

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 9.35 p.m. until the next Tuesday.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 9th December, 1897.

Roads and Streets Closure Bill: Amendment on report—Annual Estimates: in Committee of Supply—Police Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Agricultural Lands Purchase Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Paper presented—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

ROADS AND STREETS CLOSURE BILL.

AMENDMENT ON REPORT.

The Bill having been reported with amendments,

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) moved, as an amendment in the schedule, that the following paragraph be added:—

In the Townsite of Coolgardie.—All those portions of Ford Street lying between the north side of King Street and the south side of Elvira Street, and the north side of Elvira Street and the south side of Toorak Street; also all that portion of Macdonald Street lying between a north line drawn from the north-west corner of Coolgardie Town Lot 1090 and the west side of Quarry Street produced to the north side of Macdonald Street.

Put and passed.

Report (with the further amendment) adopted.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Consideration of Estimates resumed.

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT (Hon. R. W. Pennefather).

Vote—Crown Law Officers, £3,445—agreed to.

Vote—Supreme Court, £7,449:

MR. LEAKE: The work of the Supreme Court had accumulated to a considerable extent, and the time of the judges and officers of the court was fully occupied. Particularly was this so in the Registrar's office, where there was need for improvement and more assistance. The clerks employed had very little space to work in, and were subject to many inconveniences. The Registrar was a pluralist, so far as his duties were concerned, but not perhaps in regard to salary. His duties were many and various, for he was Registrar, Master, Keeper of Records, Registrar in Bankruptcy, Registrar of Joint Stock Companies, Taxing Officer, and goodness only knew what else. Another Master should be appointed in the Supreme Court, to get rid of the present accumulation of work; also, there should be a taxing officer appointed, as the business of taxing the bills of actions devolved now on the Master of the court, although this was not work he should be called on to do, but should be the work of a special officer. If a taxing officer were appointed, he would require to be a qualified man; and if an extra Master were appointed, or a Master in Equity, or an assistant master, it would be found that a great deal of the formal work now done in chambers by the judges might be done by the Registrar; and in the event of a particular matter requiring a decision by the Master, there might be an appeal to the judge in chambers, as was done in England. For instance, the judges had to issue formal summonses for attachment, also to grant fiats for probate, and all formal matters which only required a little care on the part of a qualified man to see that the necessary formalities were observed. All this work could be taken off the hands of the judges by a Registrar, or by another Master of the Supreme Court. The salaries in this department had not been increased to any perceptible extent, in this or any previous year. The time had arrived when this office required reorganisation, and the work distributed properly.

MR. EWING: The Attorney General would recognise just as fully as other legal members of this House the necessity for making some further provision for the transaction of the ordinary business of the Supreme Court; and it should be

unnecessary to urge upon him that which he already recognised. If the Attorney General could get the funds, he would do all that could possibly be done to relieve the Court from the congestion of business which existed. All that the member for Albany had said was perfectly true.

MR. BURT : It was only necessary to say that he concurred in the remarks which had been made by the member for Albany. Before he left office, as Attorney General, he was looking round for a suitable officer to recommend for appointment as taxing officer. There should be an officer appointed as Master as well. The present work could not be got through, especially the taxation of bills, which was a serious matter to the public, with the existing staff.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. W. Pennefather) : There was no doubt whatever that at the time when the present Master was first appointed, and for some years afterwards, his duties were light, and he was able to cope with the work as it came in. But within the last year the duties had become so onerous that it was utterly impossible for the Master to keep pace with the work. If the observations made by the hon. members had not been made, he (the Attorney General) had intended during the recess to make arrangements for the reorganisation of the duties in the department. It was absolutely necessary, in the interests of justice, that there should be a taxing officer. An extra master or registrar should also be appointed, who could relieve the judges to a considerable degree.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : There was not the slightest doubt that what members of the legal profession had said was an absolute fact. There was great pressure of business in the Supreme Court, and the time had arrived when more assistance should be given to the Master. The hon. members who had spoken did not tell the committee the reason why there was such an immense amount of work in connection with taxing bills. The reason was that members of the legal profession sent in bills for ten times, and sometimes fifty times, the value of the services rendered. It was not the practice, some years ago, to send in bills to this extent ; but now, members

of the legal profession thought nothing of sending in a bill for an enormous amount, far exceeding the value of the work rendered, and the Master had to tax the costs down. The result was that days were taken up in dealing with a simple bill which, if it had been moderately rendered in the first instance, would be passed in a few minutes by the taxing officer. His (the Premier's) idea was that a solicitor, who was an officer of the court, had no more right to send in an exorbitant charge than anyone else. If anyone else sent him a bill for services rendered, which was double, or treble, or four times, the value of the services performed, he would look upon that person as dishonest. The Government were now asked to provide an extra officer for the benefit of those solicitors who sent in excessive bills. It was a scandal, and if any but a legal gentleman did this kind of thing, he would be tabooed and kicked out of society.

A MEMBER : He should be called a dishonest person.

THE PREMIER : He should be called a rogue. No one objected to pay a legal gentleman a fair charge. There was the Hainault case the other day, in which the costs sent in amounted to £1,500. He had expected they would amount to £100 ; yet a sum of £160 had been paid up to the present, and a large amount had still to be taxed. It would take the taxing master nearly a year to tax the bill of costs, every item being contested. This was not as it ought to be. The legal members of the House should try to do something to put a stop to such overcharges, which he looked upon as not honest. When we were asked to provide more money in order to supply additional power of taxing costs, it was time someone took the matter up.

MR. VOSPER : The remarks of the Premier gave a layman a certain degree of courage to speak on this matter. He had always considered the whole system of taxing costs erroneous from its foundation. The idea was that authority should be given to an officer of the Crown to exercise some supervision over excessive bills sent in by unscrupulous practitioners. While the intention was good, the effect of it was that each practitioner, knowing that the items of his bill of costs were subject to reduction, had a direct induce-

ment to make his bill heavier than it would otherwise be; so that this device for cutting bills down had an opposite effect. A lawyer should be obliged to prove his claim in open court, like a storekeeper. So far from seeing the necessity of appointing an extra taxing-master, he was of opinion that the taxing system was of little use to the public.

MR. SIMPSON: While having a great respect for the ideal legal practitioner, yet when we realised what was the general opinion to-day about the average lawyer, there must be "something rotten in the state of Denmark." Not long ago he had a bill of costs containing such items as—To receiving and perusing your telegram, 6s. 8d.; replying to same, 6s. 8d.; and so on. On protesting, he was assured that this was the regular professional charge. He then pointed out that he had sent no telegram at all. The grand total of the bill amounted to £71; he offered £40 to settle it; and the reply was, "Make it fifty." If a butcher sent in an account on that principle, it would be looked upon as a fraud. If lawyers would not purify their own profession, Parliament would have to deal with it. He was informed that the growth of this practice of overcharging was due to the fact that we had a very weak taxing-master.

MR. EWING: He was a very strong taxing-master in the matter of reducing bills.

MR. SIMPSON: It was said the average man dreaded to go to law, lest he should be defrauded at every turn.

MR. MORAN: Were there two scales of costs recognised in the colony—the one for the western parts and another for the goldfields? The Attorney General's officers on the fields recognised a scale of 25, 50, and in some cases 100 per cent. higher than that which obtained in other parts of the colony. He (Mr. Moran) was charged at this increased rate; and, when he gave notice of appeal, he was informed that he could not appeal because seven days had elapsed since judgment had been given. A lawyer subsequently showed him the difference between the two scales of costs.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The observation of the hon. member was a very pertinent one, and no doubt it was a grievance; but, like many other griev-

ances, if people would endure them, they must suffer. If the hon. member was charged at an exorbitant rate, he should have appealed.

MR. MORAN said he was informed that he could not do it.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Legislature had provided a proper remedy for this wrong; and people were supposed to know what that remedy was. Why had not the proper procedure been followed? If it was too expensive, then bring in a Bill to reduce the charges. In reply to the observation of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson), that the present taxing officer was too easy, he could assure the hon. member that such was not the case. That officer bore an excellent reputation in the profession for the fairness and reasonableness of his decisions.

MR. SIMPSON: It was from the profession that this report came.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said he was afraid that in those cases where the hon. member had suffered, he had brooded so much over his sufferings that he must have lost that clear-headedness which he usually exhibited.

MR. SIMPSON said he did not imitate the Attorney General, by claiming absolute knowledge of every profession in the world; yet with regard to this matter he consulted some lawyers, and was advised that the present taxing-master was not strict enough.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL said he did not profess to know much of anything outside of his own profession, and what he did know he was very diffident about expressing. But he knew it was very easy for a public officer to make enemies, who would not be backward in expressing their opinions about him when asked to do so. It was unfair to repeat such statements in Parliament. Let a charge be levelled against a man, and, if it were proved, we would know how to act.

MR. MORAN: Would the Attorney General make a note of his complaint in reference to the scale of costs charged on the goldfields?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the hon. member would give him particulars of the costs mentioned, he would do all in his power to remedy the grievance.

MR. MORAN: It would be distasteful to pick out an individual case. Would

the Attorney General ask his subordinates at Kalgoorlie, for instance, whether they had any knowledge of two scales of costs ruling there—one the Supreme Court scale, and the other the scale agreed upon by a conclave of lawyers in that town. He (Mr. Moran) had both scales in his possession, having been supplied with them by a leading lawyer in Kalgoorlie.

MR. LEAKE: The member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) had not, so far as he could gather, made an attack upon the present taxing officer. The Premier should remember that the question in the minds of the legal members of this House was one of costs as between party and party, and not as between solicitor and client. An ordinary lawyer's bill was seldom brought before the taxing officer; yet this was the class of bill referred to by the Premier. He knew the instance the Premier had mentioned, and sympathised with the right hon. gentleman to a certain extent; but the taxing master ought to be able to settle that matter in a quarter of an hour. This extra taxing officer was necessary for the convenience of the public, and his appointment would confer no particular advantage on the legal profession, except that their work could be got through a little more quickly.

