment, he could be willing to put it in some other part of the Bill.

MR. CONNOR: In the case of a number of prospectors sinking numerous shafts on private property, say a pastoral lease, and assuming the leaseholder wanted to run his stock over the ground where the prospectors were working, how would the owner of the ground stand in regard to compensation?

MR. KINGSMILL: The prospector would have to pay for any damage done, and also pay for consequential damage.

MR. CONNOR: Supposing the prospector was not in a position to pay for any damage?

THE MINISTER OF MINES: If a prospector put down a lot of shafts on private property, where the owner was running his stock, the Bill would sufficiently protect the owner of the land.

MR. KINGSMILL: No doubt about that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.

Amendment (Mr. Kingsmill's) put and negatived on the voices. MR. KINGSMILL called for a division, which was taken with the following result:—

Ayes	11
Noes	13

Majority against	...	2
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Ayes.	Noes.
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Mr. Connor	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Ewing	Mr. A. Forrest
Mr. Higham	Mr. Hall
Mr. Illingworth	Mr. Hubble
Mr. Kenny	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Kingsmill	Mr. Locke
Mr. Leake	Mr. Monger
Mr. Moran	Mr. Ponnelfather
Mr. Oats	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Solomon	Sir J. G. Leo Steere
Mr. Doherty	Mr. Throssell
(Teller)	Hon. H. W. Venn
	Mr. Morgans
	(Teller)

Amendment thus negatived, and the clause as previously amended agreed to.

Clause 28—agreed to.

Clause 29—Renewal of lease; right to renewal by transferror or transferee of portion of a mining lease:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed, and clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 30—agreed to.

Clause 31—Pendency of application defined:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the word "part," in sub-clause 3, line 4, be struck out, and "Act" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed, and clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 32—Lease to continue in operation during pendency of application for renewal:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 33 to 44, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 45—Amalgamation of leases and claims; lien for wages; caveats:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the word "part," in line 3, be struck out, and "Act" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 46—Private lands may be excepted from mining:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council," in lines 1 and 5, be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 47—Easements over private land:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 48—agreed to.

Clause 49—Lessee no right to impound or molest any animal belonging to the owner on land, unless fenced:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the word "the" in line 1 be struck out, and "any" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that after the word "lessee," in line 1, "licensee or claimholder" be inserted.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the words "the said," in line 4, be struck out and "any adjoining" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the words "the said land so demised under," in line 7, be struck out and "and any land occupied under the provisions of" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the words "the said," in line 12, be struck out and "such adjoining" inserted in lieu thereof.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that the words "so demised," in line 12, be struck out.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as a further amendment, that after the word "lessee," in line 12, "licensee or claimholder" be inserted.

Put and passed.

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved as further amendments, that the words "such lessee," in line 7, page 20, be struck out and "him" inserted in lieu thereof; that "demised," in the same line be struck out, and "occupied" inserted in lieu thereof; that "to the said lessee," line 8, be struck out; and that at the end of the clause the words "licensee or claimholder" be inserted.

Amendments put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 50—Power for the Governor-in-Council to grant licenses to construct drives through land occupied for mining purposes:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved that the words "in Council," line 9, be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 51 to 54, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 55—Power to make Regulations:

THE MINISTER OF MINES moved, as an amendment, that the words "in Council" be struck out.

Put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clause 56—agreed to.

Clause 57—Regulations to be made :

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved, as amendments, that the words "in Council" be struck out, and "but not otherwise" inserted in lieu thereof ; also that the word "and," line 3, be struck out ; also that after the word "amend," line 3, "and repeal" be inserted.

Amendments put and passed, and the clause as amended agreed to.

Clauses 58 to 62, inclusive—agreed to.
Schedule—agreed to.

Preamble and title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments, and the report adopted.

ROADS AND STREETS CLOSURE BILL, No. 2 (BARDOC, BEVERLEY, Etc.).

SECOND READING.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. G. Throssell), in moving the second reading, said : This is a Bill to authorise the closing of certain roads and streets in various towns and districts ; and I do not know that it calls for any special statement on my part, for it speaks for itself. I believe the closing of the roads and streets referred to has become necessary. Members have the information before them, and I therefore move the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE, ETC.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and report adopted.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

At 6.28 p.m. the SPEAKER left the chair.

At 7.30 the SPEAKER resumed the chair.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration resumed (from the last sitting) at page 44.

PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT (Director, Hon. F. H. Piesse).

STATEMENT ON PUBLIC WORKS.

Vote, General Division, £162,997 10s. 7d.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS :
As announced at the last sitting of the House, I regret that the time then at my disposal did not permit me to complete my address in connection with the Public Works Estimates, which I therefore postponed until this evening. As we have now reached the first item of public works, it is my intention to make a brief statement with regard to the Public Works Estimates for the year, as set forth in the Public Works Report, which has been placed before hon. members. It will be noticed, by those who have referred to the report, that the last year's expenditure has been the largest in the history of the Works Department ; and of course it is hardly necessary to point this out to hon. members, for the reason that, in making his Financial Statement to this House, the Premier touched on this point, and said the expenditure had, during the year, been the largest on record. The amount expended from loan funds was £1,940,705 ; from revenue, £847,241 ; or a total of £2,787,946. There was expended in England in connection with rolling stock, rails, fastenings, etc., a sum of £765,000, and in the colony £2,022,946. The principal items upon which these amounts were expended were in connection with the railways and tramways. The amount expended from revenue in this direction was £46,255, and from loan £1,337,770 ; totalling £1,383,868. On harbour and river improvements the amount expended from revenue was £125,551, and from loan £28,100, totalling £153,651 ; this total being exclusive of the Fremantle harbour works, on which the amount expended was £165,569 from loan funds. On public buildings and works, the amount expended was £413,574 from revenue, and £6,394 from loan ; making a total of £419,968. In regard to the small amount thus spent from loan, I may point out that the items are balances of loan votes which were passed some years ago. For instance, in connection with works at Geraldton there was a small balance ; also at different places throughout the colony small balances had remained in connection with

various public buildings and works; and as these balances were available, it was decided to make use of them by expending them on works which were carried out in those places. On water conservation and stock routes, this being an important item, we find that from revenue we expended £41,375, and from loan £175,891, or a total of £217,266. This also is a very large amount, and points to the fact that conservation of water and the opening of stock routes have not been lost sight of by the Government. In addition to this we find that on the item of roads and bridges the large amount of £109,580 was expended from revenue, and £11,819 from loan, or a total of £121,399. In boring for coal and on miscellaneous works we expended £29,187 from revenue, and £50,180 from loan; totalling £79,367. The consolidated revenue estimates authorised us to expend a total of £1,028,118, as follows:—Public Works, £474,454; buildings, £553,664. In pursuance of the programme which we set out in the early part of the year, these works were proceeded with vigorously; but as the year went on we found there was a necessity for curtailing the expenditure and lessening the carrying out of the works; consequently the department did everything in its power to reduce the expenditure, with the result that we saved £180,000 upon the amounts which we had estimated to expend within the year. It has been said that the Works Department is responsible for the deficit; but I think the Premier, in referring to that matter in his Financial Statement, pointed out that the department succeeded, in consequence of the curtailment of expenditure in the latter part of the year, in saving the amount of £180,000 which would otherwise have been expended as authorised.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: What do you mean by "saving"?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We did not expend the whole amount we were authorised to expend, and which we should have expended if we had gone on with all the works authorised.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Is it not a fact that you pushed some works forward to the next year—not that you abandoned them?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Of course there are bound to

be a number of works carried into another year, and that is generally the case; but had we not adopted this policy of curtailment, we would have expended the whole of the amount authorised to be spent on works and buildings, and if we had carried out all those works, they would probably have swelled the actual expenditure by another £50,000 or £70,000. But, immediately we found that there was a necessity to curtail the expenditure, only those works which were absolutely necessary were put in hand. Therefore, as I have pointed out, we were able to avoid expending the whole of the amount which Parliament had voted for expenditure. To clearly put the position before the Committee, I give a statement which was prepared showing the amounts voted for expenditure on the Estimates, and the amounts over-spent or under-spent by the different departments of the State. I do not wish, of course, to place this before hon. members with a view to showing what the other departments expended, but merely want to put myself right as the Minister in control of this department. We have been accused of all kinds of extravagance, and all kinds of reckless expenditure; and so many hard things have been said about us in connection with the department, that I would like to show to the Committee that, if it had not been for the efforts which were made by this department, the result of the year's operations would not have been so satisfactory to the country as it has been. Of course we find that the amounts of the different departments set out in this statement have been much exceeded in some instances; but we find in regard to the Public Works Department, as I pointed out before, that the vote of £1,028,118, and the expenditure of £847,238 meant that we made the saving to which I have referred, equal to 17.60 per cent. on the amounts which we were entitled to expend.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How do you make out that you are saving, when you have to spend it?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The railways and tramways vote was £866,396, and the expenditure was £852,647, which resulted in a saving in expenditure of £13,749, or 1.58 per cent. The amount voted for the Works Department was £1,028,118; the actual ex-

penditure was £847,238, showing a saving of £180,880, equal to 17.60 per cent. Thus, had other departments spent only the amounts voted, and if the amount underspent by the Works Department were taken into consideration, the deficit resulting would have been £6,000 only, instead of that actually realised, £186,804; and, further, if the amount underspent by the Railways Department were taken into consideration, the deficit realised would have actually been converted into a surplus of £7,700. So soon as the department realised that the anticipated revenue would fall short of the estimate, immediate steps were taken to exercise rigid economy, not only with regard to works, but in connection with the staff; and during the six months ending the 30th June, 1897, no less than one hundred officers were retrenched, the net decrease for the year being seventy. It has been stated that we did not commence our retrenchment as early as we might have done; but I should like to point out, too, that this is the only department which really commenced the retrenchment early in the year. Of course I do not say this to put one department against another, but to show that I recognised early in the year that there was a necessity for retrenchment. I commenced at once, with a desire to cut down expenditure, to bring about a reduction in the staff, with the result that is shown by the report.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How much did you save? Because that is actual saving.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: I have the exact figures, which I will give presently. It must be borne in mind that, in curtailing the expenditure the department was considerably hampered by the fact that shortly after the Estimates were passed, a large majority of the works provided for on last year's Estimates, something between £400,000 and £500,000, had been actually commenced. If we had then only those works to commence at the beginning of the year, a much larger saving would have been effected: but, not having the opportunity of saving upon that large proportion of the works, we could only turn our attention to works which had not commenced. If hon. members will look to this fact, they will find that if it had been possible

