

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 5th December, 1906.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—ABATTOIRS SITE, KALGOORLIE.

MR. BATH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has the site for the abattoirs for Kalgoorlie and district been finally selected? 2, If so, is it the site recommended by Mr. Cairns, the expert, as the best procurable? 3, Have the local governing bodies of the district been consulted in regard to the matter? 4, If not, why not?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: No; but the views of the local authorities and Mr. Cairns are receiving every consideration.

BILL—HOPETOUN-RAVENSTHORPE RAILWAY.

SECOND READING MOVED.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. Price) in moving the second reading said: In introducing this Bill to the House, I am aware that in some quarters there is a prejudice against this railway on account of the fact that very extensive development has taken place recently in the district by various private companies. Personally I fail to see why, if the mining prospects are good, a field like this should not be assisted as other fields have been. We must always remember that without the assistance of outside capital the mines at Kalgoorlie would not have been what they are to-day. This settlement at Ravensthorpe is entirely isolated, and the port of Hopetoun is 34 miles distant. In October last, when Mr. Muir, the railway surveyor of the Public Works Department, was in that locality, he found 500 or 600 tons of cargo, consisting of machinery and perishable food-

stuffs, on the jetty at Hopetoun. Some of it had been lying there many months; in fact, there was a general difficulty in keeping the supplies going between Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun. So acute had this become that one firm had sent to Hopetoun a team of 30 horses, in order to cope with their own consignments. This was in October last. At that time the carting price for general goods was somewhere about £4 a ton. There are considerable quantities of coke required at the smelters at Ravensthorpe. When the Government smelter was running, the last contract for cartage of coke to Ravensthorpe was let at £117s. per ton. Not only is the field rich in gold, but also, as members are aware, there are considerable deposits of copper. This copper field affords exceptional advantages for the construction of the railway, for, unlike a goldfields railway where all the loading is one way, in the case of a railway through a district rich in copper there is considerable back freight in the way of concentrates. In 1905, when the State smelter was running, ore was being purchased from 54 different claims and leases, and it is expected that when the smelter is fully going, by the end of the year it will be capable of smelting 60 to 80 tons of ore a day, requiring a consumption of 10 to 15 tons of coke. This will produce 10 to 15 tons of copper matte for railage to the coast. It is anticipated that this smelter will not be capable of more than fulfilling the requirements of one of the big mines, and probably in the near future other smelters will be running in that locality. The principal mines are the Kundip, the Mt. Benson, the Elverton, the Marion, and the Mary. At the end of 1905, the greatest depth to which the properties had been developed was 200 feet, but since then considerable development has been going on, in some instances to a depth of 250 feet. A number of mines are being more or less prospected over a belt of country 22 miles long. About 13 or 14 miles of the railway will run through mineral country; in fact, traversing the whole of the mineral belt between Kundip and Ravensthorpe. When Mr. Muir was there last September there were dozens of shows being worked by three or four men, and it was then estimated

that there were something like 2,000 or 3,000 tons of ore at grass. Since then the development which has been going on has very materially increased the output. The present road from Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe is something over 30 miles long. Not two miles of that road is made; the rest is bush track, totally and absolutely unsuitable for the conveyance of heavy loads to and from Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe. It is estimated that to make this road through to the coast would cost something like £1,000 a mile, almost two-thirds of the cost of the construction of the railway. The fact that this line is an advantageous one for the Government to construct is proved from the fact that several offers have been received for its construction, one or two on the most favourable terms.

MR. A. J. WILSON: What are the terms?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister for Mines will explain, later on. A careful estimate has been made of the traffic backwards and forwards at the present date between Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, and it is estimated that it amounts to at least 170 to 180 tons every week. The population of the district as shown in the table which has been distributed to members, is somewhere about one thousand souls. In the vicinity of Ravensthorpe is a large area of cultivable land. When Mr. Muir was there he found one thousand acres under crop, and also in the locality large areas of good pastoral land. Returning from Ravensthorpe to Broomehill, across country, Mr. Muir in his report draws attention to the fact that from Ravensthorpe westward there is an auriferous belt of country some 100 miles long which has been very little prospected, and he thinks that in the near future some very favourable propositions may be located. In connection with this railway, as with all other railways, there had to be a certain discrimination exercised in selection of route. Four propositions presented themselves to the Government. First of all there was a possible railway which might have been run from Broomehill on the Great Southern line eastward to Ravensthorpe. The distance between these two points was something like 200 miles, and only 40 miles of the railway would have run through good country;

so that on the whole this route was turned down. Then we had a possible line from Doubtful Island Bay to Ravensthorpe. Doubtful Island Bay is I believe one of the best harbours on the southern coast, and had that harbour been nearer to Ravensthorpe than Hopetoun is, or even only a little farther away, no doubt the Government would have very seriously considered the construction of a railway between these two points. However, in view of the fact that every mine in the locality in its earliest stages is more or less of a speculation, and that every railway constructed to a new mining field is more or less of a speculation, it was felt that the distance of 75 miles from Doubtful Island Bay to Ravensthorpe as against 34 miles from Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe was too much, and that the building of the railway from the former port was not warranted. Another suggestion was that Starvation Boat Harbour, distant 40 miles from Ravensthorpe, should be the port; but in view of the fact that the harbour facilities there are no better than those existing at Hopetoun, it was decided to propose to Parliament that construction should take place from Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe. In connection with these various harbours or seaport termini of this suggested railway, I may mention that an examination has been made by the Chief Harbour Inspector, Captain Irvine, and that, everything considered, he is of opinion that Hopetoun, in view of the shortness of the route to Ravensthorpe, is an eminently suitable point from which to start the railway to Ravensthorpe. The line from Hopetoun follows the coach and telegraph route to Kundip, some 19 miles from Ravensthorpe; thence it runs along the Steere Valley to the Elverton group of mines, 25 miles from Ravensthorpe; thence from Desmond Range to the smelter, some 30 miles from the township of Ravensthorpe. In connection with Mr. Muir's visit, I have a report which I think will probably be of great interest to the House, and which I shall read. Referring to the belt of country which runs westward from Ravensthorpe towards the Great Southern Railway, he says:—

One noticeable feature of this country struck me, and that was the existence of an

auriferous belt, running practically parallel, and a few miles north from the line of my inspection, and extending from Ravensthorpe westward for about 100 miles. This line of country has not been prospected to any extent, and it may yet possibly prove of sufficient importance to warrant a railway line on its own merits.

Dealing with the proposition as a whole, he states:—

As to the necessity of connecting Ravensthorpe with some port by rail, there can be no two opinions about the matter. It is, in my opinion, a safe proposal, giving every promise of turning out a good investment from the start. The line of auriferous country prospected and proved extends from Kundip to Ravensthorpe, a distance of some 14 miles. On this line there are dozens of shows, all of great promise. The Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company have spent about £100,000 during the last 18 months in development works and machinery, and are prepared, I understand, to go considerably farther. Numerous prospectors too, who have now tons of ore lying at grass waiting for the smelter to start, take a very optimistic view of the future prospects of the field. There is, moreover, a considerable area of good agricultural land in the vicinity of Ravensthorpe, estimated by a local resident to amount to some 30,000 or 40,000 acres. In fact, to judge by reports and present appearances, this field promises to become within a very short period a great copper-producing district. Now as regarding the best means of developing the field, Doubtful Island Bay, which would make a splendid harbour, is some 75 miles distant. The cost of railway connection, including jetty accommodation, would amount to about £120,000. Hopetoun is some 30 miles distant from Ravensthorpe, where, however, accommodation could be provided for small vessels only, say of 500 tons burden. This port could be connected by rail, with the additional necessary jetty accommodation, for £60,000.

He proceeds to say:—

It is undoubtedly expedient that something should be done, and that in the near future, and I would, pending farther developments, recommend the lesser expenditure, that is the adoption of Hopetoun as the port for the time being for the Ravensthorpe fields. I would ask you to bring under the Minister's notice the urgent necessity for some action to be taken in regard to this matter, and would farther recommend that the permanent survey of the railway be put in hand at once.

That survey is well in hand and approaching completion. I certainly think, in view of the fact that the people settled at Ravensthorpe—and there is, as many members know, a considerable population at that place—they are entitled to some more up-to-date means of communication

between that town and the coast than they now possess in the bush track. I submit that here the question is one of choice between a railway and a road to connect the two places. I am given to understand that the present road for a great portion of its length runs over clayey soil, and in winter is practically impassable. In addition, there is close to the town of Hopetoun some two or three miles of sand which has to be negotiated, and which forms a severe obstacle to the carriage of large loads between the port and the field. In view of the fact that the road would cost within two-thirds of the cost of the railway I think the House need have no hesitation—

MR. HOLMAN: The road is not too bad.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: At this time of the year the road is not too bad, but undoubtedly during winter considerable difficulty exists in many places.

MR. HOLMAN: It should be better in the winter, because it is sandy.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am informed to the contrary—that a large portion of the road is of a clayey nature, and in winter becomes almost impassable. In regard to the cartage question, I see it is estimated that on 3,151 tons already carted between Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe to the smelter, the saving would have amounted to £3,361 had a railway been through. There is in addition the saving which would have resulted from a railway to the people of the district generally. That is estimated to amount to at least £2,500 annually, equal to 4 per cent. on a capital cost of £62,000. The State Mining Engineer, Mr. Montgomery, has shown that the construction of a railway would save on coke and matte a sum of £3 11s. 6d. per ton, equivalent to 8½d. per unit, or 24 per cent. of the total charges on a ton of copper. A similar saving would be effected in the case of timber, machinery, firebricks, and smelter supplies. There is no doubt that in this locality extensive development, by a company which is strong financially, is proceeding, and from the method in which that company's works have been undertaken, there is every indication that the field will be thoroughly developed.