MR. DOHERTY said that, just before entering the House, he had been shown a bill of costs from a lawyer at Coolgardie, including such items as "Writing telegram, 5s."

MR. LEAKE: The question was, what amount of brain power was required to give the advice embodied in that telegram?

MR. DOHERTY said he did not know that, but there should be some limit to charges of this kind. It was only fair to say, however, that lawyers on the goldfields had to suffer many hardships, and should therefore be allowed to charge a little more than was permissible in a centre like Perth.

MR. WALLACE: In a case which came before a magistrate in the local court at Mount Magnet, he was mulcted in over £9, whereas according to the schedule of charges published in the *Government Gazette*, little more than £4 could be awarded under the circumstances. His solicitor informed him that this was a scale of costs agreed upon by the profession in the district, and that the magis-

trates allowed it. He now requested the attention of the Attorney General to this fact.

MR. MORAN: The last report of the Queensland Mines Commission strongly recommended that laymen should be allowed to appear in all cases in wardens' courts. This principle might well be adopted here.

MR. VOSPER: It was done in New Zealand.

MR. MORAN: Yes; they were called mining advocates.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the hon. member would give him the particulars referred to, he would do his best to instruct the magistrates at Kalgoorlie, and wherever such a system prevailed, that under no circumstances should they countenance any collusion between lawyers.

MR. MORAN: Could the Attorney General inform the committee when circuit courts would be established on the goldfields?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Bill before the House provided for that.

MR. MORAN: There was an impression abroad that there were not sufficient judges to give effect to the Bill.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Government would provide the necessary machinery for working the Bill when it passed. Whether this would take the shape of a permanent judge or a temporary commissioner, he did not know at present.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Official Receiver in Bankruptcy and Curator of Intestate Estates, £2,630:*

Item—Assistant official receiver:

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that the word "assistant" be struck out. The officer should have been described as an official receiver, there being no authority to appoint an assistant.

MR. LEAKE: Was this an altogether new officer?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The gentleman in question had given much satisfaction both to the bench and to the bar. He was a very capable man, and, so far, he (the Attorney General) had nothing to say except in his favour. The duties of the office, particularly in bankruptcy, had so increased of late that it was impossible for one receiver to do the work.

Amendment (the Premier's) put and passed, and the vote, as amended, agreed to.

Vote—*Stipendiary Magistracy*, £26,030:

MR. VOSPER: The magistrates at Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Kimberley were receiving £600, £600, and £500 respectively; and in the estimate of the Minister of Mines there appeared the items: Warden, Coolgardie, £750; Warden, East Coolgardie, £650; and Warden, Kimberley, £500. Was the warden at each place identical with the stipendiary magistrate, and did the one man draw two salaries?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; there were two officers at each place.

MR. MORAN: Did the hon. member hope to carry this separation of offices into effect soon?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: As soon as possible.

Item—*Stipendiary Magistrate*, East Kimberley:

MR. DOHERTY moved that the amount of this item (£500) be reduced by £50. He did not think the salary was too high, but the gentleman who filled the position was not capable. This magistrate did all he could to injure the trade of the port. One Sunday, when it was very hot and there was no water about for cattle to drink, some cattle were shipped on board a steamer, and the magistrate fined the master and owners of the vessel, and detained the ship a day and a half for the trial. This magistrate had no knowledge of law, but had been a merchant all his life. The residents of the district would be glad to see the magistrate removed.

HON. H. W. VENN: A more honourable, straightforward and independent man than the magistrate at East Kimberley it would be impossible to find.

MR. DOHERTY said he was only attacking the man's administration, and not his character.

HON. H. W. VENN: It was just possible that, in carrying out his duties, a magistrate might at times make a mistake, and come into collision with the residents of a place.

MR. A. FORREST: The magistrate at Wyndham was above reproach, and in the North-West district he was the most respected man in the service. He (Mr. Forrest) was sure that, if the people of Wyndham were dissatisfied with the magistrate and the Government were willing, the magistrate would only be too

pleased to leave the district. This magistrate would be respected wherever he went.

MR. WALLACE: If this magistrate was incapable, then instead of asking for reduction of his salary by £50, the member for North Fremantle should have asked the department to remove the officer from the district.

MR. DOHERTY said he only moved for the reduction to draw attention to the matter. The man might have the highest character, but he did not suit the district.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The course taken by the hon. member, in moving for a reduction, was perfectly right. The amendment was moved just to put the remarks in order. It did not follow that the hon. member wished to reduce the vote. He (the Premier) had known the magistrate at Wyndham for a great number of years, and always considered him an excellent man. It seemed extraordinary, with this magistrate's experience at Roebourne and Cossack, that any friction should have arisen with the people at Wyndham. Such friction was bad for the district. It was not difficult, as a rule, for a magistrate to do just and right and keep on fair terms with those about him. As to the trouble about the cattle, he (the Premier) would not have acted as the magistrate did, but the magistrate had the law on his side. In these far-away places, where water was scarce and live stock had to be dealt with, officers should not be too hard and fast in regard to the rules of shipping. He did not think the strictest Sabbatarian would grumble at the removal of cattle on a Sunday, in these hot places where water was so scarce.

MR. MORAN: All hon. members did not know the magistrate, but they knew the hon. member who had brought forward this matter, and he was not the man to try and do another man an injury. The member for North Fremantle had stated the facts, and was entitled to be listened to.

MR. QUINLAN suggested that the hon. member should withdraw the amendment. As to the magistrate referred to, he could indorse what had been stated as to the estimable character of that gentleman.

MR. SIMPSON: When a member of the House was trading with a certain

district, and the officer stationed there administered the law properly, there was a better way of seeking redress than by bringing the matter up in the House and asking hon. members to reduce that officer's salary. A letter to the Attorney General might have put the whole thing right. The remarks which had been made in the House had vindicated the character of the officer.

MR. DOHERTY asked leave to withdraw his amendment. So far as the administration of the law was concerned, this magistrate had instructed the police to take action, and had then adjudicated on the cases.

MR. SIMPSON: If that was so, he was a corrupt official.

MR. DOHERTY: In the case to which he had drawn attention, the magistrate instructed the police to issue a summons, and then he adjudicated on the case.

Amendment by leave withdrawn, and the item passed.

Item — Stipendiary Magistrate at Northam :

MR. LEAKE: Was it proposed to appoint a new magistrate to Northam?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes.

MR. LEAKE: Was it not possible to work Northam and Newcastle together?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The present magistrate was attending to York, Northam, and Newcastle.

Item passed.

Item — Clerk to magistrates and local court at Carnarvon :

MR. HUBBLE asked that a tropical allowance be made to this officer, as other officers similarly situated were given such allowance.

THE PREMIER: This officer must be also the landing waiter at Carnarvon, for which he received a salary of £40 a year.

Item passed.

Item — Clerk to magistrates and local court at Mullewa :

MR. WALLACE asked why provision had been made for an officer at this place, as the office had been abolished for some time.

THE PREMIER: If there was no officer to draw the money, it would not be spent.

Item passed.

Item — Clerk to magistrates and local court at Peak Hill :

MR. KENNY: This officer received only £50 a year, while the clerk at Katanning received £150, and there were other clerks of courts at different places receiving £150 and £160 a year. He wished to know why this distinction was made.

THE PREMIER: The clerk at Peak Hill also held the office of Mining Registrar at £150 a year.

Item passed.

Item — Allowances, £1,400 :

MR. GREGORY asked if some provision could not be made for a quarter-sessions court being held for the districts north of Coolgardie. Persons were put to great expense in coming to Coolgardie from such places as Menzies and Lawlers.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The time would soon arrive when arrangements would have to be made for a quarter-sessions court north of Coolgardie. He could not say when the court would be established, but it would be done at such an early date that public convenience would not suffer.

Item passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote put and passed.

Vote — Land Titles, £8,265 :

Item — Commissioner :

MR. GEORGE asked why there was an increase of £50 in this officer's salary.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The duties of the Commissioner had been steadily increasing at a great ratio during the last year. He had a very onerous and responsible position. Officers occupying similar positions in the other colonies received £1,800 a year. This was a special office, requiring special qualifications; and we should always endeavour to see that such officers were adequately remunerated.

MR. GEORGE: Last year the gentleman occupying that position had been able to give a considerable amount of time to other duties. If the work of the office had increased to the extent mentioned by the Attorney General, what remuneration had been given to the officer who had done the work in his absence?

THE PREMIER: Dr. Smith, the Parliamentary Draughtsman, acted for the Commissioner in his absence. The Commissioner was away in England.

MR. GEORGE said he was referring to the time the Commissioner was acting as police magistrate.

THE PREMIER: The Commissioner got nothing for that.

MR. GEORGE: But when he was attending to the police court duties, did his *locum tenens* receive adequate remuneration?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member was labouring under a misapprehension. When the Commissioner of Titles was asked by the late Attorney General (Mr Burt) to undertake the duties of Police Magistrate in Perth, Mr. J. C. H. James voluntarily gave his services for nothing, and did the work of his own office after hours.

MR. LEAKE: If the Government had made any mistake in this instance, it was in not giving the Commissioner of Titles more. He had been in the service of the country for over 23 years; he was a professional man, and had carried out with great ability the important duties under the Transfer of Land Act. He had great responsibilities, having charge of a large fund, the assurance fund; and considerable professional knowledge was required to administer the department. He (Mr. Leake) must express astonishment that the salary of the Commissioner was not raised to £800 or £900. The Commissioner of Titles had, on several occasions, discharged the important duties of a judge and a magistrate, thus relieving the Government of considerable anxiety, and saving great expense.