to have reduced the expenditure earlier in the year, every effort would have been made to reduce it; but we were bound to meet our obligations, and therefore quite eight or nine months had gone by before I was able to do anything in the way of curtailing expenditure; that is, in a way which would affect the spending of the department. Now, although a large saving was made last year in regard to the expenditure, I should like to point out that this cannot be done this year. If hon. members will refer to the Estimates, they will find that the amount asked for this year, including "departmental," is only £379,000, which, allowing £46,000 for the departmental expenditure in connection with salaries and so forth, will leave only an amount of £333,000. This is a much lower amount than has been expended during the last five years; consequently, during this year there can be no prospect—indeed there is no prospect—of saving very much out of this sum of £333,000. Therefore the House may expect that the whole of this amount will be expended, excepting perhaps in respect of some works which are not considered extremely urgent; or, in regard to the administration of the department, where any money can be saved; or, in regard also to additions and repairs to buildings, where any money can be saved. I should like to point out that every effort will be made to exercise the most rigid economy in connection with such expenditure. We find, for instance, that we have something like £40,000 set down for additions and improvements to buildings; and, in connection with works of that character upon which a saving can be made, I wish it to be understood that every effort will be made to save.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: All those works will have to be done.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Of course I should like the Committee to understand this too, that during the last two or three years our policy has been to carry out our works with the greatest possible despatch; and the result has been that all these buildings have had to be furnished wherever they have been erected. It is not like putting a small amount of furniture into an old building, or adding to a building:

but all these new buildings needed a large amount of furniture; and a good deal of expenditure has been incurred in connection with their upkeep, so that this has been a very heavy item. I am glad to say that as most of the buildings are complete, or nearing completion, and as most of them are furnished, items of an extraneous character, which are necessary and are not provided for specially, will not be so numerous in the future as they have been in the past. With regard to the total loan money expenditure made up to the end of June last, this amounted to £8,583,750, of which a few of the principal items are:—Railways and tramways, £5,931,372; harbour and river improvements, £1,020,890; stock routes and water conservation, £486,955. The first two items need very little explanation, because I dealt with them in the Railway Estimates; and with regard to stock routes and water conservation, the amount expended to date being £486,955, I may say that a considerable portion of this amount has been expended on the goldfields for water conservation there, also in connection with the reservoirs and other works which have been carried out throughout the length and breadth of the goldfields; so that the work actually connected with stock routes has not been of a heavy character.

MR. A. FORREST: How much has been spent on stock routes?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The details the hon. member asks for will be found in the report, though the items are lumped together in the summary I have given. On public buildings it will be found that the total amount expended out of loan last year was £138,173. It will be found that this amount is small as compared with the large amount expended on other works out of loan; showing, as it does, that this colony has not expended much money out of loan upon buildings, and I think we should be gratified to find it has not done so. I may say, too, that persons from the eastern colonies who have visited Western Australia have frequently, in talking over this matter, congratulated us upon our not having spent much money on buildings out of loan moneys. Most of our buildings, except those represented by this small amount—

small as compared with the large expenditure of the department—have been paid for out of revenue; therefore they are not a direct charge upon the State in the way of interest. Of course, if capitalised, there is no doubt they would mean a large sum of money; but we have not to provide the interest on the money expended for those buildings; therefore I consider this a satisfactory state of things, for the reason that the larger works, which have absorbed nearly the whole of the amount of loan moneys, are interest-paying. For instance, I have shown that the railways now open represent £5,931,000, or nearly six millions of the £8,500,000 expended, and are paying a profit on capital of 4.62 per cent.; so that this is a most satisfactory state of things, although, as I pointed out before, the profits are not so good as they were last year. Now, with regard to the cost of administration, I want to show how we can economise. Although we have endeavoured to economise in every way possible, as regards the expenditure in connection with buildings, I will show by what method we can economise in connection with our administration, and that is by centralising. If we could bring all our departments together within one building, and do the whole of our official work there, by administering the departments from one office, there would be a great saving. Of course the exigencies of the service have caused us to provide a large staff to carry on the work, and it has been difficult to get that staff into anything like a central position so that it could be administered from one set of buildings. As we all know, they have been scattered all over the city, in three or four different sets of offices; but, with the exception of the survey branch, we have succeeded in bringing together into the old barracks all the branches of the department; therefore one step has been taken towards centralising the whole of the officers in this department. If we could bring the whole of the branches under one roof, there would be an immense saving—in fact I think a saving of quite 15 to 20 per cent. in the cost of administration. This of course cannot be done just now. It was hoped that, this year, we should have been able, either to have provided a new building

for this purpose, or to have put up some temporary buildings at the barracks, and thus brought the whole of the staff together ; but, unfortunately, it was impossible to do this. As you know, large buildings were erected in the centre of this city, which were supposed to be large enough to house many branches of the public service ; but the way in which the service has grown caused all the new offices to be immediately taken up by the different departments which were then in the building ; and as it has been my object to reduce, as far as possible, the cost under this head, we have, wherever possible, brought the different departments into the new buildings which have been erected. The Engineer-in-Chief has dealt with this subject in a portion of his report, and the Under Secretary for Public Works has also dealt with it. If you will refer to the report of last year, you will find it there ; and I also dealt with it myself at the time, but was unable to do anything in consequence of our not being in a position to erect the new building. The different works which have been carried out during the year it is hardly necessary for me to deal with in detail, because you have before you this year the report, which has not been in your hands at so early a date before ; consequently I hope hon. members will take the opportunity of looking through it. I need not say much about it. With regard to the Fremantle harbour works, as we know those works have been carried out very expeditiously, and we have expended upon the main scheme this year £163,562. The total length of wharf opened during the year, including that portion opened last year, amounts to 5,750 feet. The south mole, which was nearing completion at the time I placed my statement before the House last year, has been finished, and nearly the whole of the blasting has also been completed. The dredging is in a fair way of progress, and arrangements are being made for the addition of dredges. Two more dredges are to be imported, one of which should arrive early next year, the other following soon afterwards, and these, together with a number of dredges ordered, should assist us in very expeditiously carrying out the remainder of this great work. As I pointed out with regard to roads and

bridges, a large amount has been expended, and it will be shown that throughout the length and breadth of the colony, all the works put in hand are completed, many useful works having been carried out in various parts of the colony. With regard to sewerage and water supply for towns, although it was announced that the Government intended proceeding with the sewerage works this year, it has since been decided not to proceed with them at present ; but the department which has them in hand has sufficient to occupy its time, under Mr. Hodgson, by carrying out the work in connection with the Coolgardie water scheme, although there is a small branch still engaged in obtaining more information in regard to the sewerage works, which will be available by the time it is needed. The artesian boring carried out in different places is fully dealt with in the report, it being proved that we have a large supply of artesian water ; the bore at Guildford being the most recent, and giving a yield of something over one million gallons per day. The water supply on the fields, too, has occupied a good deal of attention during the year, but although a large number of tanks were constructed, I am sorry to say that very few of them have been filled with water. Three or four are filled, but, with regard to the remainder, there has been very little rain with which to fill them. As to the wells on the gold-fields, it has been decided this year to lease a large number of them, the reason being that it will reduce the cost of maintenance, and, in my opinion, it is a right step to take, because without it there would be a necessity to engage men to look after these wells, and pay high salaries in outlying districts. I made enquiry, and found it would be possible in many instances to obtain a revenue by leasing them, and, as I say, effect a saving in the cost of maintenance. Wells will be leased on certain conditions, so as not to give the leaseholder a monopoly, and the water will be sold under certain conditions as regards price, so that the public will not have to pay any more for the water than at present. The price will be the same, and, in accordance with the conditions, people will be supplied as they have been by the Government. The architectural department, which is a depart-

ment that, of course, more closely comes under the notice of most members, and one which has received a good deal of censure from time to time, has, I am glad to say, done a very great deal of good work during the past year. The total amount expended was £441,681, as pointed out before in my opening remarks. The programme, of course, has been a heavy one, and although a great deal of comment has been made with regard to the class of buildings erected, still I think that on the whole the class of work put into these buildings is of the very best character; the designs which have been adopted during the past year or eighteen months are improved; and in every way we have endeavoured, as far as possible, to make them as cheap as we could, consistent with good work. We have gone in for the plainest class of building where necessary, and, in fact, in some of our larger buildings we have endeavoured to do away with all unnecessary ornamentation. This work has been carried out during the year without increasing the staff. In fact it was one of the departments in which it was found necessary to reduce the staff. As I pointed out, immediately the necessity had arisen, the staff was reduced from 168 to 91, and owing to the small number of works which are provided for in this year's Estimates, it is still further proposed to reduce the staff to 42, so that by the end of the year the staff should be very considerably reduced. Of course, a great many of those who are now employed in the department appear on the Estimates; but if members refer to the Estimates, they will find these are only provided for in relation to a portion of the year; consequently if the necessity does not arise during the next year for greater expenditure, the Estimates presented to the House next year, as regards the staff, should be very much smaller than this year. There is one very useful work which has been carried out by this department during the year, which I would like to mention. I refer to the standardisation of plans. The whole of the buildings of such a character as may be repeated throughout the country have been standardised, and I am pleased to say this has effected a very considerable saving. For instance, schools of different kinds have been standardised, and the

standards have been arrived at after consultation with those who are likely to require schools. For instance, the Inspector General has met the officers of our department, and he has discussed the matter with them. They have come to some understanding as to what type of school should be erected; and, by being arranged numerically, they can come to some understanding as to the number of children requiring to be accommodated. It is not difficult then to decide upon the plan of a building required for a locality in accordance with the number of children. Consequently we save a good deal of time, and a good deal of money also, in having schools of this character standardised, and also having our plan ready for going on with the work. This applies also to all buildings of the character of hospitals, police stations, telegraph stations, post offices, and other works of that kind. Of course it entailed a good deal of work in the first instance; but now the plans have all been completed, there should be no difficulty in the future in dealing with small buildings of the character I have mentioned. We have been working on the standard plan for some time. There is one thing I would like to mention. With the concurrence of the House I cannot do better than read a short paragraph from the report, because we are often blamed for many things which really the department should not be blamed for. For instance, if a building has been required in a certain place, and the building erected has not been of the character, or type, which it was considered it should have been, the whole of the blame has fallen upon the Public Works Department. I think we have quite enough to bear as it is, without having cast upon us the blame which should be attached to other people. It is very clearly set forth, I think, in the report, which I will read. The report says:—