MR. HOLMAN: The company is trying to cut down wages.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not now dealing with the question of wages; I am dealing with the prospects of the place as a mining proposition. I am not here to advocate or to uphold the methods of the company, or to condemn them. The question before the House is whether this is a field rich in minerals and one affording a fair prospect of a payable railway. The question is, farther, whether it is a fair thing, in view of the settlement already existing and the development actually in process, as well as the development likely to take place in the near future, that in the interests of the whole of this State the field should be thoroughly developed by means of a railway such as I have described. Near Ravensthorpe is a fair quantity of timber, but a difficulty is that for the first 20 or 30 miles it would cost a few pence more to use local sleepers than to use sleepers shipped to Hopetoun. I have no doubt that in the course of his remarks the Minister for Mines will add materially to what I have already said regarding the prospects of the field from a mineral point of view, but I think I have made it clear that no insuperable difficulties exist in the way of railway construction, that the choice is absolutely one between a railway and a road, that a fair amount of settlement has taken place, that there is likely to be farther development, and that a fair case has been presented for a railway from which the whole of the State will benefit.

MR. A. J. WILSON: It is only a light line?

THE MINISTER: Yes.

[A pause ensued.]

MR. HOLMAN: We have heard nothing about the railway yet.

MR. C. A. HUDSON (Dundas): Perhaps the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) and some other members may wish to know a little more about this line. If the hon. member had looked through the list supplied to him by the Government he might perhaps have got the particulars he requires. Then, if he wished farther information yet, it would perhaps have been as well for him to pro-

ceed with the debate, and he could subsequently have been supplied with the details which he might suggest as needed by him. Undoubtedly the line is warranted by the development which has taken place on the Phillips River Goldfield. That goldfield is an isolated one, but is likely to become one of the best in the State; because the products of the field are not confined to one class of metal. The principal products are gold and copper. The figures given on the sheet show what development has taken place, and I am quite convinced that those figures rather understate the present position of affairs. The amount given as the output, £97,376, although a very good return in view of the life of the field—it has been in existence a little under six years—I think underestimate the value of the metals sent from that field. The chief difficulty which arose with regard to the construction of a line was the selection of a port, but that difficulty has been overcome now in a measure by the adoption of Hopetoun. No doubt some hon. members were of opinion that an attempt was to be made to have a line built from Ravensthorpe to Starvation Boat Harbour, and that the construction of a line from that port would perhaps favour an individual. Apparently, that was the idea prevailing in the mind of Mr. Kaufman, who issued in London a circular mentioning that he had been promised a line from Ravensthorpe to Starvation Boat Harbour. Now if it is in the minds of members that this line is in the nature of a favour to the Phillips River Gold Mining Company, I think any such idea must be dissipated when it is found that the line which Mr. Kaufman proposed to get, and which he put before his shareholders in London, is not the line now proposed by the Government. The line suggested in Mr. Kaufman's circular was a line from Ravensthorpe to Starvation Boat Harbour, which would have opened up a new port, and possibly would have given great advantages to the company if the company had the control of the port and the land about it. However, luckily that has been stopped, and the Government have taken the right step in choosing the port of Hopetoun as the coastal terminus of this proposed railway. I have no sympathy

whatever with the Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company in their endeavours, as has been suggested and as we saw in the papers yesterday, to cut down the wages of their men. I deprecate any attempt on their part in that direction, but they will be dealt with and the men will be fully protected. I wish to inform the House that the line is not to be built to provide for the resources of the Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company. The Minister stated that there were 34 propositions supplying ore to the Government smelter. I may tell the House that not more than ten of those propositions are under the control of the Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company, so that of the mines in operation prior to the closing of the Government smelter there are 24 that have no connection with the company, and others have been opened up since that are not in the hands of the company. The line therefore cannot be said to be serving only the Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company. Perhaps a short description of the route would give the House some idea of the nature of the country to be served, and of the nature of the track. Starting from the proposed port of Hopetoun, the journey is for 16 miles over sandy country. I was recently urging the construction of a road through that sand, and I had an estimate made of the probable cost. The reports went to show that it would cost more than £1,000 per mile, and as a matter of fact three miles of road made through that sand from the coast actually cost a shade over £1,000 per mile; and there are 16 miles of sand to be crossed. The other end of the road is through land which is of a loamy nature, which makes a bad road in winter.

MR. HOLMAN: Every other road in the bush is the same.

MR. HUDSON: I have travelled many times in the bush, and I have seen all kinds of roads. They are not the same all over the world as they are at Ravensthorpe. I have seen a great variety of roads in the bush; in fact, on this short road there is a great variety. For the first 16 miles it is sandy, very bad in summer, and not too good in winter. An ordinary six-horse team going out from the coast takes half a load a short distance through the sand,

unloads, and goes back for the other half; and so they get over the road by stages. That accounts for the high cost of cartage along the road to Ravensthorpe. When they get through the 16 miles of sand they reach a place called Kundip, where there is a settlement that has been about four years in existence, and now maintaining a population of over 200 people. The mines there are principally gold mines, and are nearly all prospecting shows; all except two, which are held by companies distinct from the company I have previously mentioned. There are two small batteries there, certainly not of the best kind; and I think the number of leases taken up in and around Kundip is between 30 or 40. The people at Kundip are mostly men working on the mines. There are very few families, though families have been settling there during the last six months. I am speaking more particularly of the condition of the place at the time of my last visit at the end of last summer. There is farming north of Kundip, around the township of Ravensthorpe, and there is a continuous belt of mineral country for 30 miles north, with copper and gold shows. These have been fully described in the Press for the last six months, and must be well known to members, so that I need not go through the full list of them. Following on the route to Ravensthorpe we pass through land to make a road through which would cost more than £1,000 per mile, though the country is not sandy. This is because there are some bad places, and bridges would need to be built. At present the teams have some pretty high grades to overcome. Generally speaking, as regards a comparison between road and railway, I think there would be very little difference in the cost, and of course the facilities given by a railway are ever so much greater than those afforded by a metalled road. The fact that the district has produced £100,000 worth of gold as well as copper—the figures are given as £97,000, but my figures are up to date—the fact also of there being timber to the north and that there are gold propositions being worked as far as 50 miles north of Ravensthorpe, and that the country to the north will be opened up and is being opened up by prospectors, and will no doubt help to feed the Ravens-

thorpe district—all these facts should be taken into consideration. The Minister has described the agricultural resources of the place so that I do not need to enlarge upon them, but I have seen some excellent country there and very good crops. There is a good rainfall of about 16 to 18 inches, and altogether it is an ideal spot. The population has increased so rapidly during the last 12 months, and is likely to go on increasing, that a railway will be an absolute necessity for the carriage of the people and for the cartage of the goods to supply to them at Ravensthorpe. Machinery will be required not only by the Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company, but by other companies and prospectors working in and around Ravensthorpe, and cartage of some kind will have to be provided for this machinery. A railway will afford great advantages. The route is only 30 to 32 miles, and as a railway would serve so many people and open up such a large belt of country producing gold and copper, I commend the Bill to the House and I hope that it will pass its second reading.

MR. HOLMAN: I move "That the debate be adjourned."

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	10
Noes	24
Majority against				14

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Bolton
Mr. Bath	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Collier	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Daglish	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Holman	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Walker	Mr. Gull
Mr. Ware	Mr. Hicks
Mr. A. J. Wilson	Mr. Horan
Mr. Heitmann (Teller).	Mr. Hudson
	Mr. Illingworth
	Mr. Keenan
	Mr. Layman
	Mr. McLarty
	Mr. Mitchell
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. Piesse
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stuart
	Mr. Underwood
	Mr. Vervard
	Mr. Hardwick (Teller).

Motion thus negatived.

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Katauning): I have heard the remarks made in reference

to this railway by the member for the district. I have not had an opportunity of travelling between Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe; but I had an opportunity recently of seeing Ravensthorpe and some of its mining propositions, and I know from the information I have gained through the people engaged in trade in that district how difficult it is to convey goods from the port of Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe. The high cost entailed is a great deterrent to successful development; and when we come to take into consideration the fact that there is no doubt as to the success of the mining ventures, it seems to me that the money should be found to build this particular railway. We have already had information placed before us from the professional adviser of the Government who recently visited the district.

MR. BATH: Who?