MR. A. FORREST: It was strange that, whenever the Estimates for this department came before the committee, the lawyers in the House invariably maintained that its officers were badly paid.

MR. LEAKE: Who had done so?

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member himself had done it now. He was rather startled to hear of the increased work which had to be performed by the Commissioner of Titles. Everybody knew that the amount of business done in the Land Titles Office during the past six months was far less than it was two years ago. This officer could go to England for over a year; could take the police court for months without pay—which he (Mr. Forrest) was sorry to learn, because every man was worthy of his hire—and then we were told that the Commissioner was overworked, and ought to have a £50 in-

crease. From one point of view, he was certainly entitled to it; because, if he was worth £700 during last year, when absent from his office for nine months in connection with some other department, it would be well to increase his salary to £1,000 a year, so that we might get him to spend eleven months in another branch of the service and one month in his own.

MR. ILLINGWORTH said he held in his hand the returns from this department, from which it appeared that in the year 1893 the applications were 220; in 1894, 267; in 1895, 361; and in 1896, 440. It was clear that, during the last four years, the work of this office had doubled. It should also be considered that this was one of the paying offices of the State.

MR. A. FORREST: Who paid for it? The public.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course the public paid indirectly for all public offices; but they paid directly to this one in the shape of fees. Moreover, this officer was a professional man, and held an office which commanded a much higher salary in any of the other colonies. A salary of £750, or even £1,000, was not too much for this gentleman's services. Professional men were worth more than ordinary officers. Would any other barrister be prepared to give up his year's takings for £750?

MR. GEORGE: The member for Albany (Mr. Leake) had entirely misunderstood him. He did not want to reduce the Commissioner's salary. His object was to point out that, while this officer was absent in England—on important duties, no doubt—his work was efficiently done by some subordinate officer. Moreover, the Commissioner, during the year now drawing to its close, had to give a considerable amount of time to police court duty. His contention was that the officer who had to carry out the Commissioner's duties while that gentleman was in England, and when he was attending at the police court, should certainly receive some remuneration from the Government. If a subordinate officer in the Attorney General's department took what might be called an acting-commissionership, as Dr. Smith was said to have done, did the Government intend to recompense him?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: The gentleman who acted, for a time, as Commissioner of Titles was temporarily engaged for the purpose. So far as he (the Attorney General) knew, this officer was not in the public service at the time of his engagement. He had been temporarily engaged as Parliamentary Draughtsman, and was subsequently appointed to act (temporarily) as Commissioner of Titles while the Commissioner was in England. But, for that portion of this year in which the Commissioner of Titles devoted some of his time to the performance of the duties of police magistrate in Perth, no one had been appointed as his *locum tenens*, as the Commissioner himself did the work after hours, and received no remuneration as police magistrate. This circumstance ought to be remembered in his favour, and he (the Attorney General) hoped next year to be able to prevail upon the Treasurer to take it into consideration.

Vote put and passed.

RAILWAYS DEPARTMENT (HON. F. H. PIESSE).

POSTPONEMENT.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS said the report issued by this department having been laid upon the table of the House, it was not his intention to make the customary speech in review of the operations of the Railway Department. Were he to do so, his statement would only be a recapitulation of the report. He would of course be very pleased to give any information which might be required during the discussion of the items. What he had said with regard to railways would also apply to public works, both reports having been presented a little earlier this year than was usual in years past. There were one or two matters to which he would like to refer.

MR. LEAKE: Before the hon. gentleman addressed the committee in reference to his departments, it would be better to wait until the Auditor General's report was before them. It would be more convenient to take the Crown Lands and Education Departments first, and postpone the discussion of the Railways and Works, as there would probably be but little discussion on the former departments, and a great deal on the latter.

He threw this out as a suggestion, with a view of expediting business.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Seeing that the expenditure of one-half of the revenue of this country was in the hands of the Commissioner of Railways and Director of Public Works, the committee were surely entitled to a statement from the Minister of a very clear and decided character, such as he gave very ably last year, in accordance with precedent. It was not enough to lay reports on the table. In respect of large spending departments such as these, Parliament was entitled to a statement from the Minister, by which a great saving of time would be effected.

MR. QUINLAN: It was rather surprising to hear the member for Central Murchison speak of saving the time of the House. All the talking had been on the Opposition side during this session, at any rate.

MR. SIMPSON: All the brains, too.

MR. QUINLAN said he did not know about the brains. He preferred to read the reports, which gave fuller and clearer information than could be derived from a speech.

MR. GEORGE: The member for Tood-yay (Mr. Quinlan) might have spared the committee the homily with which he had favoured them. Members had a right to expect from the Minister a statement of his views, in his own words, on the working of his department. Printed reports were all very well for the purpose of pointing an argument or directing an attack; but they were but dead ashes, drawn up, possibly, for the purpose of setting matters in as colourless a light as possible, so that dubious items might escape the attention of members. He trusted that the Minister would not take any remarks made by the Opposition as a personal attack on himself. Since he had been in office, the Opposition had been only too anxious to assist him in every possible way; but they would like to hear his own views on the figures his officers had prepared.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS said he, and the Government also, were quite willing to adopt the suggestion of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), and postpone the consideration of the Railways estimates a little longer. He had been anxious to make the usual statement

in regard to the working of his departments, but had understood that it was the general wish of the committee to proceed with the business. Most members would agree that exceptionally rapid progress had been made with the Estimates; and, although it had been his intention to prepare a statement similar to that which he had made last year—and he had mentioned this to the Premier—he had been under the impression that he could give to-night, in about half-an-hour, a recapitulation of the business of his departments during the year, which, coupled with the printed reports already presented, would have been satisfactory to the committee. But in accordance with the desire which had been expressed, he would deal with each department separately—with the Railways in one statement and with the Works in another. He would have to ask the committee to bear with him, however, for perhaps an hour and a half, as he would not take the matter up in a half-hearted manner. He was perfectly ready to give all the information he could, and to court all the inquiry that might be necessary into the working of the departments, and was willing to have the matter postponed until after the consideration of the other Estimates.

MR. LEAKE moved that the Estimates of Department No. VIII., Commissioner of Railways, be postponed until after the consideration of the other Estimates.

Put and passed, and the Railways Estimates postponed accordingly.

CROWN LANDS DEPARTMENT (Commissioner, Hon. G. Throssell).

Vote—*Lands and Surveys*, £62,694—agreed to.

Vote—*Fisheries*, £2,412 :

MR. GEORGE asked what was the meaning of the item "Chief Inspector, 6 months, £385," and later on "Subsistence Allowance, Chief Inspector, 6 months, £182." Had the services of this officer been dispensed with? If so, was it the intention of the department to appoint another gentleman to carry on these important duties?

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: The permanent appointment had not been given to this officer yet; he was only, so to speak, on trial, and he

had been given a six months' engagement. It was not certain whether the gentleman would accept the permanent appointment.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Woods and Forests*, £3,880 :

MR. GEORGE asked if it was intended to introduce a Bill this session to deal more fully with the regulation of the forests for preservation purposes and the cutting of timber. Last session a Bill was introduced to deal with the timber industry, which contained provisions which were inimical to the best interests of men with small capital. This Bill was thrown out, but he was given to understand that, during the recess, regulations almost identical with the provisions laid down in the Bill were gazetted and were now practically the law of the land.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: It was the intention of the Government to introduce a Bill dealing fully with the timber industry. As to the regulations; it was found necessary, in the absence of an Act of Parliament, that some regulations should be provided, dealing with the cutting of timber pending the passage of a Bill through Parliament. He proposed to introduce a Bill within the coming week.

MR. GEORGE asked whether the limited number of forest rangers were able to thoroughly carry out the duties which the department required of them. There were only three rangers, and they had to deal with 300,000 or 400,000 miles of forests.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS: The number of foresters was not sufficient, but he hoped, under the new order of things, to be able to make additional appointments. The foresters now in the department were good men. The Conservator of Forests had impressed upon him the necessity of having additional foresters appointed. As to the Timber Bill, he had taken a good deal of trouble with it, and, while a good many provisions were on the lines of the last Bill, some provisions were very different.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—*Inspection of Stock*, £6,029—agreed to.

Vote—*Agricultural Bank*, £1,385—agreed to.

MINES DEPARTMENT (Minister, Hon. E. H. Wittenoom, Legislative Council).