The Public Works Department is often subjected to adverse comment, and held responsible in the minds of some for the initiation and location of public buildings. I think it is only fair that I should emphasise the fact that the department is credited with a great deal more influence and power in this connection than it actually possesses. Its architectural section is purely executive, and merely puts into effect the wishes expressed by Parliament per medium of the Estimates. It is,

in fact, in a position analogous to that of a private architect who acts on the instructions of his clients, on the reasonable assumption that they are the best judges of their own requirements. I think it must be admitted that the Public Works Department is not in a position to express an opinion as to whether, for instance, a school, a post-office, or a hospital, should be erected in any given place. Other advisers of the Government are in a position to do this, inasmuch as it comes within their special province to know the number of children, the postal business transacted, or the number of indigent sick in any given locality. Pursuant to this conception of our functions, plans are invariably submitted for approval to the department concerned, and the Public Works Department does not erect any building otherwise, for it has no data on which to decide, say the size of a school or hospital, whether it is to accommodate 20 or 100 scholars or patients, as the case may be.

Now I think that often we are asked to do things, and are probably charged with delay in connection with these works, when the information which we should have obtained, and which should have been given by other departments, has not been forthcoming. I frequently have pointed this out, because it means that we are not supposed, for instance, to know what is required perhaps in a certain locality for another department, for a school or a hospital. Although many times hospitals which have been erected have been said to be too large, or to afford too much accommodation, and we have been accused of extravagance in having carried out the work said to be too costly, I would point out that we have been charged with doing things which really we were not responsible for. The Medical Department have stated what they required, and in fact they have insisted upon having these things done; and while they are within the estimate, we have to, as far as possible, meet the wishes of the different departments, and get the work carried out according to their requirements. Therefore I cannot see how the Public Works Department are to be blamed for carrying out the work, which after all has provided accommodation for the requirements of other departments.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : And the accommodation costs twice as much as it ought to do.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : That follows, I suppose, according to the hon. member's idea.

MR. LEAKE : You have no check.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : We have a check. When the accommodation asked for is shown to be necessary, the work has to be put in hand; but do not blame a department which, after all, has nothing to do with the nature of the accommodation, because we are not supposed to know whether the accommodation is needed or not.

MR. LEAKE : As long as you have the money, you do not care how it is spent.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : That is about it. With regard to the accountant's branch, that is another branch which of course has grown largely; but it has been found necessary to deal with the large public expenditure which has gone on from time to time. Instead of the accounts being paid to the public creditor through the Treasurer over the counter, a good deal of money, in fact most of it, is paid by the Public Works accountant; therefore a large staff has become necessary. But, in consequence of the reduction in the expenditure, it will be found necessary to reduce this too, like all other departments. I may say the work has been carried out very satisfactorily, although some friction has existed which, no doubt, will be dealt with in connection with a matter now before the House—a motion which a member intends to move. I hope to be able to deal with that when the subject is brought forward, and I will reserve any remarks with regard to this officer. Still, I may say that on the whole the department has worked most satisfactorily. What I have to do is to speak of the office and the work as carried out; and the Auditor General, who, after all, was the best judge of this, has given a most satisfactory account of the Public Works accountant branch during the year. With regard to the Cool Storage Department, that is another department which comes under the control of the Public Works Department, but which properly should be under the control of the Agricultural department. I asked my hon. colleague to take over this department last year, because I considered that as it was built entirely out of funds for the development of agriculture, it should be under the control of that department. It is really built for the purpose of encouraging the production of food stuffs and perishable goods, and for the protection of those

goods; and I think that instead of that being left as it has been under the Public Works Department, it is reasonable for this department now to be relieved of it. I certainly consider it a work, or department, which could perhaps be as well managed and better looked after by the Agricultural Department in consequence of the nature of its work, than it can be by the Public Works Department. The department has had, during the past year, an income from this source of £2,578, the expenditure being £2,059, there being thus a profit of £519; so there has been no expense to the State in connection with this department. It has given a very good return indeed; so that, after all, if the Agricultural Department had taken it over, they would have had a paying department to handle. With regard to the question of these large works, in connection with which the department have always been charged with extravagance in relation to the designing and so forth—I refer to the Mint, the Observatory, and various buildings of that kind—as I pointed out when speaking on the Address-in-Reply, it is hardly fair to blame the department for these designs. The Mint is a work in regard to which we really followed out the designs supplied from England, and subsequently it was found necessary to make greater additions to it in consequence of the large output of gold; but immediately mention was made of the fact, it was said this department was responsible for the increased expenditure.

A MEMBER: What is the total cost of the Mint?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: About £40,000 altogether. Although the work has been completed for the last seven or eight weeks, still there is a great deal more to do in connection with fitting up machinery, which is no part of the Public Works undertaking. As I said before, it is very difficult to deal with a subject like this after the report has been placed upon the table. It would have been far easier and more interesting for me if I could have dealt with a question of this kind before placing that report on the table, for the reason that the report having been brought forward, it gives members most of the facts which I have to deliver to them to-night. Most of my remarks will come to them second-hand, and

not be so interesting. It is, I say, not so easy to give an interesting account of what has been done; but as the report has been placed before members, and as that report, I take it, gives full information, there is no necessity for me to deal at further length with the Public Works report in detail. All I have to say, in conclusion, with regard to works generally, is that although there has been a very large expenditure, as I pointed out, still after all, the department should not be blamed for that very large expenditure. It is really carrying out the wishes of Parliament. A very large amount was voted, and prior to the last year or 18 months we always have had it said that, no matter what money was voted by the House for certain works, the works were to be carried out, and despatch was necessary. Of course the great object has been to push ahead. Every part of this country has wanted us to carry out these works with despatch, and we know very well the large extent of country over which our administration extends. We know, too, that the inspection necessary for carrying out these large works means a very great increase of the cost in connection with the administration of the department. Members will, I think, see, therefore, that although there has been such a large number of works, still after all, taking all the facts into consideration, including the increased cost of everything during the last two years, the works have been carried out on a fairly economical basis. The officers of the department have been most zealous in their work, and I cannot speak too highly of the heads of the different branches who have from time to time responded to the calls which have been made upon them. They have been over-burdened with work, in most instances, and the consequence is that, if the country is to have these works carried out economically, there should not be such a large programme of works undertaken as was undertaken during the past year or two. This will enable us during the present year to overtake arrears, and I hope the result will be satisfactory to the House and the country. I cannot conclude these remarks without again emphasising the fact that, notwithstanding all that has been said in connection with this department, and considering also

that, no matter what service is required, whether it be on the far distant goldfields in connection with our water supply, or whether it be in connection with our public buildings, our stock routes, our roads, our water supply in towns, or other requirements in the country, all the officers of the department have responded to the calls upon them in a way for which I give them credit. And I think too that, now we have come to the end of most of the large works, the Committee will, after all, in looking into the facts of the case, agree with me that every care has been exercised in connection with the expenditure. Although it has been so frequently said the works have cost more than they should have done, yet if we look round we shall see that the cause is due in a great measure to the increased cost of all materials required in these works, also the high rate of wages we have had to pay; and, allowing for all these, I think our works will compare most favourably with those which have been carried out by private individuals.

[Debate ensued on the Works Estimates generally.]

MR. ILLINGWORTH: In dealing with these items in the Works Estimates, it was desirable to know how much of the works were really begun and how much were transfers from last year; and, as to the transfers, how did they represent the £180,880 said to have been saved from last year. The only saving which could be made in the working of the department would be in the reduction of the men employed. To have postponed works from last year until this year was not a saving, because the works had to be provided for in the present year. He had already urged the necessity for a reduction in the expenditure of the Works Department, as one of the great spending departments; and he did not see how there could be much saving effected in other departments. Were these works all in hand, or so definitely promised that they could not be stayed? Were there any items in these works that could be struck out, or which the Government could reduce in the recess?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS:

These works which were provided for in the Estimates for the year were principally in connection with schools, and were

all in hand. With the exception of about twelve items on the Estimates, all the works were in hand, and those which were not in hand were absolutely necessary.

MR. HOLMES: Members who wished to reduce the expenditure did not desire to have wholesale retrenchments of civil servants who were doing good work for the country; but members desired to have a careful public works policy and an economical handling of the funds. As to the assurance that nearly £190,000 had been saved during the year as compared with the authorisations, there was also a previous statement made by the Director of Public Works to a newspaper reporter, when interviewed some months ago, to the effect that he saw as early as September, 1897, the necessity for retrenchment. Therefore, while members must look to the Director of Public Works for guidance in passing the Works Estimates, one must say that, if the House could have known 12 months ago that there was going to be such lavish and reckless expenditure during the year as had actually taken place, notwithstanding this saving of £190,000, this House would certainly not have passed those Estimates. It also appeared that the works authorised by Parliament last year amounted to £240,000 more than were actually completed, and yet only £190,000 of the amount voted remained unspent; therefore it must follow that there had been a reckless expenditure on works to the extent of £52,000, as the difference between the amount authorised to be spent and the amount remaining unspent. That point needed explanation. Members were told also that the Government stores at Fremantle represented £500,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: £400,000.