HON. F. H. PIESSE: Mr. Muir, and his report was read to the House, or some extracts from it—I take it that it was read almost entirely, or at least all parts relating to the construction of the line. An estimate has been given of the cost, and that includes the extension of the jetty, or providing sufficient accommodation to carry on the trade that must result. I can bear out everything that has been said by the member for Dundas in reference to the road, having travelled through about nine miles of the clay portion of it during the winter months. I can assure members even with three horses in a buggy it took me nearly three hours to accomplish those nine miles. I have not seen, even in the worst days of the goldfields, so bad a road. The clay is of such a sticky nature that it adheres to the wheels and accumulates on the felloes, making a great width, thus retarding the traffic considerably. The other portion of the road, from my knowledge of the coastal district, consists of sandy dunes, very steep, consequently it would be very expensive to make roads through those dunes. We had experience of that in Esperance, where we had some miles of that country, and in my day it cost a considerable sum in opening up the road towards Norseman. As to the mining township itself, although I am not an expert, still I am an observer, and I had an opportunity of visiting several of the mines. I do not intend to

deal particularly with these mines which have reached such a stage of development, and which are known to belong to the company which recently acquired these mines. I may say, in my opinion, so far as the development is concerned, these mines will make a satisfactory return to the country. I wish more particularly to allude to the many small mines in the district from Kundip towards Ravensthorpe and beyond Ravensthorpe. These small shows will ultimately develop into larger mines and prove profitable ventures. The owners should be considered, and means provided for the development of the mines. The statement which has been made by the Minister in moving the second reading of the Bill, and indorsed afterwards by the member for the district, goes to show that there is every prospect of a very good gold-mining centre in this neighbourhood. I may say that the copper shows that I did see gave every promise, and I had an opportunity of going down two of them, one of which has been taken down some 200 feet with an ore body 18 feet in width on an average, and as to which I was told by persons whose information I have every reason to believe that the ore taken from these mines in its crude state is worth £18 a ton. It was more in the form of an immense quarry, although well defined. There are lots of shows where one can see a large quantity of ore will be taken out at a small cost, in comparison with the working of mines in other places which we know of. I am not generally enthusiastic in regard to gold-mining or mining generally, knowing how many disappointments we have suffered in the past in many promising goldfields centres on the Eastern fields and other places; but with the evidence before me of the extensive copper deposits, and with the evidence also that these deposits can be worked at so low a cost, and with the advantages of smelting which are provided, and the opportunity for small men, it seems to me we are fully justified in doing our best to open up this district. I think too there are other propositions which will follow in the wake of those now being developed as soon as communication is given to the coast. I am sure that the proposal now made is one which is justified by the results I my-

self saw. By the reports received from time to time, and if members have watched the progress of this field, it will have been found that not only are these fields rich in copper but gold-mining shows, and the other mines are being developed and have turned out very satisfactory to the owners. These mines are situated in a most promising position, nearly 35 or 40 miles taking the extent of them now known from the coast, and they are in a most favoured locality as to climate. There is surrounding the town of Ravensthorpe a large area of land suitable for cultivation, and I saw the results of that cultivation. The successful growing of crops is assured by the regular rainfall; and the soil being most productive, I quite expect a very large quantity of produce in the shape of hay, and oats if need be, for the requirements of the people in that locality. Members will see it is an ideal mining centre, with the mining prospects so far developed, proving that it is likely to be lasting, so that in making the proposal the Government are now doing they are justified by past results; and the future is shown by the returns from the mineral experts to be almost assured, or as assured as we are likely to see in reference to mining fields in general. Notwithstanding the fact that other proposals may meet with objection from members, and the information given may not be satisfactory in their opinion, yet I am satisfied with the information given in this case, and I am more than satisfied with the opportunity I have had of seeing the mines myself. I am not a mining man, I have not spent one shilling in mining, having enough to do to look after my interests in another sphere, but I have a knowledge of things in general, and having seen with my own eyes what is indisputable, I can give my opinion to the House. Whether it will convey much weight I do not know; still I can say what I think of the prospects of the field. I have every confidence in this case and have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

MR. J. B. HOLMAN (Murchison): We were given a direct promise by the Government that ample opportunity would be given of looking into these Railway Bills; but the first opportunity

the Government have they break that promise, which was made in a sacred manner. I came away to-day without my notes on this measure, and I asked that the debate be adjourned to give me an opportunity of getting those notes. That has been denied me, and the only excuse is that the Government desire to force the railway on the country at the present time when there is no warrant for the construction of the line. It is rather awkward for one having to speak off-hand on a matter like this, when I have been preparing for this question for some time. Had I an opportunity, and had the Government treated me in a fair and impartial manner, I would have brought special information to the House, showing that the railway is not warranted. The members of the Government may have some reason of their own why the railway line should not be discussed on its merits. In the first place we had the Minister for Works speaking for ten minutes in introducing this line, and almost the whole of that time was taken up in reading extracts from the report of Mr. Muir, and several extracts from the report of Mr. Montgomery. In connection with a matter like this, more information should be forthcoming than that which has been given in favour of the construction of an important work like this. It may be said the prospects of the field warrant the construction of the line. I am of opinion that the prospects of the district do not warrant the expenditure of more money in that part of the country until we see some returns from the money which has already been expended there. Nowhere has so much Government money been spent in assisting development as in this locality and so little return received as from the Phillips River Goldfield. Since that district was opened up, thousands of pounds of public money have been spent in that district in assisting the people to develop the country and open up that district. I do not cavil at that; I say that the Government should assist people to develop their industry; but no Government without definite information and without being able to supply information to the House should decide to construct a railway which is not warranted. What is the position? The Phillips River Goldfield has been worked for six years,

and the total return of the yields from that field is less than £170,000. Now we are asked to spend £60,000 in the construction of a railway line to that place; that is on the top of the expenditure of thousands of pounds which have been absolutely thrown away in connection with assistance in developing the fields in that part of the State. It is a disgrace to the Government to refuse to allow a member to produce any information which he may have. In all probability there is some motive behind the Government that compels them to do this. Promises made to a private individual who is now in the old country as far back as June last must be kept; but those promises which are given to members are not held sacred, and members have been refused an opportunity of discussing this measure. That is only in keeping with the tactics of the Government during the whole of their career: it has been a policy of gag and forcing measures through the Chamber without an opportunity of discussing them. Are we warranted in spending a sum of between £50,000 and £60,000 in constructing a railway line from Ravensthorpe to Hopetoun when we have received so little return from that part of the State? The Minister for Works said it is a field rich in gold. The total return of gold during the past six years, that is the whole of the gold from the Phillips River field, is only 22,000 ounces. It is absurd to talk of a place which has been worked for six years and returns that amount of gold, and with the large number of men being employed in that district, as being a success.

HON. F. H. PIESSE: There is plenty of gold there.

MR. HOLMAN: There is plenty of gold, and there is plenty of gold in other parts of Western Australia where people cannot obtain a penny of Government money to help in opening up the country. I say the fact that they have to pay about £3 per ton cartage from Hopetoun to Ravensthorpe should not be taken so much into consideration, seeing there are other goldfields which have to pay as much as £10 per ton at the present time. Talk about the roads at Hopetoun! In the district I represent I have myself seen teams hung up for four and five weeks, and unable to get through with

provisions for the men in the outlying camps. In Black Range only a few weeks ago, after an inch of rain, the whole of the teams carrying provisions and machinery were hung up at once. Why is not a railway line constructed to Black Range, which has produced far more than the whole of the Phillips River district? The reason is that Mr. Kaufman, who is speculating and using his position and the position of other people to fill his own pocket at the expense of the mining industry of this State by booming up and running up the district there, has got a promise of a railway which is not yet warranted. That is the reason why this line is being constructed.

MINISTERS: No.

MR. HOLMAN: We are also told by the Minister for Works that these mines are being developed, and then he tells us that the deepest mine is 250 feet down.

MR. HUDSON: Copper.

MR. HOLMAN: Is that the sort of development? Why, it is not deep enough for a cellar! Letters in my possession received from the Phillips River district during the past few days from practical men state that a permanent lode has never yet been secured in that district. The lodes being worked are not permanent. That is the information I have from sources which I believe in preference to the information that has been read out by the Minister for Works tonight. We have been told in times past that carriers at Ravensthorpe—

MR. FOULKES: You do not rely on Mr. Montgomery's report?

MR. HOLMAN: I do not rely on Mr. Montgomery's report. I have read too many of his reports about places I know myself.

MR. FOULKES: Why do you rely on his report with regard to the Norseman field, then?

MR. HOLMAN: I am not relying on his report with regard to Norseman. I was down in that district, I dare say, before Mr. Montgomery was ever in the State, and I have had 20 years' practical experience of mining; so that I have a little knowledge of what I am talking about.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: If you had 100 years' experience it would make no difference.

MR. HOLMAN: Perhaps it would make no difference.

MR. BATH: It would not make any difference to the Minister for Mines.

MR. HOLMAN: It would make no difference with him, but the fact that Mr. Kaufman had a few years' experience in boodling shows in Western Australia might have made some difference to the Minister for Mines in this case.

PERSONAL CONTENTION.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I desire that the hon. member should explain that remark.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (to Mr. Holman): Say what you mean.

MR. HOLMAN: What I say inside or outside the House I am prepared to stand by.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member must be asked to withdraw, or to say what he does mean. He says that Mr. Kaufman has some knowledge of boodling inside this House and outside of it.

MR. HOLMAN: I did not say that.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It was a most offensive remark. The hon. member must go farther.

MR. BATH: He did not say that at all. If you would only tie up your tongue it would—

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Oh, the hon. member is always ready with something offensive.

MR. HOLMAN: If the Minister for Mines had got up and given us some information there would have been an opportunity to reply; but I was refused the opportunity of getting information.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

MR. HOLMAN: I moved for the adjournment of the debate.

MR. SPEAKER: I did not understand the hon. member to reflect on the Minister. The hon. member made some reference, but unless it can be shown to have some bearing on the Minister or any other member of the Government, or on the Government as a whole, I cannot ask him to withdraw.