Vote—*Mines*, £110,085 1s. 8d.:

MR. GREGORY: There was a very large item in this estimate for public batteries. This question had been for a long time before the House, and some idea should be given as to how these batteries were going to be distributed over the country, and what system it was intended to adopt as to finding out the best places for the erection of these batteries. He hoped the usual red-tapism would not be brought into this matter. This new system of public batteries should be placed on a sound basis. He hoped that the Government would not allow any political influence to be used as to the location of these public batteries. The inspectors of mines and the wardens should say where the batteries should be erected. Great difficulties had been experienced by prospectors, who had applied for a lease and paid the survey fees, in getting a refund of the money. Immediately it was decided whom the lease should be granted to, the other applicants should have their money returned without delay. He wished to impress upon the Government the advisability of wardens travelling through their mining centres, and holding courts very frequently. There was an amount on the Estimates for travelling expenses for wardens, but he did not know whether it was sufficient to enable the warden to travel through the mining centres and hold courts. A warden should travel through every centre where there were over 100 inhabitants. No mention was made on the Estimates for advertising the mining industry to a greater extent than was done at the present time. In New Zealand the Government issued a document every month, and it did a great deal of good, and was looked upon as authenticated, coming from the Government. He would like to see something similar adopted in this country. The Mining Department should be worked on the same lines as the Agricultural Department. With regard to the agricultural industry, there was a gentleman at the head of the department who had his heart and soul in his work, and who did everything in his power to assist agriculturists. Most people would admit, however, that the

Minister of Mines had not that sympathy with the mining industry that he had with the agriculturists and pastoralists. It was hoped that when the Government reorganised the department they would appoint some member of the Assembly to the position of Minister of Mines. Several mining inspectors had been appointed lately, but it was absolutely necessary to have at least one inspector for each goldfield. When an accident occurred in a mine, a practical man should immediately be sent to inspect it. Working men, and even leaseholders to a certain extent, required protection. The reports of wardens here, who were seldom practical men, could not be relied upon to the same extent as those of competent inspectors. No provision was made in the Estimates for rewards for the discovery of new reefs. It was to be hoped that the Mining Commission would recommend the inclusion of such provision in the new Mining Act.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): In regard to public crushers, the Government had recommended the committee to devote a sum of money to that purpose, and had already taken action by sending an experienced man—a specialist selected by the Minister of Mines—to visit the various goldfields and report as to the best sites for the erection of the batteries. As soon as the vote was passed, steps would at once be taken to carry out the scheme, and the Government would try to select the best places for the erection of the crushers. He would be very glad indeed if the matter could be entirely removed from political control, for he expected that the members of this House would have a great deal to say about it, many of them having spoken to him already with regard to the great necessity for batteries on their goldfields. They generally asked for two in each district. If that was what was meant by removing the matter from political control, he did not know how the scheme was to be carried out. If the project were a success it would be all right; if, on the other hand, it was a failure, or cost a great deal of money, neither the Government nor the House would be satisfied. The department might make some mistakes, but would do the best in their power. The Minister of Mines was taking an interest in the matter, and it would not be long before

he made a start. The difficulty lay, not so much in the cost of a battery or in the cost of its erection, but in the fact that a sufficient supply of water had to be found before the erection of the battery was commenced. It would not do to follow the example of some private speculators, who put up a battery first and then failed to find the water. His first experience of mining in the Central Murchison was when he was taken to see a battery close to the town of Cue. The battery was there, but they had been sinking for water and had not found any. The company did not continue the work, and the machinery was removed and sold for a mere song. We must be certain we could get water before putting up the machinery. One great difficulty staring them in the face was the danger of interfering with vested interests, and demands for batteries seemed to be just as strong from places where there were private crushers already as from those where there were none. It was said that the managers of the present batteries were extortionate in their charges.

A MEMBER: They could not pay dividends.

THE PREMIER: Quite so. These people said they were charging 30s. a ton for ounce stuff. Ounce stuff ought certainly to stand 30s. He had asked the question whether they were making any money, and gathered they were not; so it did not seem to be a very profitable business even when the charges were extortionate. He did not want to interfere with people who had sunk their money in the enterprise. He wanted to erect batteries where there were none at present. Next session he would be able to report to the House the result of the first attempt, and he could only hope that it would be altogether satisfactory.

MR. GREGORY: Did this vote allow the Government to subsidise a company of prospectors who were willing to provide a certain sum of money for the erection of a battery?

THE PREMIER: This was a vote entrusted to the Government, and the Government were responsible for its expenditure. These were to be Government batteries. The idea of the hon. member, that the Government should lend people some money to assist them to erect a

battery, was not a bad one; but that was not the idea the committee had in view in voting this money. They would be public batteries erected by, and under the control of, the Government. In regard to certain fees, in all probability the matter would not be so troublesome in the future as it had been in the past. The large amount of money received from survey fees had rendered it necessary to take a different course from that adopted at first. Something like £50,000 was received in one year. Formerly these moneys were left in the hands of the wardens, to be carried to revenue so soon as the lease was approved, or to be refunded by them in the event of refunds being necessary. That plan might have been expeditious, but it led to an immense amount of trouble, and was not at all satisfactory. In the early days of Coolgardie all knew the difficulty experienced in keeping control of the moneys, and a plan was then instituted in accordance with our Audit Act by which all moneys received from any source were paid into the general revenue of the country at the Treasury. Then, if refunds were required, they were made by the Treasury. The fees, of course, were not permanently taken into the receipts of revenue, but, as the surveys were passed and the fees became payable to the Treasury, they were credited to the general revenue and refunds were paid out of the same account. Any delays complained of arose from the fact that those requiring refunds were not very expeditious in applying for them, and perhaps did not know very well how to do it. The money, however, would certainly be repaid; it was in safe hands, and there was no chance of their losing it. In regard to the wardens' courts, the law provided that a warden could hold a court where he liked, so long as all the parties were agreeable. But for ordinary purposes, unless a warden's court were gazetted and had jurisdiction over a certain area, difficulties might arise. Take a case of the warden's court at Niagara. Unless that court had a certain area over which to exercise its jurisdiction, there might be some difficulty with regard to notices. A man in Menzies might give a notice affecting a claim somewhere in Niagara, and the person affected might never see it. Each warden's court had a

definite district, and all notices with regard to leases, etc., within that area, had to be given in that court. Every warden's court, in fact, represented a little goldfield of its own; it had its own officers, its registrar, its set of books, and its records. There was nothing to prevent one warden having two fields, or a dozen if he could do the work; but each court must have a definite district, and its own registrar and records. He was aware that such a system was not adopted in regard to local courts in the colony, which the Crown managed to hold throughout the country without assigning to them definite districts; but, in regard to the goldfields, such a system had been found to be altogether impracticable. If more wardens' courts were required, new districts would have to be defined. No doubt, in some cases, it would be convenient to do that. With regard to advertising the mining industry, he would bring that matter under the notice of the Minister of Mines, though he expected that gentleman had already done a good deal in that direction. He had published monthly returns of gold; but, as this became an older and more important gold-producing country, we would have to advertise our resources to a greater extent than we were doing at present. At the same time, we were not hiding the extent of our gold production under a bushel. He (the Premier) telegraphed it all over the world, and spoke about it at every convenient opportunity. The fact of the Minister of Mines not being in this House was no doubt an important matter; but it would be impossible to have all the Ministers in the Assembly. There must be one Minister at least in another place; and, although it might be possible to have some other Minister than the Minister of Mines in the other House, it was not always easy to do exactly what we desired in such a matter. It was rather difficult to get a Minister who could conduct the affairs in the Upper House single-handed. It was difficult for one man to introduce all the Bills and to give explanations of everything. The question of inspectors was also very important; but there were a good many inspectors already. From what he could see, the inspectors were an expensive lot of people, and perhaps we might be able to manage the business at less cost. In this

year's Estimates he had struck out a good many allowances for inspectors' residences: in fact, an inspector on the goldfields seemed to be almost as good as a warden. Without knowing what kind of people we had as inspectors on those fields, yet, from what he could gather, they wanted a good deal of luxury, and cost a considerable sum of money. He was in favour of giving up this plan of building expensive residences for these people. We had at Coolgardie at the present time a large number of residences for officials. He did not object to a warden or a magistrate having a residence; but when it came to giving residences to all the other officials, including the inspectors, he did not know where we would get to. It would take all the revenue of the country. If we wanted to give a man a residence, it would be better to let him have an allowance. When a residence was provided, we never heard the last of it. People who got houses for nothing were very extravagant, and were continually crying out for repairs and alterations. It had come to be acknowledged that wardens and magistrates should have residences; but inspectors of mines should either build their own houses or live under canvas, for a while at any rate. With regard to the vote generally, members would notice that this year's expenditure was not so large as last year's: £112,000 spent last year, and £110,000 for this. It must be remembered that there was £30,000 for public batteries this year which was not on last year's Estimates. Then there was £40,000 spent last year in survey fees. This money, of course, was provided by the people, and the Government only expended the amount received in fees. This year there had not been so much surveying, as fewer leases had been taken up. If there was any other information he could give with regard to this vote, he would be glad to do so.

MR. GEORGE: Was the Premier quite sure of the accuracy of this estimate?

THE PREMIER: Yes; it was all right, so far as he knew.

MR. GEORGE: The right hon. gentleman had pointed out that the expenditure last year was £112,463, and that this year it was £110,085, of which £30,000 was for public batteries. But it would be observed that, though the revenue of

this department was expected to fall about £87,000 in this current year, the actual expenditure in connection with salaries and allowances was, if anything, more than it was last year. For instance, for temporary clerical assistance and draftsmen, the expenditure last year was £4,253 12s. 3d.; this year it was estimated at £700, so that there was a difference of £3,553 to go against public batteries. Again, the survey of leases, areas, etc., cost £45,074 last year, and the expenditure for the current year was estimated at £20,000, leaving a further difference to go against the £30,000 for public batteries. Then in the item "Incidental expenses" and in other items, less amounts were to be expended; and the total saved on these items was £37,000, which was to go against the £30,000 which had been added for public batteries. This proved his point, namely, that whereas the work of the department was admitted to be considerably less this year, the expenditure had gone up very materially; and he pointed out these matters to emphasise the fact that the department had not exercised sufficient care in cutting its coat according to its cloth, as a man would have to do in his own private business.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: One of the anomalies of this department was the decreased estimate of income with an increased estimate of expenditure. When a Minister sent estimates of that kind to the House, there ought to be some reason given for the increased expenditure. If a commercial man found his business failing, he reduced his expenditure, and so it should be with a Government department. He desired to point out that the discoverer of the Cue goldfield had never been paid any reward. In the case of Lawler, who discovered the Lawler's field, 200 miles away from any other goldfield, he understood the Treasurer was going to do something for him. It was hoped the Government would give the man a good round sum. Returning to the question of public batteries, he desired to impress on the Government the necessity for the greatest care in the erection of these batteries. It had been suggested that, as far as possible, the Government should arrange for the construction of the batteries within the colony; at least, a price could be

obtained within the colony. If once a foundry was established here, it could deal with the machinery belonging to the great mining industry, or some well-known firm in the other colonies might be induced to come and start a branch here, if tenders were invited for the supply of batteries in the colony. If anything happened to any mining machinery at the present time, the owner had to send to the other colonies to replace the broken portion, except those portions that could be manufactured by the well-known firm of Messrs. George and Co. It would be a step in the right direction if the House could induce the Government to call for tenders for these batteries in the colony, and the hon. member for the Murray might become the successful tenderer, which would recoup him to some extent for the loss he had sustained by the removal of the duty from machinery some couple of sessions ago. If we could get the batteries in the colony at a reasonable price it would be a very good thing. He wished to draw attention to the necessity for the Government taking the utmost care in starting these batteries. If the first two or three batteries were a failure, then the whole thing would be crushed from the day of its inception. If they got incompetent men to run the first battery or two, the whole thing would get into disrepute. There should be great care in the selection of the machinery and of the men to take charge of it. Wherever batteries were placed, we wanted men of judgment, not only to see the batteries were properly erected and in the right place, but that the proper kind of gold-saving machinery was selected. What might suit in one locality might not suit in another. He wished to impress upon the Government that great care must be taken in the inception of this work, and he also wished to impress on the Government the necessity of taking a stand from the first in this direction. If the Government gave first-class work, they must be paid properly for it. Public batteries were not to be given as charitable institutions. The Government should not want to make any profit out of these batteries, but should expect to cover the cost of working them, and if the batteries were properly managed they would cover their cost.