MR. HOLMES: Well, he was prepared to admit the stores might have cost £400,000; but how had the stores accumulated? One instance would illustrate the system. The Works Department undertook to build a swing-bridge at Fremantle, some time ago; and after the contract had been let some one discovered that a swing-bridge would not act satisfactorily, and the particular work was not gone on with. The contractor, when consulted, said he had expended £100,000

for lifting-gear in connection with the swing-bridge; and, as he required compensation, the result was that the £1,000 worth of gear was handed over to the Government storekeeper, and was credited as stores, instead of charging the £1,000 towards the cost of that work. The actual value of the gear taken over was to-day what it would fetch as scrap, unless some other works were undertaken in which the gear could be used, and that was very doubtful. This instance showed how stores had accumulated at Fremantle. He understood the Treasurer had given instructions that no more stores were to be imported; but, if that were so, the effect would be that some stores would have to be purchased locally, at any price that might be required.

MR. DOHERTY: Why not give local industry a chance?

MR. HOLMES: The system of ordering stores was to make out an indent and send it to the Storekeeper, and he sent it on to London; and when the stores were eventually landed at Fremantle, the particular officers were advised accordingly; but in some cases the work for which those stores had been ordered was found to have been abandoned in the meantime. This also showed how the stores had accumulated at Fremantle; and any ordinary person would value the present accumulation at about half the cost. If the Government would pursue a careful, business-like policy in the expenditure of public money, they would find many hon. members willing to support them; but if they continued the reckless policy which they had carried out in the past, he at all events would not be found talking from the Government side of the House. He found officers were allowed to go out to all parts of the country superintending works, and were allowed to draw on the Treasury for what were known as "field orders," items of that sort appearing in the Estimates at page 46.

MR. DOHERTY: What was the number of the items?

MR. HOLMES: When the time came for settlement in connection with these field orders, the particular officers were not always to be found, and yet Parliament was now asked to recoup this expenditure. No attempt appeared to have been made in the Estimates, this

year, to reduce many of the officers and heads of departments; and he found, for instance, that the supervision of buildings was to cost the country as much this year as it did last, although the new buildings were not to be nearly so numerous. With regard to the Ashburton jetty, which cost over £12,000, he had been told the Government were informed by the engineer who went up to survey the work that, if it was constructed at that particular spot, the first storm would blow it away; and the result was as predicted. The first storm demolished the structure.

MR. A. FORREST: It was only nailed together; not bolted.

MR. HOLMES: That made the thing the more serious, for surely there were enough supervisors and inspectors to see the work carried out properly. The Director of Public Works, although he had done his best for the country, had men attached to his department for whom the country could not find the money to carry out their expensive ideas. He (Mr. Holmes) would do his best to assist in reducing the officers drawing large salaries, which some of them undoubtedly did not earn.

MR. A. FORREST: The enormous territory over which the works represented in this vote were scattered rendered it difficult for private members to criticise particular items. All who travelled through the country knew that, rightly or wrongly, there was a large expenditure of public money in connection with this department, and that it was not always spent in the most economical way. Public buildings were erected in a style beyond the colony's requirements. The expenditure in respect of the new post-office at Kalgoorlie, and public buildings in Coolgardie, was quite unjustifiable at the present time. Naturally, the Parliamentary representatives and the inhabitants of these districts demanded buildings worthy of them; but such buildings were beyond the colony's means, and the same could be said of public buildings generally throughout the country. From an architectural point of view, they were most extravagantly constructed.

MR. DOHERTY: That remark could not apply to the North.

MR. A. FORREST: No; the Government never spent any money in the North,

except on jetties. An instance of such expenditure would be found in the Ashburton jetty, where the planks were glued together or fastened with a few spikes, and the first storm blew the structure away. The catastrophe could hardly be laid at the door of the Director of Public Works, who doubtless trusted his officers; but the Committee should find out who the contractors were, and why the inspector in charge passed such work. It could hardly be supposed that the inspector would allow the work to be slummed unless he were well paid for it. Had he (Mr. A. Forrest) been in the position of the Minister, he would have insisted upon an inquiry.

MR. HOLMES: There was a chief inspector's office in Perth.

MR. A. FORREST: But this work was thousands of miles away, and the head of the department could not possibly watch all the work in course of construction throughout the colony. As he had maintained for many years, the department was too big; and the railways must be separated from the works. No one member of the Ministry, no matter how capable, could manage both. Though the present Minister worked almost night and day, he could not do everything. The Government should consider this matter during recess, with a view to the separation of the two departments. Something would have to be said in respect to the salaries fixed by the House. Hon. members could not control the salaries of officers temporarily appointed, but there was no reason why the permanent staff should draw higher salaries than those granted by Parliament. At a later stage he would ask why the salary of the Engineer-in-Chief, which was estimated at £1,500, appeared as £1,625. The extra sum of £125 should have been put down as expenses, instead of being included in the officer's salary.

THE PREMIER: The officer did not receive that amount.

MR. A. FORREST: Hon. members could only look at the papers placed before them.

MR. MONGER: Did the hon. member wish the Government supporters to sit in Opposition?

MR. A. FORREST: Taking an independent attitude on the Estimates, as he prided himself in doing, yet he supported

the Government generally. He congratulated the Minister on the manner in which the public works accounts had been placed before the Committee, for, unlike the railway accounts, they were clear and comprehensible. The department would doubtless receive from hon. members the consideration it deserved, and any criticisms would be taken by the Minister in good part. The Works Department spent practically the whole of the revenue of the country, and hon. members must point out where the department was in error, and where money could be saved. Members should keep themselves closely in touch with what was going on, to prevent reckless expenditure wherever possible. The Minister took credit for having saved nearly £181,000 last year by spending less than the authorisations. That was a good thing, otherwise the Treasurer's debit balance would have been increased by that sum. The colony was passing through a slight depression, which could hardly last long; but it behoved every man to let caution mark his way; and, in dealing with the items of these votes, the Minister would doubtless be willing to give the fullest answers to the many questions which hon. members might put.

MR. LEAKE: Members were asked to pay for the extravagance of last year, and were thus committed really to the completion of many public works in hand. The Government were bound by contract, and if the works were completed, the money must be paid, otherwise they would have suits for damages on all sides. The Minister asked us, the other evening, to allow him 12 months to consider his position, and turn over a new leaf. The Minister had not made an appeal in regard to the Public Works Department similar to that which he made in relation to the railways; but members would have to give him another 12 months to mend his ways. When the Minister came back next year, he ought to have a better tale to tell, and a better account of his administration generally. It was a curious excuse that the Government had to comply with the demands of the members of each particular district. The fact was, Ministers could not say "no." Last year there was a general election, and "no" would have been a nasty

word, in those days. Undoubtedly a number of extravagant works had been distributed all over the country, and we had to pay for them, and were face to face with the fact that there was a difficulty in finding the money. The revenue had decreased and the expenditure had increased. He did not wonder at the wail coming from the Government benches, and particularly the Treasury benches; and, after all, the best thing that could be done was to accept the assurances which had been given, and allow the Government enough rope to hang themselves. That was the position the Government would speedily find themselves in, if they attempted to carry out the public works policy disclosed in the Estimates, in view of the financial position of the country. There had not been a sufficient attempt to cut down all round. The Director had said that as soon as he saw the revenue was falling off, and retrenchment was necessary, he began to retrench. Retrenchment was necessary even in September last, on his own admission; yet three months afterwards he asked for a million to spend on railways and buildings. There was no attempt to retrench then. The Minister having committed the country to huge contracts, the country must find the money; but this was not a fair way in which to treat Parliament. It had been pointed out how extravagant some of the public works had been; one of them being a jetty which blew away, another a useless drawbridge at Fremantle, and others were courthouses on the goldfields; also at Geraldton, and all over the country. There was no building in Perth which came up to any of those, so far as suitability to their purpose was concerned, and yet we were denied a few thousands to build a Supreme Court in Perth, where most of the administration of justice was carried on. This observation did not apply to Ministers, but there was a good deal of peculation going on outside. In the case of a contractor, a man might come along and measure up a portion of work, say a cutting, and the certificate having been given, the contractor was paid. Subsequently another official came along and measured up the whole cutting, and the contractor was afterwards paid for the whole. Orders for money were sent to the heads of departments, and work was

sometimes paid for twice over. He had pretty good authority for that statement. He had heard of it from gentlemen in the Public Works Department.

MR. DOHERTY: How could orders be paid twice? They were all numbered.

MR. LEAKE: We heard and knew of many cases of peculation in the outlying districts. We heard constantly of officers being dismissed, but they were not prosecuted, because a prosecution would necessitate an exposure of the particular department at fault. But the public lost the money all the same. Everything was forced along at high pressure, instead of the expenditure being spread over a considerable length of time; consequently everything stopped suddenly, and it was that which caused our trouble at the present time. He hoped Ministers would profit by the experience which members on the Opposition side of the House told them they would have. There was one item which the Minister did not refer to, namely, we were asked to vote £40,000 for roads and bridges throughout the country. In the departmental report, the Under Secretary suggested, in relation to this £40,000, that the Government should be actuated by the principle of helping those who helped themselves; and he stated that, of the 75 existing roads boards, only six so far had struck a rate.

MR. MORAN: The goldfields had done so.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, no.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Yes; Kalgoorlie.

MR. MORAN: Kalgoorlie struck a very big rate.

MR. LEAKE: Yes; and Coolgardie and North-East Coolgardie were going to. The Under Secretary said the want of some logical basis on which to distribute the annual sum granted by Parliament for roads boards had long been apparent, and that one's mind naturally reverted to the safe principle of helping those who helped themselves. While agreeing with the principle, the Under Secretary was not, at present, prepared to urge its adoption, because in the sparsely populated districts it would prove inoperative. In the more settled districts, however, some inducement should be offered to those boards which could reasonably be expected to strike a rate. A *pro rata* subsidy need

not result in an increased vote, as the lump sum granted to all the boards could be proportionately reduced. These remarks of the Under Secretary should commend themselves to hon. members. In country districts, particularly where the roads ran through the property of large land-owners, there was no rate struck, and the sooner this House insisted on roads boards rating themselves, the better it would be. He trusted something would be done to give effect to the suggestion made in the departmental report, and he was sorry the Minister had over-looked the point.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : It was on his notes, and he would refer to it later.