MR. HOLMAN: I was referring to the fact that I have had 20 years' practical experience in mining, 14 years of the time on West Australian goldfields, when the Minister remarked that if I had had a hundred years' experience it would have

made no difference; and then I made another remark which seemed to fit him very well.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I want to know whether the hon. member wished that remark to refer to me. If so, I want it withdrawn immediately.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. member reflected on the Minister for Mines, he must withdraw immediately.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I should like to know what the hon. member referred to in making that offensive remark, that Mr. Kaufman had a knowledge of boodling both inside and outside the House?

DEBATE.

MR. HOLMAN: I did not say that Mr. Kaufman has a knowledge of boodling inside the House, and I hope no man of that class will ever know the inside of a House of Parliament in the State of Western Australia. I say unhesitatingly that the fact that Mr. Kaufman went down into the Phillips River district and bought properties for twenty odd thousand pounds, and floated them in the old country, where their market value at the present time stands at $1\frac{1}{4}$ millions, shows that he is using his position for all it is worth. During past years, indeed, he has been working his position to the utmost possible extent. Up to the present, the total production of gold and copper from the Ravensthorpe field has amounted to only £160,000. This leads me to say that Mr. Kaufman is using unfair means of flotation and boodling as regards the people of Western Australia and the people of the old country, using means that are altogether unfair. How is it possible for that field, which has returned a total of only £169,000 in gold and copper during the last six years, to pay a fair rate of interest on a capitalisation of £1,250,000 and also pay the working expenses as well? I say it is absurd. In my opinion, the field at the present time does not warrant the construction of a railway. The promise of the construction of the railway given to Mr. Kaufman assisted him in boodling and in making a lot of money in the old country at the expense of the mining industry of this State. We are told that the development of the mines in that district amounts to 250 feet. We

have seen no report from the Mines officials on the field. We have had no report from Mr. Maitland, the Government Geologist, who is one of the best men that could possibly have been sent down there. I maintain that before this railway was considered in the House, that gentleman's report should have been furnished, and it should have been a late report. His opinion ought to have been available before we considered the measure. We are told that no made road exists in that part of the State, between Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe. Why, the same thing obtained on the whole of the goldfields of Western Australia, on every one of them.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is there no difference in the rainfall?

MR. HOLMAN: There is this difference as regards the rainfall: when an inch of rain falls on any part of the Murchison field, teams are hung up for weeks on end. We had that experience at Black Range only a month ago.

MR. GULL: After one inch of rain?

MR. HOLMAN: Barely an inch, or little over an inch. It came down all at once.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Three inches.

MR. GULL: One inch should not stop a team.

MR. HOLMAN: The fact has been published time after time. I refer to a bush track. Next, a statement is made by the Minister that several private offers were made to construct the line. Why is no information given to the House on those? We have farther been told that the conditions of the offers were very favourable. Why are we not told who made the offers and what the conditions are? It is just the very same thing as occurred when Mr. Rason moved the second reading of the Collic-Boulder Railway Bill. He gave the House no information whatever on that Bill. I say we have not yet had any information as to the reason why this line should be constructed. It is true we have had a few remarks from the Minister for Works.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Was a recommendation for the construction of this line ever made to the Cabinet that you were a member of? Was a recom-

mentation made by one of your own Ministers?

MR. HOLMAN: I do not care. I satisfy myself before I give my approval to a work.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Was a recommendation made?

MR. HOLMAN: The fact that a recommendation was made by a Minister would not influence me. Why should that weigh with me now at all? The fact that the Minister for Mines of that time had seen the field would not influence me. I should want to be satisfied myself that the railway is wanted. The fact that a recommendation was made to the Cabinet of which I may have been a member is no reason why this Ministry should come down with a proposal to construct the line, and force the proposal through the House after giving no information and allowing no opportunity for the bringing forward of information ending to prove that the line ought not to be constructed.

OPPOSITION MEMBER: The Government had the smelting works at that time.

MR. HOLMAN: Yes; the Government had the smelting works at that time. Mr. Kaufman was not there at that time, nor could Mr. Kaufman have got the smelter on the same terms as he has got it on since. In connection with the savings to be made, we have been told by the Minister for Works that the cost of cartage to Ravensthorpe is some £4 per ton.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That was bargained. It is about £1 17s. per ton now.

MR. HUDSON: That is a special price. The ordinary price, according to a telegram I received yesterday, is £3 15s.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That was the last Government contract.

MR. HOLMAN: Whom are we to believe? The Minister says one thing, and the member for the district another.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I said the last Government contract was for £1 17s.

MR. HOLMAN: General cartage has been mentioned. Coke is a specially bad article, for the bulkier an article is the more is charged for it.

MEMBER: What about chaff?

MR. HOLMAN: Chaff is always bargained a higher rate per load than any

other goods. We are told there would be a great saving on the whole of the cartage, and we are told that 3,000 tons have been carted on behalf of the Government alone. But we know what that 3,000 tons was. It was a smelter and fuel, and that work is not going to be repeated for some considerable time. At any rate, the work in the contract has all been done; and, barring the carting of a little coke, timber, necessary provisions, and a little machinery, very little carting will be needed for some considerable time.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: What about coke for the smelter?

MR. HOLMAN: The smelter has not started working yet, and we do not know when it will start. I hope, if Mr. Kaufman pursues the same principle as in the Phillips River district, where he has tried to reduce wages below a living wage, that the smelter never will start, to suit Mr. Kaufman's book. The Minister for Mines remarked that there is timber near the line. Several parts of the State have been asking for railways, parts of the State that have returned hundreds of thousands of pounds. They have asked for wood lines, for example, and for other lines; but they have received no consideration at all. The people of Cue have been asking for a wood line for some considerable time. The mines of Cue and Day Dawn have been suffering from the fact that they cannot get fuel or mining timber. What consideration have they received? None whatever.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: How long is it since the wood line was asked for?

MR. HOLMAN: The people of Cue asked for the wood line long before the James Government were in power, and, I believe, when the Minister for Mines went up there once he gave a half-promise of the line.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Nothing of the sort.

MR. HOLMAN: A request was made for a wood line when the present Premier was on tour inquiring into the timber industry, not only as regards this part of the State, but as regards other parts as well. That request has been several times repeated. What consideration have the people received? None whatever. We have the member for the district

stating that the line was warranted by the development of the field; but there is no development of the field. The field is only in the prospecting stage, and there has been in that part of the State no discovery of a permanent lode; that is, provided the information I have received from persons able to give good information is correct. The Ravensthorpe people are working mines where the reefs and ore are very small. The lodes are worked for a certain time, and then they cut out. I have not been in the district myself, but I have tried to get all possible information, and that is the effect of it. Take the products of the field and the possibilities of the field. Why, during the last few years the yields have been decreasing! That is so beyond a doubt; the returns of the Mines Department show it. The latest return I have from the Mines Department in connection with the Phillips River field is somewhat similar to the returns I desire to have at present brought up to date. However, in the circumstances I maintain that the railway is in no way warranted. Next, as to cartage to the field and the total number of shows already at work, the number of men at work on the field at the present time does not in any way warrant the building of a railway, and the prospect of a large number of men starting in that part of the State in the near future is remote indeed; in fact, present informations goes to show that there are a considerable number of unemployed in that part of the State. We see that on the first possible chance the big company, the company for whom this railway is being built, is trying to reduce wages; and when we know that the company, if it could sell its property at the present market valuation, would clear nearly a million and a quarter of money. This shows the means the company will stoop to for robbing the working-men of a paltry shilling a day. The member for the district (Mr. Hudson) urged that there were 16 miles of sand along the road and a certain amount of clay. In the district I represent there are two roads between two centres, one 120 miles in length, the other between 140 and 150 miles; and in addition there are some ten or 12 other roads in all directions, some of them 50 or 60 miles in length, and in every one

are clay and sand patches; so when it rains all these roads become impassable. The member for Katanning (Mr. Piessé) said it took three horses three hours to drag a buggy a distance of nine miles. I have seen a whole team taken out and harnessed to a buggy that had got bogged, and the whole team could not haul that buggy out, though they pulled the shafts clean away and left the buggy behind. The member for the district said that I could not have travelled many roads. I think that for the one mile of goldfields roads the hon. member has travelled, I have travelled fifty, perhaps a hundred. I have travelled every gold field road in Western Australia with the exception of those in the North-West and one or two in the Phillips River part. I think I have a better knowledge of the goldfields roads of Western Australia than any other member of the House; and I say that the whole of the goldfields roads are in a bad state, and when the weather is at all wet they become impassable. In some cases there are 15 or 20 miles of heavy sand in spinifex country. Yet in the case before us, only some 30 miles of carting is required and we have to remember that the total amount produced on that field would no more than pay the cost of constructing the line, if the whole of the money were expended in that direction. I would like to ask what the Government are going to do in regard to other parts of the gold fields. We are told that, comparatively speaking, the Phillips River field is new that it has only been worked for the last six years, and that its prospects at the present time may be considered bright. I hope it will turn out one of the best copper-fields in Australasia, let alone in Western Australia—I would be only too pleased to believe that such will be the case—but I have information which shows that the prospects of the field are none too bright, and that it has only been boosted by a man whom it pays to boost it to the highest point, Mr. Kaufman. We are told by the member for Katanning that he has been to that part of the State and has seen the gold mines; but I prefer to be guided by information obtained from practical men [Hon. F. H. PIESSÉ: I said "copper." We will take the copper returns for that district. I do not know exactly how

many thousands of pounds have been spent by the Government in the construction of the smelter, but I do know that only £72,000 worth of copper has been produced during the last six years; and we have now a proposition to spend £50,000 or £60,000 in the construction of a railway to a field the prospects of which are so poor.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Mr. Kaufman is prepared to build the line.