MR. VOSPER indorsed the remarks of the hon. member for Central Murchison. He would like to say that he was one of the first in the colony to advocate the idea of public batteries. The Government must look at this system of public batteries with a great deal of caution. The system could only be looked upon as a gigantic experiment, and unless there was care in the early stages of the work the whole thing might be a great failure. He understood that already the Government had been sending out inspectors to choose localities for these batteries, but the inspectors had been sent to various districts at the will of the Minister, or at the caprice of the inspectors themselves. An inspector should be sent to each goldfield with a view of inspecting every portion of the field. The Government must choose only such places as would recoup the outlay the Government were put to. As to the increase of expenditure in the Mines Department and the decrease of revenue, he would like to point out that one of the causes of the high revenue last year was that numbers of temporary surveys were made, and survey fees were paid on numbers of leases that were taken up, not with the object of trying to obtain gold from the leases, but with the object of trying to obtain gold from people's pockets. The decrease in this revenue was a good sign. It showed that mining people were confining their enterprise to mines that were likely to pay. If there was a reduction in the mining revenue, it was only of a temporary character, and was compensated for by the working of the good mines. He recommended the Government not to move in any direction for reducing expenditure at the present time.

MR. SIMPSON congratulated the Mines Department for the way in which it had been administered. He would never propose to place the funds of this country into a channel that offered more precarious returns than that of erecting public batteries. He would favour giving subsidies. There was one feature he would like to suggest to the Government, and it was that the Government would have to take the responsibility for the returns. Before the battery began to work, it was always estimated that the stone would go three or four ounces to the ton, but as soon as the stamps began to fall, the

return dwindled down to pennyweights. There was another feature in connection with this: the Government certificates given for trial crushings might be used for flotation purposes, unless the whole thing was carefully watched. The Premier had mentioned the water supply on the fields. Of course that was an expensive item, and it was intimated that the large scheme for supplying Coolgardie with water would not be completed for years. He had no hesitation in saying that during the time it took to construct these waterworks, the cost of bringing the ore for trial crushing to the coast or Northam would be reduced, and it would be less expensive to bring the ore down here than to have it crushed at the public batteries. The erection of these batteries and a proper water supply would run into thousands of pounds. It was not proposed to put the batteries in the large mining centres, but in outside places where the carriage would be very high, labour scarce, and material would have to be imported. He did not wish to damp the enthusiasm of hon. members, but the committee could not be too careful in safeguarding the interests of the public. He wished to impress upon the Premier the desirability of the Minister of Mines holding a seat in that House. He hoped the policy of the Mines Department would not be to hamper the industry by vexatious charges and regulations. He wished the wretched red-tapeism that existed to be done away with. In his opinion there was not a fee in connection with the whole gold-mining industry that was not too high, and would not bear a good sound reduction. Something had been said about the prospecting vote, and it was suggested that the Minister should give a lump sum for equipping parties to go out to prospect new country. His opinion was that this would be an absolute failure. He would sooner see encouragement given to the discoverer of new fields by reward. If a man made a good find, the Government would benefit, and could afford to give the man a reward. It was to be regretted that the Royal Commission on Mining had not had an opportunity of reporting to Parliament. He hoped hon. members would bear in mind that the gold-mining industry would benefit more by being left alone. All over the world where the

Government had kept away, this industry had done well. He hoped to see the day when annual conferences of mining men would be held. The mining estimate would receive no further criticism from him. He hoped that any Minister who succeeded the present able occupant of the office would administer the affairs of the department with ability and economy.

MR. OATS said he was in sympathy with what had been said in reference to public batteries. He was very pleased to hear the Premier say that the first thing was to get water on the mines. On looking through the country he saw a great number of batteries erected, which were supposed to be making good returns, but they were not. To make a battery a success, there must be plenty of stone and water and the mill must be kept going. Something had been said about the cost of crushing, and the Premier thought the cost per ton would be about 30s. under favourable conditions. The cost of crushing at the Boulder was about £1 per ton, and coming nearer home the cost of crushing at Fraser's battery, Southern Cross, had been cut down as low as 10s. a ton. The reason for this was that the mills were constantly going. It was no use having a battery running occasionally: that was not the way to success. The Government must be very cautious in spending this money on public batteries. He was in favour of subsidies rather than the erection of these batteries. He desired to help those who helped themselves, and although he was in favour of erecting batteries, the best plan was to help those who helped themselves, by subsidies. Let the Government put up batteries that would be a success.

MR. KINGSMILL: There was simply one requisite to make the scheme of public batteries a success, and that was the *personnel* of those appointed to carry out the work. We must have trustworthy inspectors; men who knew a mine when they saw it, and who knew what payable stone was, and how much there was available if they went down a mine. It was important that there should be capable and efficient managers for these batteries. He had been running batteries for some years, and he could inform the House that it depended on how the battery was run as to whether it would pay. If a man

was given ever so good a plant, so long as he did not understand his business, he would not be able to make a success of it. It was hoped the Government would not pauperise the industry by crushing stone for nothing, or at a loss. In districts languishing for the want of a battery, mine owners were willing to pay a fair amount for crushing. In the case of private enterprise people had to pay a high price for proving the value of their mine. That was quite practicable with regard to places possessing railway communication and cheap carriage; but for outlying districts it was altogether unworkable. The fees charged by the Mines Department were simply ridiculous in comparison with those charged in the other colonies. He could also indorse the remarks of the member for Geraldton (Mr. Simpson) with regard to the prospecting vote. The one stimulus necessary for good prospecting was poverty. A man sent out with money in his pocket and a luxurious outfit had no inducement to prospect; but when he knew that unless he found something he was absolutely bankrupt, it became a case of "root hog, or die." Everyone knew that the best discoveries on our goldfields had been made by men who wanted them most.

MR. MORAN: The last remark of the hon. member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill) had his entire sympathy. As far as this colony was concerned, the independent prospector had found everything. In Queensland and Victoria a few leads had been discovered by Government prospectors; but, throughout Australia, the old fossicker was the man who had opened up the goldfields. The Government did its duty when it gave the miner such facilities in the way of railway communication, water supply, and postal service, as had been afforded here. He was altogether opposed to pecuniary assistance to prospectors. Such men would simply prospect around the nearest hotel, and, when their money gave out, their pluck would go with it. With regard to the Mines Bill, it was too late to bring it before this House, and it must be said that the Mining Commission—without reflecting on the estimable gentlemen who formed it—was a mistake from the commencement, and could only wind up by telling the members of this House things they had learnt years before. The Mining Act

of this colony required very little alteration.

MR. MORGANS: It needed a lot of alteration.

MR. MORAN: Possibly it might in detail, but not as regards its general principles. The Australian mining laws had done as much for mining as had been done by any Government in the world. Such mining laws as would be found in some countries of which the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) knew so much, would never suit Australia. What would be the result, for instance, if we were to grant a fee simple of the leases to mining companies in this country? That, after all, was the bone of contention. No such law would ever be carried in this House; for it would be fatal to legitimate mining speculation. No one wanted to treat foreign capital harshly, and that cry had died out. Men like Mr. Kauffman came here and paid, perhaps, half a million for a mine, and were quite contented with the laws of the colony. There has been no instance of a single unjust act done by any Australian Government to the British or foreign capitalist. But, on the other hand, there were a great many instances in which English capital—and more especially that particular kind, yecept nominal capital—had almost ruined the country. This colony had had a fair dose of that sort of capitalist, who floated a company with a nominal capital of £100,000 and sent out £2,000 with which to work the mine. The amount of actual capital invested in Western Australia was so small, compared with the nominal capital supposed to be sunk in mining, that we ought almost to be ashamed to admit that the British press would misrepresent one of their own dependencies as they had done. It was claimed that two hundred millions had been invested here; but not more than six millions had ever seen the shores of the colony. A deputation had waited on the Premier to ask that the spending of a certain amount of money on a mine should entitle the lessee to the fee simple of the land; and it was claimed that this system obtained in America. In America, however, the Government did not build railways to the goldfields, nor did they follow them up in any way to the same extent as was done in Australia. It was a pity the Mining Commission had

ever been appointed. There were eleven mining members in the House, and did it require a Royal Commission to tell them how many men to the acre should be put on? Not much harm, however, could be done between this and next session. He must warn the Government not to be led away by every district that sent in a request for a public battery. In the first place, there should be an output of at least 10z. to the ton before the battery was erected. The second desideratum was a sufficient supply of water; for, if the battery, when once erected, were stopped, the effect would be to give the district a bad name. Again, in many cases it would be much better to provide cyanide vats than batteries; and the Government might also find it advantageous to collect ore near a railway siding. Again, there were large lakes—at Broad Arrow, for instance—on the banks of which reduction works could be established. In some cases it might also be advisable to subsidise private batteries, a maximum price being fixed for the crushing of ore. The indiscriminate working of mines on Sunday was another question which was agitating the public mind, and public opinion was decidedly against it. This evil ought to be remedied by legislation. He congratulated the Government on their having cut down their mining estimates, in some cases as much as 50 per cent. There was no use living in a fool's paradise. At the same time, it must be remembered that the duties of Government officials on the fields had not grown lighter. Mining registrars, for instance, had even more work to do now than in the old days. Leases were changing hands and shares were being registered; and the Government, with commendable enterprise, were providing even small fields with registrars and other officers in order to facilitate business.