MR. LEAKE : When the item was dealt with, he would ask the Minister to say what the Government intended to do with regard to that suggestion. An important point touched upon by the Under Secretary was that of the stores branch. The Government admitted having four hundred thousand pounds' worth of stores, and he believed it would be found to be nearly £500,000's worth on invoice value. That amount ought really to go to increase the debt ; and then the deficit, instead of being only £186,000, would be nearer £600,000, if the accounts were fairly kept. The Government had admitted, in answer to a question, that they had never taken stock since 1890. Nothing was written off for depreciation ; so, if we had a stocktaking at the present moment, we should find these figures were altogether adrift. What he complained of was that members did not get facts. We got figures, but that was all. Even the figures were not true, but were altogether misleading. In the Estimates for works, there was a little item to which he wished to draw attention, and he had drawn attention to it last year—the additions and repairs to existing buildings. Instead of that item appearing only once on the Estimates, and the total amount set out against it, the item was dotted all over the Estimates in each department. Of course the reason for this was that probably hon. members would not realise how large a sum it was in the aggregate. The total amount was £22,000, besides £5,000 more under the heading of incidental expenses, thus making about £27,000 for

the Director of Works to come and go on. This was not as it should be. The additions and repairs to existing buildings should be set out as one item, and show the total amount. Comparing the total proposed to be spent in this year on additions and repairs to existing buildings with the amount actually spent last year, members would find the amount in these Estimates would not be half enough. The Director of Works could have his extra six months for trying to put his department in order, but it was to be hoped that those members on the Government side who constantly joined in condemning the administration of this department would, if a motion were brought forward, support it as the only means of straightening the department, and the sooner that was done the better, for it was no kindness to let the Director of Works go on over-running the constable, and this was more likely than not to bring disaster on the country. The Director of Works should not be allowed to spend money at his own sweet will ; and, although he plumed himself on not having expended many thousands of pounds last year, yet he did not ask Parliament as to the selection of the works on which the money should actually be spent, but made the selection himself. Possibly there might be a little favouritism in that expenditure, if the particulars were known ; and the Government supporters might suffer, if the selection of the works had been made by Parliament instead of by the Minister.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Out of £15,000 voted for his district, he had not got a shilling spent.

MR. LEAKE : This instance showed what might happen, if some curb were not put on the Director of Public Works. The money would have to be voted this year as asked for in the Estimates, there being a majority on the Government side to control the expenditure ; but, in voting the money, he trusted that the effect would be to give the Government sufficient rope to hang themselves.

MR. MORAN : In the expenditure on public works, as on railways, the colony had reached a stage where it could afford to rest a while. In railways we had the greatest mileage to population as compared with any part of the world, which meant that we had less chance of making

the railways pay as compared with other places. So also in the matter of public works, this colony was better served than any other Australian colony.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Or Great Britain either.

MR. MORAN: Yes. We had more substantial public works in proportion to population than any other British community. Labour had been dear and material had been dearer still; and if we had the same thing to go over now, and having the same knowledge to guide us, we might safely say that many of the existing buildings would not have been erected.

MR. LEAKE: Whose fault was that?

MR. MORAN: Not the fault of the Government, but the fault of Parliament in voting the works.

MR. LEAKE: But who proposed them?

MR. MORAN: The suggestion had been made, and he was sorry to hear it come from the leader of the Opposition, that there had been some favouritism in the expenditure of money on public works; but the fact was notorious that some prominent members of the Opposition had obtained for their districts four times as much money for public works as had members on the Government side. Of course no one would accuse the member for Albany of being a prominent supporter of the Government, openly, though he might support them in other ways; yet Albany had some very fine public buildings, and in fact more money had been spent there than could be justified. Another prominent member of the Opposition (Mr. Simpson), who was unfortunately absent at present, had been treated in a similar way, for Geraldton had been particularly well favoured in public expenditure. The member for Central Murchison also had shared all too well in public expenditure, for the Murchison had received four times as much per head of public money as any other part of the colony.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was not correct.

MR. MORAN: Half a million had been spent on the Murchison railway.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was out of loan money.

MR. MORAN: It was money all the same, and would have to be paid for, or the interest on it must be paid, not by the Murchison but by the whole colony; and

that railway was not going to pay its working expenses, as the hon. member knew. The town of Cue, with a population of only some 1,200 persons, had public buildings equal in character and of exactly the same type as had Kalgoorlie, with a population of 12,000; so that Cue had received ten times as much money for public buildings per head as compared with Kalgoorlie.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Do not forget the 2½ millions for a water supply.

MR. MORAN: That had not been spent yet, and could not be reckoned at present. The leader of the Opposition, in his remarks on this point, could not have meant that public bribery and corruption had been practised by the Government in distributing the money for public works, because, if that were true, there could be no doubt as to where the money went; and it was a question as to how far the same thing should be allowed to go on, for it was pretty evident that, if any Government supporter wanted to be favoured in that way, he ought to join the Opposition. The constituency represented by himself (East Coolgardie), as a fairly staunch supporter of the Government, and having strained his support in their favour at times, had been most ill-favoured in regard to public buildings; for it was only now that a sum was on the Estimates for a post-office and warden's court at Kalgoorlie. His electorate must contain altogether some 20,000 people, most of them ratepayers and workers; turning out half the gold of the colony, and paying weekly wages equal to all the other goldfields put together; yet the public buildings there were not commensurate with the requirements, and were hardly equal to the buildings at Cue—poor little god-forsaken and gold-forsaken Cue! It must be admitted that the requirements of Kalgoorlie and the Boulder had been neglected. The Government school at the Boulder was attended by 300 children, and only now was there a sum on the Estimates for building a permanent school, the present building being crowded by double the number of children allowed by law according to the size of the school. If the Boulder township, with its large population, was not permanent, then the colony could not be very permanent. He hoped this Parliament

would never again be so generous in the expenditure on public works as it had been in most parts of the colony during recent years ; for every little village and hamlet in the agricultural centres was overdone with public buildings. The hospital racket had been overdone, where railway facilities were available, and such institutions did not exist in other colonies under similar conditions. The schools and post-offices in many places were of too costly a character ; but the buildings were permanent, and would serve in the future for a greatly increased population. Having the largest mileage in railways per head of population, we could now stop expenditure in that direction and build up the population along the railways. Having also erected public buildings that were capable and competent to serve ten times the present population of 180,000, we should rest from further expenditure, knowing that this large outlay meant a heavy burden on the existing population for maintenance and interest. Still these works and railways, being permanent, must be maintained at a large continuing cost ; and the country as a whole could now say to the Government : "Well done, thou good and faithful servant!" Of course the Opposition would not join in saying that ; but his own conviction was that in no one particular had the Government used their overwhelming majority in this House to show favour to one constituency above another. No one could lay his finger on one spot, and say the Government had favoured a supporter as against a member of the Opposition ; but rather it might be said, with some truth, that the Government had placated the Opposition by spending more money in Opposition constituencies than in others. As to the motive for doing that, he supposed it was that the works were more necessary in those places than elsewhere. The goldfields had in many places received too much expenditure, for it was evident that schools had been built in the prospecting stage, when population was numerous in particular localities ; and the population having since left, the schools had to be closed. There had been a too sanguine expectation that the population in those places where people were numerous in the prospecting stage would continue as a

permanent settlement ; but experience here, as elsewhere, had shown this to be a great mistake. In other colonies, large goldfields had existed at one time or another, and particularly in North Queensland, where the goldfields population never got a post-office or telegraph office, and now those populations had gone. In erecting so many public buildings in this colony, we had been "too previous," for we had expected in good faith that the external evidences of gold-bearing country would be permanent, and we had erected large buildings to accommodate a temporary population. While overdoing the thing in some places, we had underdone it in others, as in the case of Kalgoorlie, where a large permanent population had not been sufficiently supplied with public buildings, but were still treated as being in the prospecting stage. If any member of this House had reason to complain in regard to public buildings, he might say that, as representing the big permanent goldfield of the colony, the great Broken Hill of Western Australia, the Parliament might have done more for this large permanent centre in the way of providing permanent public buildings, though he was hopeful that in 12 months time these facilities would be substantially increased. In the Boulder township, there must be 600 or 700 children attending school, this fact being satisfactory evidence that the population had come to stay, and showing that the people were engaged in the two great industries of increasing the population and increasing the gold return, and they were succeeding splendidly in both. They were a law-abiding and progressive people.

MR. OLDHAM : Were they law-abiding ?

MR. MORAN : The great majority were law-abiding. There were a few hare-brained and shallow-pated individuals who made a tremendous noise, altogether out of proportion to their number and importance ; and the Kalgoorlie and Boulder districts had incurred some little disfavour on their account. His district had a permanent and settled population, and contained more married women and more children than would be found on any other goldfield in the colony. The Government school and the Roman Catholic school at Kalgoorlie and at the Boulder were full of fine, healthy children, of which any com-

munity might be proud. The Church of England school at the Boulder also had over one hundred children, and the Presbyterian school had a large number. The Government were only educating half the children at those places, and this fact ought to encourage the department to give those large centres necessary public works. No more public buildings there should be constructed of wood and iron, as all such edifices would have to come down in the course of a year or two. The Government were attempting the impossible, in hoping to pay for these public works, and pay off the past and future deficits out of revenue. The business-like way would be to cut down the revenue to two millions, and write off one million against loan account; and, as the population increased, as it must increase, the loan indebtedness per head would be getting less and less. It was sufficient to pay interest on the capital cost of public works already constructed. This proposal should be considered during the recess, for it must ultimately be adopted. Let the Government write the revenue down to one and a half or two millions, if necessary; then the colony would prosper again, and there would be a return of the good old days which, after all, were not far past.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The hon. member (Mr. Moran) had made a statement with regard to the public works expenditure in the Murchison district which called for reply. He (Mr. Illingworth) had therefore procured a report from the department, which proved that the hon. member was under a wrong impression; for it showed that the expenditure on North, Central, and South Murchison, from June 1896 to June 1898, in respect of public works, was £56,063; while the expenditure under that head for Coolgardie, East Coolgardie, North Coolgardie, and North-East Coolgardie was £477,279. For railways the Murchison received £170,184.