MR. HOLMAN: I have heard that statement made once or twice before; but it has been only a statement. If Mr. Kaufman went to the old country and told the company he represents that it would have to build the railway line, then the market value of that company's property would not be so high as it is to-day. It was only on the assurance given to the company by Mr. Kaufman that the present Ministry had promised to build the line in the near future that he was able to boost up the property in the way he did. It would pay Mr. Kaufman to build the line, even if he had to spend £50,000; because during its construction he could be unloading his stock, and at the end we would find that the investors had been left with a "baby" to nurse, while Mr. Kaufman would have his pockets full. I do not want to see any individual benefiting himself in this way at the expense of genuine investors and at the expense of the good name of this State. As I said before, as soon as the value of a property is bolstered up on the London market, if such property is not returning a fair percentage on the money value, the first thing the owners try to do is to reduce wages. We have had an early experience in this connection of the class of person Mr. Kaufman is; for before starting smelting at all, he has tried to reduce wages by 1s. or 2s. a day; and it is a disgrace that the Government should assist an individual like that who tries to bring down wages and to bring down the industry. We have heard a lot about the high cost of cartage in that part of the State. The cost of cartage to Peak Hill at the present time is £8 or £9 a ton, and to Wiluna it is about the same; yet those places cannot get any consideration from the Government. I asked that a well be sunk on a 20-mile sandpatch on the road to Wiluna, on which the horses, after the

teams had gone eight or nine miles, had to be taken back that distance and watered. That was refused. For what reason? Almost as many men are on Wiluna as there are at Ravensthorpe, men who are working and opening up the district without companies to assist them; but because they are legitimate prospectors no consideration is shown them. Yet we find that Mr. Kaufman, who would be making a million and a quarter, providing he disposed of his property at its present market price, can get a railway for the asking. The time has arrived when the spending of loan moneys in that direction should be at an end, and when the legitimate prospectors of this State should be assisted in a manner that will best open up the industry. Why should those people who have borne the heat and burden of the day for the last 12 or 14 years—the workers at Peak Hill have been developing the country for the past 14 years—not be able to get any assistance at all? The track to Peak Hill which at the present time is not too good in many parts, covers a distance of 120 miles, whereas the expenditure of a few hundred pounds would open up a direct route between Meekatbarra and Peak Hill which would reduce the distance by at least 25 miles. If the Government would provide a grant for the survey and cutting of this road, the roads board would do the work itself. But this cannot be done, though thousands of pounds are spent in other directions where such help is not required.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: You have no right to make that statement. You know inquiries are now being made.

MR. HOLMAN: I have had that reply many times.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: We have had a report within the last 10 days.

MR. HOLMAN: The Minister for Works knows that I sent in a request long before this session opened. A report favourable to the cutting of this road has been received.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Some of the reports are in favour of the road, some against.

MR. HOLMAN: The report of an officer who has been on the field for a number of years, who has travelled the different roads and in fact opened up

the country by making water supplies, should be preferable to that of an officer who probably has never been there. I am sorry the Government adopted the attitude they have in regard to the passage of these Railway Bills. I mentioned when the Loan Bill was before the House that I should like some farther information why these railways should be constructed; but the Government will neither give the information nor afford members an opportunity to bring forward any information we may have at our disposal. In connection with the putting through of this line, I am strongly opposed to it, as I do not consider that at the present time this railway is warranted. I would like to see such development in the near future that a railway line should be warranted; but I do not feel disposed to support this measure, which means an expenditure of £50,000 or £60,000 in the construction of a railway which is not warranted. If we spend this £60,000, it will mean that we will have spent in that part of the State probably almost as much Government money as the total output of gold and copper from that field. That is manifestly unfair, and it is unreasonable to expect us to do it. I believe in the Government fostering industries and spending money where it will do the most good. At the present time we are not doing this. Before a line from Ravensthorpe to Hopetoun is considered, a railway should be constructed to Black Range and Meekatharra, and a line in the North-West. We heard of the vast possibilities of the North-West long before this other was discovered. It has been stated that the salvation of the North-West lies in a railway connecting the coast with the Pilbarra Goldfield; and I say that before a railway is begun in the Phillips River district we should construct a line in the North-West. I have not visited the North-West, and I am speaking now from information supplied to the House in returns issued by the Mines Department. According to these, the North-West has returned thousands upon thousands of pounds worth more of mineral wealth than the Phillips River ever did or is ever likely to do; and the possibilities of the mineral fields of the North-West are far-and-away ahead of those of the Phillips River district. Its only draw-

back is that there is no Mr. Kaufman standing to make so much money in the North-West as is the case in constructing a railway to the Phillips River field. I would like to know how it was possible for Mr. Kaufman to go to England and at a meeting of his company early in July last give information that a railway was to be constructed to that part of the State in the near future? I would like to know where he got his information? Mr. Kaufman left Western Australia early in June last, yet he was able to go home and give this information, while we even at the present time are not allowed an opportunity of perusing the reports of Mr. Muir, the engineer who was sent to the district; and we are supposed to take the few extracts read out by the Minister for Works as being the whole of the information available as to the necessity for constructing the line. If that be so, sufficient evidence has not been adduced to-night to show good reason why that railway line should be constructed. Therefore I move an amendment—

That the second reading of the Bill be postponed for six months.

[A pause ensued.]

THE MINISTER FOR MINES : The hon. member—

MR. HOLMAN (again rising) : I will not move that now, as I find that another amendment is to be moved.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. H. Gregory) : The previous speaker wishes members to believe that an effort has been made to "gag" those who are opposed to this Bill. The Railway Bills were set down for second reading last night, and no effort was made to push them forward. In the earlier stages of the debate this evening the hon. member rose and asked that the debate be adjourned. That was refused. I may state there were other reasons for the attitude of the hon. member. I was strongly advised not to make any statement on the second reading of this measure until after the member for Murchison had spoken. I feel pleased to think I did not speak before he rose; and probably the fact of his having spoken first may account for the loss of his notes. I am satisfied that many other statements

would have been made had the member an opportunity of speaking after I had spoken in regard to the Bill before the House. A little brief history of the district may not be out of place. The Ravensthorpe field is essentially a copper mining district, a district for the production of the baser metals. There is some gold there, and for some time the Floater mine and the Marri Chief mine were worked as gold-mines. Both of these mines so far as gold-mining are concerned were partial failures, but lately there have been many leases applied for as gold-mining leases in the Kundip district. From 24 to 36 leases have been applied for, and in addition a large number of prospecting leases have been worked at Kundip, situated midway between Ravensthorpe and the coast. Copper has been worked in this district for the last five years. When copper was first discovered it was impossible to develop the mines to any great extent; in fact, it was impossible to do anything but rob the mines of the richest shoots of ore, as the expense of sending the ore to the coast and then to Adelaide or Sydney for treatment was so great that it was impossible to work these mines in a proper manner. An official inspection was made there, and a smelter established. For some time the smelter did good work, but owing to its being badly constructed a new smelter had to be erected in its place. While that smelter was closed down a new company appeared on the field, and the greater number of producing mines were purchased by that company, that is the company controlled by the gentleman of whom the member for Murchison has said a great deal, Mr. Kaufman, who I believe controls the Phillips River Copper Mining Co. That company is doing a large amount of work, but that is not the only company there trying to develop that field. The hon. member has spoken to some extent of the small value of production in connection with the Phillips River field, that the district has only produced 9,500 tons of ore; but those 9,500 tons of ore have produced copper to the value of £72,000.

MR. HOLMAN: They are all the rich patches.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I was pointing out the difficulties of the

district, which made it impossible for the people to work anything but the richest patches to be found. The general manager of the company is Mr. Klug, who is respected by mining people, but who may not have had as much experience as the member for Murchison claims in connection with mining generally. Mr. Klug is highly respected, and I am given to understand he believes they will be able to make 3 per cent. ore pay in that district. If the company can only make 5 per cent. ore pay, while in the past it has needed 10 per cent., 12 per cent., and up to 15 per cent. ore to pay, it stands to reason a larger quantity of ore will be available. This is a very large district. It has been proved over 22 miles, and a large area has been taken up. When I was there three years ago with Mr. Montgomery we spent 10 days on the field, inspecting every mining show being worked, and every member is aware of the extensive pamphlet Mr. Montgomery issued and the recommendations made by him in which he pointed out how impossible it would be for that field to ever grow unless connected by a railway with the coast. Mr. Montgomery was not the only one who had that opinion, for an opinion was given when the member for Murchison was a member of Cabinet. Mr. Johnson on the 30th June, 1905, sent a minute to Cabinet recommending that a tramway was absolutely necessary for the successful working of the smelter.

MR. HOLMAN: You are incorrect. The member for Murchison was not a member of the Cabinet at that time.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Not on the 30th June?