MR. MORGANS: The member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) was, as a rule, well posted in figures; but his memory had failed him somewhat in reference to the supposed capitalisation of English mining companies, when he said that the nominal capital of these concerns, in respect of mines in this colony, was two hundred millions.

MR. MORAN: It was over £150,000,000 at any rate.

MR. MORGANS: According to the most reliable statistics obtainable, it did not reach £70,000,000 up to the present time. Comparing the nominal capital of the mining companies in Western Australia with those of the Rand, or any other mining district in any part of the world, the result had been generally favourable to Western Australia. This was a gratifying fact. No one in the House had a greater objection to floating "wild cats" than he had; at the same time it was gratifying to know that, "wild cats" notwithstanding, the result had been so good. The hon. member for East Coolgardie had endeavoured to impress upon the House the absolute uselessness of the Mining Commission. As a member of that Commission, he (Mr. Morgans) might say he did not object in the slightest to have the hon. member's criticism of the work done by the Commission. So far as he was concerned, he felt it a great honour to be a member of the Mining Commission, and, so far as he was able to judge of the work done by the Commission, they had succeeded in obtaining a very large amount of valuable information, which would be embodied in a report and presented to Parliament for consideration. The hon. member said that there were eleven mining members in the House, who could have given the Government all the information necessary without the intervention of this Commission. He entirely disagreed with that hon. member. The Commission had called evidence—he was prepared to admit that a great deal of it was not of much value, but a large amount of it had proved to be most valuable practical information; and when the hon. member for East Coolgardie was given an opportunity of reading the report of the Commission, he would be the first to admit that it was a valuable report. The question had arisen as to the prospecting vote. He had no sympathy with the prospecting vote; but for the information of the Premier, and it might be a surprise to hon. members to know this, he had in his possession at the present time, and he intended to present it to Parliament at an early period, a petition asking for £100,000 for a prospecting vote to sink deep shafts and prospect deep veins at a certain depth from the surface. He (Mr. Morgans) disclaimed any desire to introduce a system into this country

through the mining laws for obtaining the fee simple of a mine. He expressed the belief, however, that if the system existed it would be far better for the interests of the mining industry in this country; but he had never expressed any such opinion, nor did he believe any such proposition would commend itself to their judgment, and he knew too much of the world to get up in the House and propose any scheme of the kind. This colony had made many grievous mistakes in following too closely the laws of other colonies in their legislation. He did not believe that all the talent of the continent of Australasia was to be found in the other colonies, nor was the legislation framed by the other colonies so perfect that we should follow it. As to the mining laws, this colony had followed in the footsteps of the others, and after he had examined the mining laws of the other colonies he found that this colony had followed the least liberal of them all—Queensland. With regard to New South Wales, he might say that the very undesirable condition of the mining laws in that colony had been the means of destroying the mining industry in that colony, and he did not think it would be the desire of that House to enact laws which would have the effect of damaging the interests or deterring the inflow of capital from foreign countries. In Queensland they had an abundant supply of water, and the water question on the goldfields of Western Australia was the one which had involved the great mining industry in a serious difficulty. On the question of public batteries, he desired to indorse all that had been said by the hon. member for Central Murchison and others. The Government must exercise the greatest possible care in the expenditure on these batteries, the erection of which was the desire of the workers on the fields. Miners no doubt had a right to expect that the Government would erect batteries for them. These batteries should be looked upon as an experiment, and the Government should try it as such. If the Government went on the lines suggested and disappointment resulted, it could not be said that Parliament had not given proper consideration to all the points raised in connection with the matter. Of all the difficult points surrounding the question,

the most difficult would be to select the sites for these batteries. In the first place, the Government would find itself surrounded by demands, reasonable and unreasonable, and it would be difficult for the Government to select sites in the right places to suit the convenience of the greatest number. There was one point in connection with this, and that was the settlement of the important question of finding water to supply the batteries. He (Mr. Morgans) could point out to the Government a dozen spots where batteries could be erected as an experiment, and under ordinary circumstances would pay their expenses. But in not one instance in the dozen was there a supply of water. One of the first steps the Government should take was to investigate the water question. It was no good putting up batteries unless a supply of water was assured. Another question was the kind of reduction plant the Government should erect on the fields in connection with these batteries. The mode of extraction was another important point which should be taken into account; and also the desirability of erecting cyaniding plants with the batteries. Public batteries in the hands of private persons were dangerous, but in the hands of the Government the responsibility was greater; though that was no reason why it should deter the Government from making the experiment. Although he was alive to the difficulties which surrounded the erection of these batteries, he said to the Government, erect the batteries and make the experiment. The Government should erect, in connection with these batteries, a small cyaniding plant. If a 10-stamp battery, which could crush two-and-a-half tons per stamp per day, was erected, the Government could put up a small cyaniding plant to treat all the tailings from the ore crushed by such a battery, for £800 to £1,000. If rebellious minerals were met with, they could then be treated by this cyaniding plant. The point had been raised as to advertising the goldfields, and something might be done in that direction. West Australians had not been backward in making known this colony in London. It had been done through the medium of the Chamber of Mines and the statistical office. But it could be done by pamphlets—descriptive

of the goldfields, giving the returns of the gold—being issued and scattered all over the world. Many of the able minds in the Government might suggest other ways in which the advertising could be done. The publication of the gold returns which had been undertaken by the Government, he knew from his correspondence with London, had had good effect in the metropolis of the world; and the Government must aim at keeping the public posted with these returns. He did not think there was much to criticise in the Estimates. They seemed to be based on the principle of economy generally. Some of the salaries of the officials on the goldfields were not so good as they might be. The wardens on the goldfields had tremendous responsibilities on their shoulders, and they had an enormous amount of work to do; and he thought the Government might well reconsider the question of these officials' salaries next session, and also the salaries of the other officials who were employed on the goldfields.

MR. KINGSMILL: The Government in taking in hand the erection of public batteries were energetically working, and would confer a great benefit on the gold mining industry, which would be felt throughout the length and breadth of the colony, and would materially assist in making the industry the great value it was capable of being to the colony. The assistance which the erection of batteries would be to the prospectors would undoubtedly be highly appreciated, and would enable them to work at a profit their own properties. It had been said that the mining revenue had been decreasing in the face of an increase in expenditure. He thought these increases in expenditure would, in all probability, have the result of their materially increasing the revenue. Although many mining leases were taken up for speculative and gambling purposes, it was a well-known fact that many good leases were abandoned by prospectors because they had not the means of extracting the gold. With many mines transit was a very big item, and goldfields lying to the north of Menzies and southward would greatly benefit from the public batteries. It would give an opportunity at once of obtaining the gold, and for men working their own leases; and this should be the main object that

every man who had the mining industry at heart should have in view. It was by this means that the colony of Western Australia would mostly benefit. The necessity for caution in the erection of public batteries had not been over-estimated; still, there was more to be said in their favour in Western Australia than in any other country, because gold mining was our national industry. Most people would be in favour of subsidising private batteries, where practicable; but the success of the experiment would largely depend upon the inspectors chosen to decide where crushers should be erected. He hoped that no such proposal as that of handing over auriferous country in fee simple to syndicates would ever be sanctioned by Parliament. Why should we alienate our greatest source of wealth and prosperity? The salaries of some of the wardens were very small in proportion to the cost of living on the fields. He hoped increases would be granted next session.

MR. KENNY: It was in the interest of the independent prospector that public batteries were asked for. The experiment might be risky in some places, but there could be no risk at Tuganara and Peak Hill, where there was a large quantity of stone at grass and a plentiful supply of water; and it was only necessary to supply crushing power to bring that portion of the fields into prominence. Much had been made of the objection that the Government would be interfering with private enterprise; but there were "fashionable localities" in the mining districts, as elsewhere, and this part of the fields was not so fashionable as others, and, therefore, required encouragement. Everyone must regret the large sums of money which left this colony to pay dividends to English companies—not that those companies were not entitled to dividends, but it would be far better to keep the money in the country. It was only some few months ago that after years of prospecting some very rich stone was struck 25 mines south of Peak Hill, near the Horse Shoe. That was the second spot where he would advocate the erection of a public battery. The water question had not been quite solved at present. They had only sunk to a certain depth. It was the intention of the Government to put down a bore, and he had

not the slightest doubt that a large supply of water would be met with. This was not the only colony that was helping on the mining industry. Victoria had set us a splendid example. Not only were they erecting public batteries in that colony, but they were giving bonuses for deep sinking and for prospecting, and they were spending large sums of money for the encouragement of the industry. The Queensland Government, during the last twelve months, had expended over £100,000 in the purchase of crushing machinery for the sugar plantations. Sugar rose and fell in the market. It might be commanding a very fair price this month, but nobody could tell what the price would be twelve months hence. That was not the case with gold. A sovereign was a sovereign all the year round. He looked upon the expenditure of this £30,000 as purely an experiment which he was confident would turn out satisfactorily. He was sure that if it were expended wisely and well, as he believed it would be, the Government would never regret having placed it on the Estimates.