MR. MORAN: No; that was not half of the amount expended.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Coolgardie districts during the same period received £447,111.

MR. MORAN: The figures quoted were very satisfactory to him, and obviated the necessity of proving the statements he had made.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was not so.

MR. MORAN: The population of East Coolgardie was, roughly speaking, 40,000, and those 40,000 people received £447,000 in public works expenditure. How much was that per head?

MR. DOHERTY: £10 per head.

MR. MORAN: The population of the Murchison district was about 4,000.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: 14,000.

MR. MORAN: To be generous, he would say 5,000; and they received for public works £56,063. How much was that per head?

MR. OLDHAM: £11.

MR. DOHERTY: More.

MR. MORAN: Say £11; and even then the hon. member's district had the benefit of about £1 per head. That comparatively small goldfield had received £1 per head all round more than the Eastern goldfields.

MR. DOHERTY: Over £20 per head. They received nearly £200,000 for 5,000 inhabitants.

MR. MORAN: That, of course, included the railway expenditure. When the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) said the Murchison district had received £170,000 for railways, he omitted to allow for rolling stock and sundries. For public works, according to the hon. member's showing, the Murchison people had received £1 per head more, and for railways they had received six or seven times more than the population of the Eastern goldfields. That was the financial gospel according to the hon. member, and it was very acceptable.

MR. OLDHAM: It was surprising that the speech of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) had not raised the ire of the Government benches. Had it come from the Opposition side of the House, the member would have been accused of "croaking."

MR. MORAN: The hon. member did not know how to speak nicely; besides, he looked too bitter.

MR. OLDHAM: The hon. member spoke of a future as well as of a past deficit, and advised that it be written off revenue and put down to loan, in order to saddle posterity with a debt incurred by this generation, on account of public buildings which were said to be far in advance of the needs of the present population.

MR. MORAN: Yes; it was for that reason that posterity should be saddled with their cost, because posterity would benefit by them.

MR. OLDHAM: The constituency of North Perth received a reasonable amount of public money.

MR. MORAN: What constituency?

MR. OLDHAM: A far more important constituency than that represented by the hon. member. All hon. members must recognise that, whilst public buildings throughout the colony were of a substantial nature, the money had not been expended in a manner conducive to the welfare of the country. In places with a small population, money had been spent on post offices and railway stations to the same extent as in large centres. Doubtless the Minister knew of railway stations on agricultural lines of a superior character to the principal station in the city of Perth.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Had the hon. member seen such stations?

MR. OLDHAM said he had seen the plans, and his information was correct. In such stations, where they did not take 15d. in a fortnight, members would find cash drawers provided with a Chubb patent lock, costing 35s. He knew from the plans of stations provided with barriers to prevent overcrowding at the booking offices in districts where there was not a soul living within 40 miles of the station.

MR. DOHERTY: Where was the station?

MR. OLDHAM said he would take the hon. member there, if he liked to go to Bridgetown.

MR. DOHERTY said he would be pleased to go, if the hon. member paid the expense.

MR. OLDHAM: There was a public building erected at Cue, in all respects similar to another at Coolgardie. Did not that demonstrate the incapacity of the department?

MR. MORAN: No; the incapacity of the goldfield.

MR. OLDHAM: Any department which would erect the same class of building at Cue as at Kalgoorlie, thereby showed its incapacity. In answer to a question by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Kenny), the Minister had stated that the last stocktaking of railway stores was in 1890, and that the value of the stock

amounted to £19,712 10s. 5d. It also appeared that the value of railway stores now in hand was £430,210 8s. 8d. It was admitted that it was not known how long the bulk of this stock had been in hand.

MR. A. FORREST: The whole of it must have been stocked since 1890.

MR. OLDHAM: How could that be known without stocktaking?

MR. A. FORREST: What came in and what went out was known.

MR. OLDHAM: Yet nothing was allowed for depreciation.

MR. A. FORREST: Certainly not. Engines, for instance, did not depreciate if not used.

MR. OLDHAM: If the hon. member carried on his private business in that fashion, he would find himself in trouble. No one could tell the value of these stores set down at £430,000; so that the present deficit, stated at £186,000, would, if a proper record of stores had been kept, amount to something like £360,000 on the stores account alone.

MR. MORGANS: The points raised by the members for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) and North Perth (Mr. Oldham) required criticism. The latter had said the stations on the Bridgetown line were palaces, which would do credit even to the city of Perth. This had been said before, and it was time the complaint was disposed of. What were the facts with regard to these stations? There were seven stations on that line, which, including goods-sheds, sidings, and all works connected therewith, had cost the Government £8,000. Where did the extravagance come in? The member for North Perth was really attempting to play with the common sense of the House, when he talked about "palaces" and so on. How could he suggest that the Government had committed an error of judgment and run the country into an unworthy and improper expense for these stations, when he knew that seven of them cost the country £8,000? The hon. member should not bring forward statements of this kind to the House, which went forth to the country, and were absolutely misleading.

MR. OLDHAM: That was what he said the hon. member was doing now.

MR. MORGANS: It was to be hoped we would not hear any more about these Bridgetown railway stations. The hon.

member had made a great deal in regard to the railway stores, saying that no account had been kept. Upon what authority did the hon. member make that statement? Accounts had been kept, and the Government knew perfectly well what stores they had in Fremantle at the present time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Stock had not been taken by the Government for many years.

MR. MORGANS: The Government had a list of all the stores in Fremantle, he understood, and he had made inquiries into the question. Not long ago, the leader of the Opposition said the Government had no right to take credit for these stores as cash. From one point of view, that was correct; but it should also be looked at from another standpoint. If the Government had no stores at all, and had to provide them, they would have to furnish cash for the purpose; and if they laid out £500,000 on them, those stores would, according to the principle adopted in regard to the balance-sheet of an ordinary commercial house, be credited as an asset.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No one objected to credit being taken for them, but to their being included in the cash balance.

MR. MORGANS: If the hon. member made that admission, no more need be said about it. The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) said half the gold produced in the country was obtained at Kalgoorlie. It was getting close to that certainly; but according to the actual figures, Kalgoorlie was producing one-third of the gold obtained in the colony.

MR. MORAN: The hon. member was wrong.

MR. MORGANS: The average figures for the last three months showed that the yield of Kalgoorlie was a fraction over one-third of the total yield of the colony. If during the next three months it was increased to one-half, no one would be more pleased than himself. He sincerely hoped, and he also believed, that in a short time Kalgoorlie would be turning out double the amount of gold produced there at present. As to the public buildings, it was quite true the Government had spent a considerable amount of money in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, but not one shilling had been thrown away upon the majority of the public buildings in either of

these places, or any of the gold-mining centres. The court houses at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie cost from £16,000 to £18,000 each, and as a matter of fact neither of them was large enough for the work that had to be conducted. If the Government had spent from £5,000 to £6,000 more on them there still would have been room for more expenditure. As to the Boulder railway, the schools, and so on, he endorsed what his friend said with regard to them. No doubt there was in the Boulder a very large number of children, and in Coolgardie there were between 300 and 400 attending school every day. Any Government was justified in spending a considerable amount of money in school houses, where we had such a large attendance of children. As to extravagance and mistakes, he would like to know if there was any Government in the world which did not make errors. It was impossible for any Government to be absolutely perfect in everything. Human beings were prone to mistakes, and surely Governments, which consisted of human beings, must, as well as others, be prone to them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oppositions always criticised Governments, did they not?

MR. MORGANS: Yes; and in this House they did it to the fullest extent, the hon. member himself taking a prominent part. The hon. member did so cleverly, but he was unfair to the Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Unfairness was displayed towards the Opposition too.

MR. MORGANS: If a building were erected for the Education Department, and it turned out to be unnecessary, the whole blame was thrown on the Public Works Department, although the department was not to blame.

MR. MORAN: Who did that?

MR. MORGANS: The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) intimated it.

MR. MORAN: The assertion made by him was that Parliament was to blame.

MR. MORGANS: Then it was the member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham), who was always making mistakes of that kind. He remembered hearing a statement a short time ago by a member on the Opposition side, that the Public Works Department put up a school where there was not a child to be found within a mile, or

something of that sort. Supposing such were the case, the department was not to blame for having been asked to put up a school, and doing so. The department entered into obligations, which must be carried out whether there was a deficit next year or not. It was a fair proposition that posterity should pay something in relation to public works; and it would be a good thing for the public at the present time to be only called upon to pay interest upon loan, and a fair proportion of a redemption fund to repay any outlay incurred by the Government at the present time for the general good.

MR. KENNY: To be credited with having caused this question of the stores to be brought so repeatedly before the House was something of which he was proud. He wondered how the Director of Public Works, who had a large experience in storekeeping and in commercial life in the colony, could possibly endeavour to lead the House to believe that we should reckon the long list of stores as worth 20s. in the £.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: It really had nothing to do with him as the Minister, as far as that went.

MR. KENNY: It would be interesting to know whom it had to do with.

A MEMBER: The Treasurer.

MR. KENNY: The Treasurer informed us that the stores were at Fremantle for the purpose of being utilised; so he (Mr. Kenny) failed to see how we could disconnect the Director of Works from the question. Stores should be shown as stores. The Director of Works had plenty of supporters and admirers on his own side of the House, and surely he would admit that it was the duty of the Opposition to criticise. At the same time, it was the duty of the Opposition to criticise fairly. He (Mr. Kenny) had no desire to go through the long list of works which had been constructed in the colony, and which, in the opinion of the public, were not worth the amount spent upon them. Some time ago, when travelling from Norseman to Coolgardie, he came across two tanks in the heart of the wilderness, one of which cost upwards of £13,000 and the other upwards of £16,000. There was not an individual living within miles of those tanks. If the Director of Public Works could justify such expenditure as

that, he could do a great deal more than he (Mr. Kenny) gave him credit for. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) appeared to be most anxious to have fair play shown to the Director of Public Works. The hon. member might have gone to the trouble of endeavouring to justify the expenditure alluded to.