MR. BATH: On the 5th June he left.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Three weeks earlier he was turned out, was he? I did not think he was found so useless so quickly. I am pointing out that the member for Guildford sent in his recommendation to Cabinet, and I now understand the member for Murchison was not a member of the Cabinet at that time. But Mr. Johnson, the then Minister for Mines, wrote to Cabinet pointing out that in his opinion it was necessary a tramway should be constructed by the Government. Why? I wish members to consider this. I do not want them to

give a moment's consideration to the remarks of the member for Murchison. The reason why Mr. Johnson recommended to the Daglish Government that this railway should be constructed by the Government was that for a considerable time before that a genuine offer had been made to the Government asking to be allowed to construct that railway. The offer was to construct a railway with a 3ft. 6in. gauge, with 40lb. rails, and that railway was to be constructed from Hopetoun *via* Kundip, Mt. Desmond, past the smelter to Ravensthorpe. It was to be handed to the Government free of expense at the end of 30 years; that is, the Government were not to pay one sixpence for the line. They would have to pay for the rolling-stock, the equipment, the tanks and buildings, but for the railway they were not asked to pay one sixpence, and we were to give nothing away except the small piece of ground which the railway would traverse. The rates which they offered to charge were lower than the rates recommended by the Works Department in connection with the construction of this line. I want members to remember that it was since Mr. Kaufman has been spending thousands in that district and since he has been trying to hoodle people in this State, as the member for Murchison put it, or trying to carry his hoodling propositions in the old country, that the matter came before me and before the member for Guildford. The proposition was before the Government long before these people offered to construct the railway. The Works Department suggested that the freights charged should be so much per ton. The offer of these people was less than that recommended by Mr. Carrington, the engineer, which is in the report of the engineer-in-chief in connection with this matter. I think it was 6d. a ton that the engineer suggested should be charged, and he reckoned that at 4d. a ton on the traffic there would be a loss of £40 10s. 8d. per week. This report was made some time ago, when I was previously in office. At 6d. a ton the revenue would give a profit of £31 4s. per week. These people offered to carry goods at a lower rate than that, and that rate was to be reduced until it would come down to a basis of 10s. a ton, on coke and copper matte.

MR. HOLMAN: The prospects of the field were better then than now.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I differ from the hon. member.

MR. HOLMAN: I say yes.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member has had such great experience of the fields.

MR. HOLMAN: Look at the reports.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Has not the hon. member a little bit of common sense, or does he want to hide the fact that for 12 months there was no smelter worked.

MR. HOLMAN: I am speaking of 1904-5.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Does not the hon. member know that during most of 1905 the smelter was closed down? If he wants to hide these facts, well and good. We do not want to hide facts at all. It is apparent to everybody that the district has never, during the time it has been in existence, been in the same state as it is at present. There is prosperity now before it. I regret, as everybody else does, that when we have good propositions they are taken up by outsiders, who come in and obtain the benefit that we should obtain here. On the other hand, are we to say that we refuse to allow outsiders to come here, and when they come here to refuse to allow them to invest money in the State? This Mr. Kaufman and his friends came here and invested money in the State. When Mr. Kaufman came he asked me in regard to various projects, and I told the House months ago the substance of the communications which took place between Mr. Kaufman and myself. Three questions were placed before me; one, the acquisition of the smelter; secondly, the building of a railway to the coast, and thirdly, the construction of tramways from the various mines to a central smelter. Members know what has happened in regard to the smelter. With regard to tramways from mine to mine, I said that was not a matter which I considered necessary to consult Cabinet about, but that if he opened up half a dozen mines and put up one central smelter, provided he did not interfere with the rights of other people, I would give him the same right that had been given to the big mine at Lawlers, that he could construct tramlines enabling him

to treat his ore at one central works at the cheapest possible rates. I made him that offer and told him that if he made application to me through the warden, unless there was grave objection he would get permission from me; but in regard to the railway I told him that that was a work which would have to be constructed by the Government, that it was a work we should control, and that it was my intention to recommend Cabinet to construct the railway. I made that announcement previously, and the same knowledge was available to Mr. Kaufman or anybody else. I had a big opinion of the field, and I want to impress this on members. As far as my knowledge is concerned, I do not know of one member who is interested to the extent of one sixpence in these mines. One member who was formerly a colleague of mine had some interest in one of the leases, but he sold out previous to this action being taken; but while he was a member of Cabinet I can assure members that never in one instance did he approach me in regard to one single matter relating to the Phillips River field. Members know the gentleman I am referring to. He is not a member of this House at present; but from the first day he had his small interest, he did not approach me at all. I do not think it is necessary for me to go into details as to the merits and importance of the field, the number of men employed there or the potentialities of the field. Anyone reading the papers and the mining reports must be satisfied that there is the possibility of a big district there. I have received a semi-private report from a gentleman who was appointed by my friends opposite to a responsible position on the fields, and that gentleman gave me his impression of the field; that it would in the near future carry a population of over 10,000 people. I am sure if I mention his name hon. members would say that they could place the greatest confidence in any statement he made. But, apart from that, we have the steady progress of the place, and the possibility in the near future of an exceedingly large production. So far as any one individual is concerned I care little. It has nothing to do with me. My great desire is to try and promote the best interests of the industry.

Although from the arguments used the other evening by the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) he apparently wishes one set of laws to apply to the prospector, and another set of laws to the mining company —

MR. HOLMAN: No.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: So far as I am concerned, once a person or a company obtains any proposition or any right under the Mining Act, I say it is our duty to treat all equally.

MR. HOLMAN: You have never done that yet.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: It is for the House to say whether we shall construct a railway there, and I may say that I have had three offers for the construction of the railway. One has been a special offer, and I believe the people behind the gentleman who made it are people of means, people who have been engaged in railway construction in this State for a long period, and have executed some very large works indeed. They made this offer some two years ago to me, and I refused to accept it, unlike those hon. members who would prefer that private enterprise should construct these railways. I said "No," and that in this instance I considered the railway one which might well be constructed by the Government. Mr. Kaufman would be only too pleased, I think, to have the control of the railway. When he came to me on the subject I said at once, "No." I gave him the promise I have told the House of in regard to his tram lines, but in regard to the construction of the railway I told him distinctly that I thought this a work which should be constructed by the Government, and that I intended to recommend the Government to construct a railway. I farther said that if the Government did not construct the railway I should refer the matter to Parliament, but that if the railway was to be constructed by private enterprise the work would not be given privately to any individual: the Government would call for tenders with a view to enabling the person offering the best terms to secure the construction. I also said, however, that I believed that Parliament would not allow private enterprise to construct the railway. Another reference was made to-night, and I think it was a most un-

gracious reference, to the possibilities that might have occurred in connection with the running of this railway to Ravens-thorpe from Starvation Boat Harbour. Now, what did I do? As soon as ever I discovered that there was a possibility of the railway running to Starvation Boat Harbour, I sent for the papers and particularly inspected the Admiralty charts. It struck me that it was possible Starvation Boat Harbour would afford better accommodation than Hopetoun, as there was deeper water at Starvation Boat Harbour. Having seen the chart I thought it might be my duty to recommend Parliament to construct the railway to Starvation Boat Harbour. Therefore, I asked the Minister for Lands to reserve every bit of land about that port—to reserve it to the Crown, so that no person would be able to chip in and secure any of it. Thus I reserved to the State, had construction to that point been decided on, the whole of the unearned increment which would accrue. There is no necessity for a sneer as to what might have happened had the railway gone to Starvation Boat Harbour; because every right of the State was conserved, and conserved by me.

MR. HUDSON: After you had notice.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Notice from whom?

MR. HUDSON: From me.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member is making a statement which he cannot substantiate.

MR. HUDSON: Look at *Hansard*, and read my speech on the second reading. Then you will see.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I may say more. I do not think anybody has ever shown less influence in connection with the matter than the hon. member (Mr. Hudson). It is simply because the railway benefits the district that it is being constructed.

MR. HUDSON: That is why I am supporting you.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Whether the hon. member pointed it out or not, early action was taken by me. As soon as I saw the chart, and saw the possibility of Starvation Boat Harbour proving the best harbour I took action. However, to adopt that port would have meant about eight miles of additional construction, for the sake of the deeper

water. Besides there were other difficulties; and on receiving the reports of the special officers, including Mr. Irvine, whom we sent down to investigate, the Government could come to no other conclusion than that Hopetoun would, of the two, be the better harbour. We are, therefore, compelled to the belief that it will be wiser, in the best interests of the State, to construct a railway to Hopetoun. If we were willing to construct some 70 miles of railway we could obtain a better harbour; but the cost of construction, in the opinion of the Government, would be too great altogether. I do not think we should be justified, at all events at the present time, in incurring the increased expenditure. I hope that Parliament will come to either one of two conclusions. The district, in my opinion, warrants the construction of a railway. If we are not going to construct the railway, I hope we shall not indulge in any dog-in-the-manger policy. I have refrained from giving the name of the gentleman who made a special offer, which was received on the 28th June 1905, because probably it would not be a fair thing to give the name—because Parliament might say that the State would not construct the railway but would allow others to construct it.

MR. JOHNSON: It was a genuine offer.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes. I think the hon. member (Mr. Johnson) was dealing with this offer when he made his recommendation to Cabinet.

MR. JOHNSON: That is so. I was dealing with that offer.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I do not think it would be fair to the gentleman who made the offer to make his name public now, because other applications may be received; and it would be unwise, anyhow, to give any farther particulars than I have given here to-night. I resent the imputation that the action of the Government has been taken simply because a certain company has started operations in the Phillips River district. The recommendation in regard to this railway was made by Mr. Montgomery some two years ago.