M^r. A. FORREST: It had been said that the erection of public batteries by the Government would do an immense amount of good. He agreed with that to a certain extent, but he was afraid they would not accomplish quite so much as was expected of them. A public battery had been erected at Southern Cross to crush stone at £1 a ton, and they were not able to get any to crush. At Nanine there had been a battery for a long time, which had been ready during the last two years to crush stone at a very cheap rate, but they had met with only a certain amount of success. There were also public batteries at Kalgoorlie, Cue, and other parts, ready to crush the stone. They were charging enormous rates in some places, but in Niagara there was a public company with a large amount of capital which he had the honour to represent in London, which was putting up 30 head of stamps. He did not think the Government would be able to crush at much less than 30s. a ton. The greatest care should be exercised in determining the localities where the batteries were to be erected. If the Government were going to enter into competition with private enterprise and erect batteries in

places which were already sufficiently provided with them, they would not confer the immense benefit on the country that was expected. If the Government intended to erect a public battery at Kalgoorlie or Coolgardie, where there were already a number of batteries, both public and private, they would not be meeting a want.

A MEMBER: Nobody wanted the Government to do that.

MR. A. FORREST: It was only in outside places where these public batteries would be a public benefit. He represented a company which had put up a battery at a cost of £24,000. If the Government proposed to put up a battery there it would not pay. There were many places where the erection of public batteries would not do any good at all. Unless the Government took the greatest care not to compete with private enterprise, the experiment would be a total failure. There was a public battery at Menzies which crushed at a reasonable rate.

MR. MORAN: £4 a ton!

MR. A. FORREST hoped no one would have the impudence to charge so high a price as that. He suggested one should be erected at Broad Arrow.

A MEMBER: There were four already.

MR. A. FORREST: If there were so many, then they charged prohibitive rates.

MR. VOSPER: That was quite true.

MR. A. FORREST: There were a large number of mines at Kurnalpi, and no battery.

A MEMBER: There was one there.

MR. FORREST: The success of the experiment would depend entirely on how the money was applied. Batteries were not required at Southern Cross, Nannine, Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie and other centres; and if the Government erected any there, private enterprise would bring the price down to that charged by the Government, and the result would be a total failure to the Government. He would rather leave the decision of the question where these public batteries should be erected, with the wardens on the fields.

MR. MORAN: What did they know about it?

MR. A. FORREST: If a warden did not know, he would not be fit to hold his position, and the sooner he was got rid of the better.

MR. MORAN: A warden was not there for that purpose. What did the warden at Kalgoorlie know about a mine?

MR. A. FORREST: Just as much as the hon. member, or as any other hon. member. The warden was a man of common sense. He (Mr. Forrest) intended to support the vote, but the officers connected with the Mines Department should exercise the greatest possible care in selecting the places for the erection of the batteries, because if the experiment proved a failure, hon. members would be the first to cry out and say that the batteries were not necessary.

MR. WILSON protested against this item of £30,000 being spent for the erection of public batteries. He wished it to be clearly understood that he was not opposed to the erection of public batteries on the fields, but to the erection of batteries by the Government out of public funds. The money would be much better expended in granting subsidies to private people to erect the batteries where they were required. It had been admitted by every member that this was merely an experiment, and that the Government would have to exercise great care, and extra caution would have to be displayed in selecting managers for these batteries, and in choosing sites. Water must first be discovered in large quantities, and cyanide plants or chlorination plants must be erected, before public batteries would be a success in the slightest degree. It had further been admitted that public batteries as a rule had not paid. What encouragement had this Parliament or the Government to spend £30,000 for erecting works which were dangerous, and only an experiment to begin with? His experience of speculative works was that, when they were erected, the real trouble only began. The cost of the erection was possibly the smallest expense the Government would have to face. Then there were the maintenance of the works and the running of the batteries, and probably mismanagement. He saw nothing but trouble as the outcome of the proposal. Hon. members in favour of this vote said that these batteries should not be erected in settled districts where the mines were producing large quantities of ore and where batteries had already been erected; but the Government must assure themselves that they had a

large supply of ore to keep the batteries working night and day, week in week out, for years to come, or the works would not be successful. This £30,000 would run into hundreds of thousands before the experiment of public batteries had been proved. If the Government were only to erect batteries in such districts where a sufficient quantity of ore was assured, then private enterprise would erect a battery. If the Government would grant a subsidy to be paid at so much per ton for the first 1,000 tons crushed, the Government would get the batteries erected that were required. If private enterprise did not respond, then he would consider the advisability of supporting a vote of this description. There would be a serious danger in reference to the certificates issued. The Government would be bound to give a battery certificate, which would be used for the purpose of floating a mine.

A MEMBER : The certificate would not say where the stone came from.

MR. WILSON moved, as an amendment, that before "public batteries" the words "subsidies for encouraging the erection of" be inserted.

THE CHAIRMAN said he could not accept the amendment.

MR. WILSON : Then he would move that the item be struck out.

MR. LEAKE : There was a diversity of opinion even amongst those who represented the goldfields.

MR. MORAN : Not a bit.

MR. VOSPER : Only in detail.

MR. LEAKE hoped those members who were at variance amongst themselves would not think he was captious in the remarks he was about to make. It was his intention to support the amendment of the member for the Canning. In doing this he did not desire to aim a blow at the goldfields, nor did he desire to check the attempt to develop the goldfields : it was a question only of method. The Government, in placing a sum on the Estimates for the erection of public batteries, thought they were doing the best thing for the development of the goldfields ; but after having listened to the discussion, he (Mr. Leake) was convinced that this was not the best way to develop the industry, nor was it the only way. If the committee passed the vote as it stood, the £30,000 could

only be spent in the erection of batteries. The committee should leave it to the discretion of the Government to expend the money either in the erection of public batteries, or assisting the erection of public batteries, or assisting some other method of gold extraction. The Minister of Mines should not be tied down to the erection of public batteries. He took it that this was another form of encouraging pioneering, but the committee should not bind the Minister to one method. A majority of members were more in favour of the bonus system than the system proposed. No less an authority than the hon. member for Yilgarn (Mr. Oats) had expressed himself in favour of the bonus system. If a bonus were given towards the erection of private batteries, and a fixed maximum charge for the treatment of stone made, a great deal of good would be done. There were very few centres with a battery which would not crush for the public at the present time. He was very much struck by a remark made by the hon. member for the Canning, that if the Government undertook this work it would, of course, clash with private enterprise, and further would be an extra charge on the revenue. These public batteries must be managed and attended to by expert people, and could not be worked as economically as private batteries. Small parcels of stuff would have to be put through separately, and after each crushing there must be a cleaning up ; consequently the up-keep would cause additional expense.

MR. GREGORY : Charge extra for small parcels.

MR. LEAKE : That could be done, of course, but when a matter of this kind was in the hands of the Government, charges would have to be reduced to a minimum. It was declared that there should not be public batteries unless they be made to pay ; but those who used the batteries would clamour for a reduction of prices below a payable amount. These were his reasons for supporting the amendment. He did not ask that this £30,000 should be removed from the Estimates altogether, but that the Government should reinstate the item upon recomittal, and appropriate it to the general development of the goldfields. He supported the amendment, prompted by the most friendly feelings towards the

gold-mining industry. There were eleven members for the goldfields in the House, and only £30,000 for public batteries. Each member would want two or three batteries, and it would cost more than £3,000 to erect and equip a battery. Yilgarn, Coolgardie, Pilbarra, and other districts would probably desire to have public batteries erected; and it would relieve the Government of a great amount of responsibility, if discretion were left to say whether the vote should be applied to public batteries exclusively, or administered in the development of the goldfields generally.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member wanted to strike out the item.

MR. LEAKE: No; he did not want to strike the item out. If it were struck out, it would be only on the understanding that the Estimates were to be re-committed, and the item reinstated under a different heading.

THE PREMIER: This matter was surrounded with a good deal of difficulty, and a good deal of risk, but the country was in a way committed to public batteries. The proposal had been received with favour throughout the whole of the goldfields. In the short session in August last there was almost a chorus of opinion that it was essential the Government should keep their promise. Well, the Government had kept their promise, and now submitted the provision made on the Estimates for that purpose. The Government fully recognised the difficulties and the burden which this proposal placed upon them, because, as the hon. member for the Canning had pointed out, it would not be merely a matter of £30,000, but of a very great deal more. But that stage had now been passed, and everybody connected with the gold industry was in favour of the proposal. It would not do for the Government now to turn round, and "jump Jim Crow" on a public question of this kind. He had been approached by the goldfields members on the matter, and everyone of them realised that the carrying out of the experiment was not all going to be plain sailing—that public batteries would not be a success unless very carefully managed. If success were achieved, the Government would rejoice and probably go further. He had consulted with the goldfields members, and they seemed to

think it advisable to widen the vote a little bit, so as to give the Government more discretion. So far as he was concerned, he did not want too much discretion, because discretion meant responsibility; at the same time he did not want to bind himself down to public batteries, and nothing else. It might be more economical to encourage private enterprise in certain cases in the erection of batteries; and it had been suggested that if he were to add "and subsidies and loans in aid of" after the word "public batteries," that would give the Government an opportunity to assist persons who were ready to engage in the work. In the Pilbarra district, years ago, overtures of this kind were made to the Government; and now, looking back to that time, he thought the request then made ought not to have been refused. The people were willing to erect a battery there, and take a good deal of responsibility, if the Government would assist them with a certain amount, which they offered to repay in time. But that overture from Pilbarra was refused, there being no vote for such an object. An offer of that kind now would do a great deal of good. He was much obliged to the hon. member for the Canning for the way in which he had dealt with this question from a business and commercial point of view. But after all, under existing conditions, the Government could afford to look at this matter, not altogether from a commercial point of view, but rather from an experimental point of view. The prosperity of the country was due to the gold industry, and anything that could be done should be done to encourage persons to raise stone, and obtain gold from it. Under the circumstances, even a rash experiment would be justified. The proposal, if carried out, would not ruin the country; and at any rate, if it was found the step was a wrong one, the Government could stop. This was not an expenditure that was to be altogether unproductive. It was better to keep faith with the people, and spend the £30,000 now, rather than to appear to hesitate about the matter. He only hoped that good men would be got to manage the batteries; but the object in view was worth all the risks that would arise.