MR. MORGANS: Some mistakes were, he admitted, made by the Government; but the erection of those tanks was not a mistake, as they would be useful for the railway.

MR. KENNY: That was what he wanted to bring out. First of all the Works Department made a blunder to the extent of £30,000, and the next thing they wished to do was to make a greater blunder by constructing a railway to justify the construction of the tanks.

A MEMBER: Where was the railway?

MR. KENNY: Enough of that had been heard in the early part of the session. It had gone, with a pretty large portion of the Government programme. As to the retrenchment policy, he congratulated the Government upon it; but it was a great pity that it did not commence about two years ago, when the balance-sheet showed a much healthier aspect than it did to-day. The Government had commenced retrenchment and had cut down expenses in a very peculiar way, to say the least of it. They made a very strong point of retrenchment in regard to the hospitals. The hospitals at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie were responsible for £20,000 each of the public money during the last twelve months, this expenditure being too heavy, and he did not believe the money had been spent for the benefit of our fellow-creatures. He happened to know a good deal of public hospital administration in this country, and in his opinion the day had come when the officials should be taught that they could no longer live and luxuriate on creature comforts intended for the patients. While he was prepared to admit that the expenditure on those two hospitals had been greater than it should have been, he thought it a great mistake to endeavour to cut down the smaller institutions in other districts. In his own district, Peak Hill, a movement was made some time ago for the purpose of obtaining a hospital. It was built, but not com-

pleted; and, notwithstanding the condition of that hospital to-day, the subsidy had been cut down by one-half, as notified by circular. Some of the retrenchments appeared to him to be parsimonious; and while complimenting the Government on their endeavour to curtail expenditure, yet the noblest way of economising would be to economise human suffering. Before curtailing the expenditure on small hospitals, the Government should economise in the small mounds that marked the last resting-place of men who had assisted to develop the colony.

MR. CONNOR: Referring to the item of £13,000 for the building of a dance hall for the *élite* of Perth (Government House ballroom), this appeared to him to be a public—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Scandal.

MR. CONNOR: Without calling it a scandal, it appeared to be a public mistake, such as was not justifiable, even in boom time; for this magnificent building was shut out from the view of the people, and would not be of much practical use. Referring to the item of £31,120 for the erection of school buildings, he asked where this large expenditure on school buildings was going to stop, for it increased every year, and he hoped it would be greatly reduced next year. Referring to the item of £1,500 for the overhaul of the refrigerating works in Perth, he objected to this as being excessive and unnecessary.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Those works earned £519 over the expenditure last year.

MR. CONNOR: Even if that were so, this amount for overhaul was too large. Referring to the item "Furniture for public buildings £10,000," he asked why it should be necessary to spend so large an amount at a time when the country was in a bad state. If the money had been spent, nothing could now be done; but, if not, he asked the Minister to reduce the item, so as to show the country that it was intended to curtail expenditure. While such unjustifiable expenditure was proposed, smaller matters requiring attention were neglected. A few days ago he entered the deed-room at the Titles Office, and found that, owing to bad ventilation, several public servants were on the sick list.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That defect was provided for in the Estimates.

MR. HOLMES, referring to "Accounts and Pay Office, £275 for clerk," asked if it was not possible to reduce the large staff of this office. There was a reduction of only four officers in the staff as it stood last year.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The hon. member would notice that many reductions were proposed, and the staff would remain as estimated only until the end of December. Further reductions were now being made.

MR. HOLMES, referring to item "D.P.W. field order account to recoup K. K. Darlington's account, £232 8s. 11d.," asked for explanation.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: A man named Darlington was put in charge of some artesian boring, and drew orders upon the Government. When his account was balanced, this amount was left as a debit. The discovery was made after he had been dispensed with, and an effort was made to prosecute. In every instance of this sort, the Government had instituted proceedings, which unfortunately were taken by the Auditor General under the Audit Act; and the department was subsequently advised that, for some technical reason, the prosecution could not succeed.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Act required amendment.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The Act would be amended, so as to deal with such cases in future. The man was dismissed, and unfortunately he could not be prosecuted.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This was stolen money?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Stolen money.

MR. HOLMES, referring to item 96, "Incidental Expenses, £5,000," asked what these were for.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: To this item was charged everything not specifically mentioned in the Estimates. Last year, an amount of £7,826 10s. 3d. had been expended. This year, it was proposed to reduce the vote to £5,000. Every care would be taken to curtail the expenditure.

MR. HOLMES, referring to item 98, "Railway fares, £2,000," said the amount voted last year was £1,500 and the actual expenditure was £2,365 16s. 4d. The item was for £2,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Last year there was great occasion for travelling on the part of officers of the Works Department. The system adopted was that ticket-orders were drawn on railways for this purpose, and were paid for. The whole amount would not be spent, if it could be avoided.

MR. LEAKE, referring to item 102, "Assistant Superintendent of Public Works, £500," asked who was this officer.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: He had been transferred to the Architectural list.

MR. LEAKE: Was it proposed to re-instate the office of Assistant Engineer-in-Chief?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That matter was now being considered.

MR. A. FORREST, referring to item 101, "Engineer-in-Chief, £1,500," said the amount expended last year was £1,625. How was the increase accounted for?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The additional sum of £125 was charged to this item in error. During the absence of the Engineer-in-Chief in England the Assistant Engineer acted for him. Mr. O'Connor was away for 7½ months, and part of the salary of the Assistant Engineer was provided for in the Estimates at £800. £125, being portion of the £200 in excess allowed to make up a salary of £1,000, was debited by mistake to the Engineer-in-Chief, but should have been charged separately. The Engineer-in-Chief had not received any extra salary.

MR. A. FORREST: The department should be more careful, for such an error might lead to an officer being unfairly criticised by hon. members.

MR. DOHERTY, referring to items "Engineer-in-charge (also of Goldfields Water Supply Branch) £100, resident engineer £350, assistant engineer £325," asked hon. members to compare such salaries with the remuneration of the railway locomotive superintendent, a mere tradesman, who received a salary of £800, while experts controlling large

expenditure received such miserable salaries. How could the department expect a man to be honest on £350 a year, while this officer at Fremantle, who handled no money, received £800?

MR. A. FORREST: The amount of salary did not make men honest.

MR. DOHERTY said he had been told that a contractor had offered one of the resident engineers a large sum of money as a bribe, with the intimation that, if he would join in working a swindle on the Government, he and the contractor could make £10,000 each.

MR. A. FORREST: Such a man should be instantly dismissed.

MR. LEAKE: But the bribe had not been accepted.

MR. DOHERTY: Even the man who managed the railways received only £1,200.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The positions were not analogous. The man who was getting £350 was an assistant, whose duty was almost that of a chief clerk.

MR. A. FORREST: What was his name?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: His name was Ower. The other person referred to was the Engineer for Construction, a very worthy officer, who got £700 a year. It seemed to him that personal feeling was introduced, sometimes. This question of a contractor offering an engineer a sum of money occurred only a few days ago, and it seemed that the officer who mentioned it to him (the Minister) had also mentioned it to the hon. member, which he considered a breach of official discipline, and it was a matter he would take note of too, for it appeared that he was now getting to the bottom of what he wanted to probe—the frequent giving of information by officers of the department, which should be really private information. He would take the opportunity of sifting this to the bottom.

MR. DOHERTY: It was not a civil servant who gave him the information.

MR. JAMES: Supposing a civil servant did so, why should the information not be given? This was not a Star Chamber.

MR. A. FORREST: Who was the other man?

MR. DOHERTY: A man named Campbell, whom he did not know personally;

the wrong sort of man for him to associate with.

MR. LEAKE: It was to be hoped the Director of Public Works would not proceed to visit his wrath upon the other civil servant.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS said he was not going to visit his wrath upon any civil servants. He was just going to get at the bottom of the thing he wanted to know.

MR. LEAKE: To say that because a man happened to be a civil servant he should not talk about things was absurd.

THE PREMIER: The member for Albany would not care to have one of his clerks babbling everything.

MR. LEAKE: Within proper bounds.

THE PREMIER: That was it.

MR. LEAKE: The Minister ought not to threaten all sorts of dire vengeance, because the member for North Fremantle happened to acquire some information.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: Such threat was not made by him. What he said was that it gave him the cue as to where things came from.

MR. LEAKE: The question was whether this information was good or bad. If it was good, a member had a perfect right to make use of it, and it was a great pity that members could not question civil servants about what went on in the departments. If they could do so they would be able to dispose of a good many abuses, not only with regard to the Public Works Department, but also other departments.

A MEMBER: They would all have a grievance.

THE PREMIER: They would not tell on themselves.

MR. LEAKE: No; but if one happened to be on familiar terms with civil servants, these civil servants suffered on that account, and they were accused of divulging information which they need not do.

THE PREMIER: They never suffered in consequence, he was sure.

MR. LEAKE: As far as he (Mr. Leake) was concerned, he never tried to worm information out of civil servants, for the reason that they might be visited with the wrath of the Minister.

THE PREMIER: Since he had been in the House he had not known a case.

MR. LEAKE: The Minister had told the member for North Fremantle (Mr. Doherty) that he knew where the hon. member obtained the information, and that he was going to make inquiries. That meant a threat to someone.

MR. CONNOR, referring to item 166, "Roads and bridges throughout the colony, £40,000," asked how the money would be allocated?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The amount would be allocated in the usual way, the necessities of each board being fully considered, and the department was guided in the matter by the length of road and other conditions. There was a statement in the annual report dealing with this matter.