MR. HUDSON: He recommended it in 1905.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: The member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) also recognised the importance of the

district, and I am sure other members who have followed the development of the field recognise also that it is a district of importance. It is not like one of the districts mentioned by the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) where 70, 80, or even 90 miles of construction is involved. This railway is a proposition of 32 miles. Copper production is entirely different from gold-mining. There is so much extra carriage in connection with copper mining—double the carriage that one has in connection with goldmining. Coke and other necessities for smelting have to be transported as well as the products of the mines. Moreover, a much larger population has to be provided for in connection with copper mining. Then one has to get the product back again, usually in the form of matte. Probably, however, in many instances—and we may find it so in this connection—a smelter is constructed near the coast, if transport facilities are reasonable. I want also to impress on hon. members that there is not a good supply of water at Ravensthorpe—good water will have to be obtained at some distance, I am afraid. There is a difficulty in regard to fresh water, and mining engineers have been considering for a long time whether the more economical course would be to construct a smelter on the seaboard, where there would be abundance of water, or to smelt their ore at Ravensthorpe. In either case, the deal is a good one for the railway. The amount of coke used is indeed large. I have here the figures relating to coke used by the small smelter which the Government were working some time ago. Hon. members can imagine the increased quantity of coke which will be required when ore of a value of 5 per cent. or less is being treated on the field. I have not the slightest doubt that if we can reduce the cost of production—and the only method by which that cost can be reduced is the construction of a railway—so as to enable 5 per cent. and less ore to be treated there, within a few years we shall have a large population in that district, a population exceeding 10,000 and probably 15,000 or 20,000.

MR. HOLMAN: What is the average per cent. of ore treated?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I hope hon. members will deal with this

matter to-night. I wish to state that personally I have no interest in the place, but that so far as the mining industry is concerned, I feel we shall be doing a good thing in providing this railway. I want to impress on hon. members that this is not a proposition similar to several other propositions, where outside people have come in and made offers, where it would have been far better for the Government to construct the railway straight away. We have received genuine offers, and there is not the slightest doubt in my mind that if we were to agree to this railway being privately constructed we could get, within a couple of months, offers for the construction, with a substantial bonus to the Crown for the right to construct. I say we are not justified in this, however. The district warrants the construction of the railway, and I think it is due to us to try and assist in the development of the district, which should be a big consumer of the products of other industries within the State.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): The Minister for Works and the Minister for Mines have evidently taken to themselves the remark of Artemus Ward which the member for Subiaco (Mr. Daglish) quoted the other night, to the effect that what they don't know is not knowledge. I want to point out to both gentlemen, and especially to the Minister for Mines, that on an important project such as this it is not sufficient to talk in a loud voice. What is necessary is that the information supplied shall be detailed, shall be information which will assist members in arriving at a decision, and that Parliament should not be called on to decide on the expenditure of money even for a railway only 32 miles long before full information is vouchsafed. Now, it has been referred to before, and I presume it will be referred to farther to-night, that we are in precisely the same position as we were in last session when three railway proposals were introduced. At that time the whole plea was that the railways were part of the Government policy, that the change of Government and the exigencies of the election campaign had compelled Ministers to introduce these measures at the very termination of the session, and that only because of the

urgent necessity for the construction of these lines did they call on Parliament to deal with the proposals in such a short period of time. We had promises of amendment for the future: we were assured that in connection with all future projects for the construction of railways, ample time being available for Ministers to prepare their proposals, every possible information would be supplied, and that this House would not be called on to deal with such proposals except on the amplest information, and after ample time for discussion. We also had that assurance repeated when the Treasurer moved his proposal for the suspension of the Standing Orders in order to despatch the business before the House. We were then told by the Minister that while he wished this motion to go through in order to facilitate business, he would not push through important financial proposals or Bills for the construction of railways without giving hon. members the fullest information and ample time for discussion. Now, what is the information supplied to us? To a large extent it consists of vague estimates of the areas being worked and of what the traffic is likely to be; but I can say with absolute confidence that, apart from the statement as to the length of line, the gauge, the weight of rails, and the estimate of cost, we have nothing which will enable members, unversed as they are in the claims of some of these proposals, to give an intelligent decision on the Bills submitted to the House. What we require is not only the estimates supplied here, but an estimate of what is likely to be the traffic, the revenue per year, and the working expenses: we should have a statement of the interest and sinking fund, and working expenses, so that we could arrive with some degree of certainty at what the projects will bring forth. Instead of this we have had some hysterical remarks from the Minister for Mines, and somewhat of a schoolboy essay from the Minister for Works, and we are not even given time to deal with or see the report of their speeches. We are not able to secure an adjournment even for one day, but the proposal must be rushed through Parliament in order that hon. members may not be able to deal with it in the manner the proposal deserves.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: You know we do not propose to go on beyond the second reading.

MR BATH: But the second reading stage is practically the only opportunity we have of eliciting the information. The Minister knows that when the Bill goes into Committee we have to confine our remarks to the subject-matter of the particular clause being considered. So far as this district is concerned, I am not in agreement to a great degree with the remarks of the member for Murchison. I regard a proposal such as a railway to Phillips River field as one that is worthy of the consideration of the Government, and well worthy of the consideration of hon. members; because I have always found that, while gold attracts more and is regarded as more certain, because we can always rely on a fixed price, if we look at the history of mining throughout the Commonwealth we find that it is the baser metals that have furnished employment at places like Cobar and Broken Hill not only to miners but also to people engaged in business dependent on the mines, and have also furnished a considerable amount of traffic for the railways. But that opinion which I hold does not justify me in giving a verdict on this proposal without adequate information; nor does it justify us in being treated this session—with ample opportunity before the Government to introduce their proposals—in precisely the same way as we were treated last session. These proposals are not new. The Minister for Mines has said that when Mr. Kaufman was here he told him that the field was deserving of railway communication; and we have had statements from the Premier and his colleagues in regard to other proposals, in the policy speech and in the very early stages of the session, showing that there was nothing in the way of the Cabinet bringing down these proposals at an early date and securing the fullest possible information on them. The Minister for Mines says that this railway is at present an essentially better project and more satisfactory than it was at the time the member for Guildford (Mr. Johnson) made a recommendation to the Cabinet of which he was a member. I say that such is not the case. At the time the member for Guildford made a recom-

mendation to Cabinet the Government owned the smelter at Ravensthorpe, and the properties which had been taken up and partially developed on this field were held by independent miners. The Government had expended, not only in the erection of a smelter, but in the provision of other facilities, a considerable sum of money in the development of that field. To a large extent the Government of this State had done the pioneering work in connection with the Phillips River gold and copper field; and after they had done this, after they had erected a smelter and provided facilities in various other directions, especially in connection with the harbour at Hopetoun, in order that the field might procure its supplies as expeditiously as possible, after they had brought the field into prominence, and after developments had warranted those who went down there saying that the permanence of the field was assured, and there was a possibility of great development and a great increase in the population and of an increased production—after all this had been done practically by the Government and by the expenditure of public money, the Government allowed a person from outside, not interested in legitimate mining development, but interested in the flotation of properties in the old country, to come in and practically scoop the whole pool. Therefore I say that the project is now not at all on a par with the position when the member for Guildford made the recommendation to Cabinet more than 12 months ago. The position at the present time is this: Mr. Kaufman, who is the moving figure in connection with the Phillips River Gold and Copper Mining Company, has secured many of the producing properties there and has also secured the smelter; and no matter how much we may be told as to the extent of the mineral-bearing field there, and of the probability of farther development in other districts, the possibility of farther development by independent mine owners is practically nullified by reason of the fact that the smelter has been sold to Mr. Kaufman and that they have no opportunity of developing their properties independently. They have no way of treating their stuff now except for the term specified in the agreement of sale;

and that is only a limited time; and it will mean that those mine owners who are actively developing mineral-bearing ore will have to abandon their shows or else sell their properties at a price not fixed by themselves or by agreement with Mr. Kaufman, but fixed by Mr. Kaufman himself, because he has possession of the smelter and has a lease of the land around it, a lease of all the ironstone deposits surrounding the smelter, and therefore has a whip hand and may dictate terms. The position is that though there are now parties struggling outside independent of Mr. Kaufman, the proposition resolves itself into the State building a railway for the working of Mr. Kaufman's properties.

MR. UNDERWOOD: We must work a profit to somebody with the railway.