MR. HUBBLE: Although not recognised as a goldfields member, yet

there was a gold-mine in his constituency, and he took the same interest in the welfare of the colony as any member of the House.

MR. OLDHAM: How many batteries did the hon. member want?

MR. HUBBLE: Only one. He was trying to float a company in the district to put up a battery for themselves, but if it was not a success the Government would have to be asked for assistance. He certainly approved of the vote as a step in the right direction towards opening up the fields in outlying districts, where there was plenty of labour, but unfortunately no capital, to get the stone crushed. The Government did not put up these batteries with the idea of making a profit out of them. If the interest on the expenditure was returned in the same way as on railways and other public works, there would be every reason to be satisfied. If the expenditure of this £30,000 succeeded in opening up the goldfields to any extent during the next six or twelve months, it would mean the return of many hundreds of thousands of pounds to this colony. He should certainly vote for the item, with the addition proposed by the Premier.

MR. WILSON: While not begrudging the goldfields the sum of £30,000, he was afraid that the expenditure might increase indefinitely, and he had therefore moved that the item be struck out, which motion he now begged to withdraw, as he was satisfied with the Premier's suggestion that discretionary powers be given to the Government.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

THE PREMIER moved, as an amendment, that the words "and subsidies and loans in aid of" be inserted after the word "batteries." This only meant that the Government could subsidise a public battery, or lend money for the purpose of erecting one, or erect a public battery itself.

MR. MORAN: If the Government took that view of the matter, they would be doing themselves an injustice. It ought to be understood that, if they saw their way to erect a public tramway at any centre, they should be able to do it.

MR. MORGANS: The Premier would be defeating the object he had in view, unless he could alter the wording of the amendment so as to permit of the vote

being used for more purposes than the mere erection or subsidising of public batteries.

THE PREMIER said he understood it that way.

MR. MORGANS said he was satisfied.

MR. GREGORY: A little time ago the people of Yerilla collected £1,500 for the purpose, and if the Government would subsidise them to the extent of £1,000 it would facilitate the object they had in view.

MR. KINGSMILL asked if the vote included every form of crushing and prospecting machinery.

THE PREMIER said it included everything that would crush the stone and get the gold out of it, also any cyanide process that would facilitate the extraction of gold.

Amendment (the Premier's) put and passed.

Other items agreed to, and the vote put and passed.

VOTE—*Geological Surveys*, £5,499:

MR. VOSPER said he would like to urge upon the Government the necessity for some systematic collection of the ores of the colony. The geological staff was a very large one for a colony of so small a population, and it was decidedly qualified to do this class of work. Among the items was one of £200 put down for a museum of practical geology. He hardly knew whether this was sufficient. The work of collecting ores from the different parts of the colony was expensive. He thought it ought to be at least £1,000. Unless certain classes of ores were collected at this stage of the colony's history, we should never have the opportunity of collecting them. A few years ago some extraordinary surface ores were found by some private persons, who contributed specimens free of charge to the Museum, and but for their action the Government would have had none. We were working through the higher levels of various complex ores, more or less affected by the action of the atmosphere, which brought about certain complex chemical and mineralogical changes. All the phenomena occurring in connection with these alterations were of the utmost value as clues and guides to future development. If oxidised ores were obtained such as appeared in the mines at Kalgoorlie—oxides of tellurium, for

instance—it was a good indication that there would be tellurides at a greater depth. Unless care were taken to preserve some of these ores, they would be stoped out, and no trace of them would be left. Even if other discoveries of the class of ore to which he had referred were made, there was no guarantee that the conditions were similar. If the Government made a collection of these ores, they would form a valuable reference library: in fact, no library could give so much information as a well arranged case of mineral samples. If the Government intended to undertake the work of instituting a museum of practical geology, let it be done properly. While the Government were establishing a museum of this kind, let them make a complete collection of all the various ores of the colony, and it would pay the Government in the long run. There was no country in the world that presented more interesting features than Western Australia, and the Government should take care that some memorial of each stage of the colony's progress was kept. If six samples of each class of ore were taken the Government would only require to keep one, and the other five samples could be sent away to other museums, and other samples would be sent back in exchange. He urged upon the Government the absolute necessity of increasing the vote so as to do the work thoroughly: it would be an important branch in the education of the people. The Government had a chance of doing a work which no other colony possessed. It was a peculiar fact that, in the collection of ores which the Government had, nearly all the goldfields of the colony were more or less represented, except Kalgoorlie, the principal goldfield of the colony. The fact was that the people of Kalgoorlie had been so busy in making money and doing other things, that they had not thought of sending in specimens to the Government.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he regretted he could not promise to increase this estimate, but he had no doubt the Government Geologist had asked for what he required. The hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) would note with pleasure that the Government were doing more this year than ever before in regard to the geological survey.

Last year this work cost £1,000; this year it was estimated to cost £5,099. The country ought to be geologically examined and mapped, and he hoped the work would continue and be crowned with success. A substantial vote was contributed to the Museum. The Government had always been most anxious to have a really good Museum in Perth, and had taken so much responsibility on this score as even to spend money without authority. He would make a note of what the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie had said, and see whether anything could be done to encourage the further equipment of the Museum. There might be a difficulty at the post office in getting specimens franked through free, but there was no doubt that any specimens delivered to a warden or resident magistrate would be forwarded to the city free of charge. Should there be any difficulty in this matter, he could easily give a direction to have it remedied.

MR. SIMPSON: Mine owners would readily give specimens to the Government Geologist.

THE PREMIER: If that were so, the Government would find means of transit. The thanks of the committee were due to the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie for calling attention to the matter. It had always been the desire of the Government to encourage in every way the geological survey. Any money spent on the geological examination of this territory had repaid the country over and over again, and the Government must not rest satisfied until the whole of the country had been examined and mapped.

MR. VOSPER: Prospectors could get free assays made by Government officials, and it would be a good idea to provide that prospectors sending any stone for assay should send duplicate specimens, with the name of the district in which these were found. In addition to that, the assistant Government Geologist and other officials could be instructed to hand to the warden any specimens on which they might lay their hands.

MR. LEAKE complimented the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie on the suggestions he had made in connection with the geological survey. He (Mr. Leake) would like to ask the Premier whether, in view of the proposed mining exhibition at Coolgardie, steps would be

taken to secure the specimens there shown, with the ultimate idea of sending them to the forthcoming Paris exhibition.

THE PREMIER: That was a very good idea, which would not be lost sight of.

Vote put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

POLICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council, and read a first time.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS PURCHASE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, for the Commissioner of Crown Lands, and read a first time.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the Director of Public Works: Correspondence *re* Drainage of Harvey Agricultural Area.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:25 p.m. till the next Monday evening.

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 13th December, 1897.

Papers presented—Question: Holidays of Locomotive Employees—Question: Water Sellers at Kanowna—Question: Referendum and the Commonwealth Bill—Question: Labour Conditions in Lead, Tin and Copper Mining—Question: Mail Contract, Eastern Colonies—Motion: Leave of Absence—Public Education Bill: first reading—Metropolitan Waterworks Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Fire Brigades Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Crown Lands Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Roads and Streets Closure Bill: third reading—Annual Estimates: Postponement—Dog Act Amendment Bill: consideration of Legislative Council's Amendments: in committee—Underground Surveyors Bill: second reading (moved)—Noxious Weeds Bill: in committee—Registration of Firms Bill: in committee—Agricultural Bureau: Adoption of Select Committee's Report—Municipal Institutions Act Amendment Bill: in committee—Excess Bill: second reading (moved)—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By MR. SPEAKER: Report of Auditor General, 1896-7.

By THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Regulations of Government Railway Service.

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—HOLIDAYS OF LOCOMOTIVE EMPLOYEES.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, for Mr. Vosper, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways:—1. Whether he was aware that since the present Locomotive Superintendent took office there had been many changes made in reference to the holidays granted to men employed under him. 2. Whether he was aware that four or five such alterations had taken place during the period specified. 3. Whether it was true that Class III. of these employees had had their holidays altered from 12 days annually to 7, and that Her Majesty's birthday and Anniversary Day had been taken off the list of paid holidays. 4. Whether the Minister was aware that serious dissatisfaction existed in the Locomotive Department in consequence of these changes. 5. Whether the Minister considered it desirable to substitute a fixed system of granting holidays, instead of leaving the matter at the arbitrary dictation of an officer.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piesse) replied:—1. Shortly after the appointment of the present Locomotive Superintendent, the present regulations governing leave of absence came into force, viz., on 20th August, 1896 (*vide* copy attached). 2. No alterations have since taken place, excepting that as regards the Locomotive Workshops staff, it was found more convenient that leave be taken by all employees at the same time, viz., nine working days from and including the 25th December. 3. Under the previous regulations, 14 days' leave was authorised, but in the revised regulations employees under Class III. are only allowed six days' holiday, and Christmas Day and Good Friday. They are also granted a free pass over the railway for themselves and families. 4. I am not aware of any dissatisfaction, as no complaints have been received from any of the employees. 5. As already stated, holidays