MR. LEAKE again asked the Minister to say what was the intention as to requiring roads boards in country districts to rate themselves, as a basis on which the grants for roads should be distributed. The amount of the vote for roads was too much; and in order to test the feeling of the House on the question he had raised, also on the question of amount, he moved, as an amendment,

That item 166, "Roads and bridges throughout the colony, £40,000," be reduced by £20,000.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: If the object of the amendment was to obtain from him an expression of opinion on the question put, he would say at once that the question had not been considered by the Government, though it had been discussed. At a meeting of roads boards delegates held in Perth recently, the Premier and two other Ministers who were present expressed opinions to the effect that something ought to be done in the direction suggested; and he (the Director of Public Works) had no doubt that, before next year, something would have to be done for requiring roads boards to contribute towards the maintenance of roads by levying a rate. The matter was brought up last year, and considered to some extent; but some of the roads districts were so thinly populated that the principle could not be applied in all cases. The Government were desirous that it should be adopted, and the time was not distant when it would be necessary to

call on roads boards to rate themselves for this purpose.

MR. A. FORREST : To reduce the item by £20,000 would cause great hardship in the North, where a rate for road purposes would bring in only a very small amount. All that a road board in the North received from the Government was a small vote for road maintenance, a little bridge, and perhaps a jetty. He asked the Minister to apply out of this vote £6,000 or £7,000 for making a road to connect the new jetty at Carnarvon with the township. The Government had built a jetty, but there was no road to it.

THE PREMIER : It was a stock jetty, and never meant for anything else.

MR. A. FORREST : It had been built at a large cost, and was not connected with the town ; so that although a steamer could load stock, yet the steamer had to go a mile further and anchor, and there discharge goods for the township. The Premier had advocated this jetty scheme since 1887, and the work ought to be completed so as to connect the jetty with the town by a road.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : While anxious to see the work carried out, there was no probability of being able to do it this year.

MR. JAMES : Had the Government considered their right to build a jetty outside the 3-mile limit? (General laughter).

MR. DOHERTY : If the amendment were for striking the item out altogether, he would support it ; for if any money was wasted in the country, it was by the roads boards. A storekeeper was generally the chairman of a roads board, and, knowing some local man who was the most deeply in his debt, that was the man who generally got the contract from the board for doing work. This opinion of how the thing was worked in country districts was based on experience, for this road board item was the most corrupt thing in the colony. The chairman of the board generally reaped the benefit of the contract.

MR. OLDHAM : The hon. member had supplied a good argument in favour of the roads districts taxing themselves for road maintenance, as they would then at least have to pay a portion of the

money out of their own pockets. A district in his electorate (North Perth), comprising about 800 people in a square mile, had been agitating during 12 months for permission to form a roads board in their district, but they could not get permission. These people resided on the boundary of the city, in Woodville, Toorak, and Forest Hill.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : The hon. member had told him this would do next year.

MR. OLDHAM : The people did not want a shilling from the Government this year, and were prepared to rate themselves, if they could get the power to form a roads board.

THE PREMIER : They wanted it in order to get a grant from the Government.

MR. OLDHAM : Of course they would want a grant, the same as other boards get, when the board was formed ; but in about nine months the people in that district would probably be asking for permission to form a municipality. Surely when people who paid rates asked for self-government, they were entitled to it. At the present time, this district was under the jurisdiction of the Perth Roads Board.

THE PREMIER : And the Wanneroo-road had been made through it.

MR. OLDHAM : The Wanneroo-road did not serve these people.

MR. A. FORREST : Who represented the district?

MR. OLDHAM said he did. The people did not ask for money, but merely for self-government ; and the Lands Department, after being petitioned, had shelved the matter. In the district known as Woodville, Toorak, and Forest Hill, there were 800 people.

THE PREMIER : The proposal to give a roads board to that district would be unsuitable. It was not required.

MR. OLDHAM : Why not?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS : The matter would be looked into.

MR. OLDHAM : Nearly four months had elapsed since the subject had been broached. In the Governor's Speech, a Roads Act Amendment Bill was promised. Where was it?

MR. LEAKE : It had shared the fate of the Electoral Bill.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: The matter will be considered. The hon. member had promised to call on him with regard to it. He (the Director) did not even know where the place was, and he had never seen a plan of the locality.

MR. OLDHAM moved that progress be reported.

Motion put, and a division being called for by **MR. OLDHAM**, it was taken.

MR. JAMES rose to a point of order. The member for Sussex (**Mr. Locke**) was one of those who said "aye" on the question being put; yet now the hon. member was voting with the "noes."

THE CHAIRMAN said that he did not hear the voice of the hon. member, when putting the question.

MR. JAMES: A man should stick to his colours, even if he were a Government supporter.

The division resulted as follows:—

Ayes	3
Noes	17

Majority against ... 14

Ayes.	Noes
Mr. Kenny	Mr. Conolly
Mr. Leake	Sir John Forrest
Mr. Oldham	Mr. A. Forrest
(Teller)	Mr. Hall
	Mr. Hubble
	Mr. James
	Mr. Lefroy
	Mr. Locke
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. Morgans
	Mr. Pennefather
	Mr. Piesse
	Mr. Quinlan
	Hon. H. W. Venn
	Mr. Wallace
	Mr. Wood
	Mr. Moran
	(Teller)

Motion thus negatived, and the discussion resumed.

THE PREMIER: The policy of the Government had always been to give power to form roads boards. He believed thoroughly in small areas for such boards, and he did not suppose there was a case in which the Government had refused a board, where any sort of case could be made out. Sometimes there was a little difficulty in getting roads districts carved out of existing roads districts, because the existing boards objected, and then it took some time to hear both sides of the ques-

tion; but, as he had indicated, the tendency in the past had always been to encourage the formation of such boards. Of course we could recognise often that the desire people had to get public money to spend on roads in their own locality was an incentive to the formation of roads boards; but the smaller the area, the more it tended to better self-government. If what the hon. member said was correct, and no doubt it was, that there were some hundreds of people who desired to have part of the Perth district carved up and governed in smaller districts, he (the Premier) could see no objection, so long as a good case was made out to satisfy the Lands Department. There was a desire to assist all to manage their own business. When the Government found a sufficient number of people in a district willing to manage their own affairs, they always endeavoured to meet people's wishes. On the other hand, he knew that the existing board always objected, for one reason or another—he supposed they had no wish to see their jurisdiction curtailed. There had never been any opposition on the part of the Government to the subdivision of a roads board, because, he repeated, the smaller the area the better it was looked after.

MR. JAMES: The Perth roads board was the most incompetent, fossilised, old-fashioned, antiquated, fatuous-headed roads board in the colony. It had done absolutely nothing. It had never raised a penny by way of rating, and, as a rule, it had spent its money in a most inefficient manner. This was not a roads board that should be for one moment considered; and he put it to the Premier, as a matter of urgent duty to East Perth and the suburbs, to do all he possibly could to take away the jurisdiction of this utterly incompetent body. He was in favour of the principle that we should help those who helped themselves. The first roads board to rate themselves were the South Perth roads board.

A MEMBER: The board did not rate themselves much.

MR. JAMES: For two or three years they rated themselves at 1s. in the pound, and now they rated themselves at 9d. in the pound. The funds were spent in the district; the valuations were reasonable; and the amount of rate was fairly high.

He helped to form that board, and he was one of the ratepayers. If this question went to a division, most of the country members would vote against it. The members for Sussex, the Ashburton, and other places would vote against it. When the money was allocated this year, let notice be given that next year the Government would, as far as possible, act on the principle of refraining from assisting those who would not assist themselves. He did not say that boards should receive pound for pound, nor that country boards should receive the same as suburban boards.

MR. QUINLAN: So far as he knew, it was unjust and ungenerous to make such remarks as some which he had heard to-night. He had not known a chairman of a roads board make anything out of the position. What he knew of roads boards was that members gave their time for nothing and were most devoted to their work. He knew of one instance in which the members gave their personal guarantee to a bank for a considerable overdraft. Roads boards deserved better consideration than they had received from some members. It was desirable that those who wished to be helped should help themselves to some extent, and no doubt the Government would take some steps to bring that about. He hoped the Committee would not attempt to interfere with this item. If everybody spent the money as economically and as well as the roads boards generally did, it would be a good thing for the country.

MR. LOCKE: It was a matter of surprise to him to hear the remarks which had fallen from several members with regard to this item. As the question was important, and only few members were present, he moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11.35 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 19th October, 1898.

Papers presented — Question: Pinjarrah-Marradong Railway Survey — Question: Sly-grog Selling on Goldfields — Question: Police Boat, Perth and Melville Waters — Bush Fires Act Amendment Bill, first reading — Goldfields Act Amendment Bill, third reading — Municipal Institutions Act Amendment Bill, Motion to discharge order (withdrawn); in Committee, new clause; reported — Marriage Act Amendment Bill, second reading, in Committee; third reading — Land Bill, in Committee; postponed clause and schedules; recom-mittal (twice), reported — Zoological Gardens Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading — Bills of Sale Bill, Discharge of Order — Coolgardie Mining Exhibition Bill, second reading, in Committee, third reading — Roads and Streets Closure Bill, No. 2, second reading, in Committee, third reading — Mining on Private Property Bill, first reading — Coolgardie Municipal Rate Validation Bill, all stages — Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at 4.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: By-laws of the municipalities of Bunbury, Bulong, and Perth.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION: PINJARRAH-MARRADONG RAILWAY SURVEY.

HON. R. G. BURGESS, for the Hon. E. McLarty, asked the Colonial Secretary: What is the cost of the survey of the Pin-jarrah-Marradong Railway?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. G. Randell): The total cost of survey was £3,888 17s. 4d., of which sum the trial surveys cost £17 per mile, and exploration surveys £5 per mile.

QUESTION: SLY-GROG SELLING ON GOLDFIELDS.

HON. A. G. JENKINS asked the Colonial Secretary: Whether, in view of the indiscriminate sly-grog selling carried on throughout the eastern goldfields, the Government will take some steps to have such traffic promptly suppressed?