MR. BATH: Undoubtedly; but the project cannot be so favourably regarded now that Mr. Kaufman holds a monopoly, or has the power to exercise a monopoly any time he needs, as when we had independent mine owners with the possibility and probability of widespread development over the whole field. The Minister for Mines has said: Are we to say that the company which owns these properties is to be denied railway communication because it has come in from the old country and has brought in capital when local investors were not ready to do it? The question I would like to ask the Minister is this: Is it not probable that local people would have been ready to develop the field if they could have placed before their shareholders the same proposals as were submitted by Mr. Kaufman? I have no desire to make any charge against the Minister; but whatever may be said in regard to the promise in connection with the railway, the fact remains that Mr. Kaufman used the statement that the Government were going to place a sum of money on the Estimates for the railway in order to assist in booming the shares of the company in which he was interested. If local people could have used the same statement, if the people in Western Australia could have gone to the investing public here or throughout the Commonwealth and said that the Government had promised to spend £70,000 in the construction of a railway, and had promised to sell the smelter at a

price much below what it cost, and had promised to lease a large area of land at a nominal rental for 99 years, the local investors would have jumped at the chance, and there would have been no need for British capital to come in. But the fact of Mr. Kaufman, rightly or wrongly, using this information and placing it before the investing public of the old country was the reason why he was able to get British capital invested here. If the local people had precisely the same opportunity we would have had the investment of local capital and would not have had Mr. Kaufman appearing in this project at all. While I have said that a mineral field such as this, if the mineral ore is likely to any great extent to be permanent, and if there are large ore bodies, presents a better proposition than even a gold mining district, we have to bear in mind the fact that copper is a metal the price for which is essentially a fluctuating one. I have seen the time when it was well below £50 and when the lower price closed scores of mining districts in New South Wales. I spent a great many years, practically the greater portion of my life since I left school, in fields which were partially gold propositions and partially worked for the baser metals, such as silver, copper, and lead, and the three in conjunction; and while I have found that a field might thrive and furnish a large amount of employment and a considerable amount of business when copper, silver, and lead realised good prices, I found also that when those metals fell in value, as they have done during the last 20 years, the fields were practically ruined and the capital invested was to a large extent lost, and those who had engaged in business were rendered bankrupt. These are facts we must bear in mind in connection with this proposal to construct a railway from Hopetoun to Phillips River. The member for the district has informed us that there are agricultural possibilities in connection with Ravenshorpe, but the Minister for Works did not deal to any great extent, if he dealt at all, with the agricultural possibilities of the district, and when he states that the report of Mr. Muir was quoted he only quoted very briefly from it. If Mr. Muir has submitted a report on the proposal I think it

should have been submitted, in connection with other information, to the House. Members should have been afforded an opportunity of perusing the report and studying it before being called upon to vote on this proposal. I intend to move an amendment in connection with this motion—

That the words "now read a second time" be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"Inquired into by a committee of experts, who shall report upon the project at an early date."

I have no desire to move this amendment in connection with this Bill only. I propose to move it in connection with the other railway projects before the House. [MR. SCADDAN: Hear, hear. The Greenhills extension also.] Because I believe that this would give to the House an opportunity of having some reliable information upon these railway projects that are placed before us. It is all very well to talk about possibilities and potentialities of these various districts. I am sick almost unto death about hearing of the potentialities of this district and the potentialities of that. We hear about the potentialities of the Goomalling-Dowerin line. If we had to look at it from the point of view for building purposes, I must say that the land has great potentialities, but I am not so sure of its potentialities for agricultural purposes; certainly not the land through which the railway passes. We hear of the potentialities in connection with this Dowerin line, just as in connection with every proposal.

THE PREMIER: If you had looked at the plan of the Dowerin line you would have seen it was put down that it was going through sand plain.

MR. BATH: What is going to happen in the future? We were assured that although it was not visible it was somewhere beyond the range. We want something more than the information that the possibilities of this district are over the hill, or just beyond, and in the near future; or hopes, or potentialities. We want something solid. We want the opinion of men who have no axe to grind, and no reason to give a favourable report, or an unfavourable report; men who from their own knowledge, their own inspection, are satisfied that it is favourable or unfavourable. We have officers in

the employ of the State who, both from the point of view of construction and from the point of view of possibilities with regard to mining or agriculture, can speak with authority on this question, and I believe it will be an advantage not only to Parliament, but also to the State, that before we are definitely committed to these proposals we shall have a report of some such experts.

THE PREMIER: You do not mean members of Parliament.

MR. BATH: Certainly not. I am not at all in favour of having a system whereby there will be a committee of members of this House.

MR. SCADDAN: There are reports on these railways now which should be on the table of the House.

MR. BATH: I believe in getting a committee from outside. I should say that on this proposal the Engineer-in-Chief should be one, and that as far as the Hopetoun to Phillips River railway is concerned, we should have a report from someone qualified to speak from a mining point of view. I do not say necessarily that he should be a State employee. I would be satisfied so long as he was qualified to speak, not only from a theoretical knowledge, but also from long experience of mining work, especially in connection with fields of that kind; and I do not see that securing the report of such a committee of experts would in any way involve any serious delay in carrying out these proposals. The Treasurer told us that owing to the unfavourable state of the market it would be well into 1907 before he proposed to go on to the market in order to try to secure the loan, and I do not see that it would involve any great expenditure of time in order to secure these reports. I believe that if the House decided that such a report of an advisory committee would be desirable the committee could be appointed almost straight away, and we should have its report within a month or two; and having passed the Loan Bill with certain provisions for these railways, preliminary work could be carried on, such as surveying and preparation of plans. As soon as the report of the advisory committee was received Parliament could be called together at the earliest possible opportunity, and Bills then placed before it.

THE PREMIER: We have the Engineer-in-Chief's report, giving the cost of construction. What more can he give you?

MR. BATH: He does not speak from personal inspection.

THE PREMIER: That would not interfere with the cost of construction if he has his plan.

MR. SCADDAN: Why did you not place all the reports on the table of the House?

THE PREMIER: What other reports?

MR. SCADDAN: Other reports have been held back; I will give an instance of one or two.

MR. BATH: It will not involve any delay in connection with this proposal, because in the report Mr. Kaufman stated that the Government had promised to build a line, and have it completed and in working order within 12 months. The Premier justifiably and rightly pointed out that the question of constructing this railway had not yet been threshed out in Cabinet, but he was visiting the district in the course of a week or two, with a view to gaining some farther knowledge regarding the proposal, and in any event, as the hon. member (Mr. Holman) would understand, the line could not be completed within 12 months from the date of Mr. Kaufman's report. Farther than that it was pointed out by the Agent General:—

I do not presume, however, that any definite line of action will be decided in connection with this and other railways until the Government is satisfied in regard to its land tax proposals, and whether it would be wise for us to consider the question of a large works policy, without being satisfied of the revenue which would be raised by means of our land tax, and which would be necessary to pay the increased interest bill.

So that in the opinion expressed by the hon. member himself, to secure such a report as is outlined in connection with this amendment would not involve any delay in connection with this proposal. In view of that fact, and in view of the value it would be, and that it would practically make the question a non-party one, if the House decided to abide by the report, it would not only be an advantage in regard to this railway, but on other railway proposals. I move the amendment to which I have referred.

On the motion by the PREMIER, debate adjourned.

BILL—DONNYBROOK-PRESTON
VALLEY RAILWAY.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

MR. J. EWING (Collie): I have a considerable amount of pleasure in supporting the second reading of this Bill, which was laid before the House in such an able manner by the Premier last night. Whatever may be said with regard to the building of agricultural railway lines, I think the facts placed before the House and the country by the Premier last evening will place this railway in the category of agricultural lines which will lead to the development of the country, and at the same time prove a paying proposition. The route of this railway line is from Donnybrook direct through the Preston Valley to Boyup Brook on the Upper Blackwood. The climate and soil of that district are, I think, the best in Western Australia. The Preston Valley itself is, I think, one of the most delightful spots in Western Australia, and is noted for the production of fruit, especially apples, also for the production of cherries, I think, and fruit of almost every kind. There is something like 5,000 acres of alluvial land along the valley of the Preston River, which will produce all classes of root crops. It is also pointed out that the lands on this railway route are settled by something like 550 residents, and these residents hold 310,000 acres, the average being 600 acres per settler. This refers to the old settlers. It must be admitted that there are not large estates to be benefited. No one is holding large areas of land, and the benefit will go to those holding small areas, who have to such an extent borne the heat and burden of the day in developing this important portion of Western Australia. The Premier pointed out that something like 450 acres are under orchard in areas of from one to seventy acres, and that from each acre under cultivation there is a production of 500 cases of apples. That means that from the area held by these settlers, something like 225,000 cases of apples would be brought over that line during each year, and the building of the railway would, I think, double this. In his remarks the Premier also states that there are 1,200 acres

cleared and ready for the planting of orchards, which would, of course, practically double the output of fruit in that district. The area of land served by the railway is 693,000 acres, of which 310,000 acres, as I mentioned previously, has been alienated, and the rest, 383,000 acres, is open for selection. The destination of the line is Boyup Brook. The Premier last night stated that he hoped to alter the route slightly, so that it would go through a portion of land lately forfeited by the Department of Lands, which is now available for closer settlement, and it is gratifying to think that this large area of land, which has been reported on by Inspector Thompson, who, I think, is the chief inspector for the Lands Department, contains, as shown by his report, something like 40,000 acres of first-class agricultural land and 40,000 acres of second-class land, the remaining 18,000 acres being land of third-class quality. That being the case even to develop and open up an estate of that kind almost warrants authorisation being given for the construction of the line. It is well known that the portion of Western Australia referred to cannot be successfully developed unless we have a railway of some kind. Land at Boyup Brook is some 50 miles from any railway. By carrying the line through the Preston Valley you are giving advantages to deserving settlers, whose orchards are a credit to them and a benefit to the State of Western Australia. It is gratifying to know that members representing the goldfields have on many occasions had opportunities of visiting various agricultural districts of the State. Although many agricultural shows have been held this year, I do not think it has been their privilege to see the fruit shows of the South-West. I think that if they could go to Donnybrook or Bridgetown and see the magnificent apples, grapes, vegetables, and cereals produced in those districts, they would not hesitate for a moment to open up this land, which is awaiting further settlement.

MR. UNDERWOOD: Cherries are 1s. 6d. a pound.

MR. EWING: The way to cheapen fruit is to make it more available, and to get more people to cultivate the land and plant orchards. I believe that members

recognise fully the importance of this portion of the State. They know as well as I do what magnificent apples are produced, and how the people of the State require fruit as cheap as possible. As far as prices are concerned, I believe that will in time cure itself and fruit will be placed on the market at a price which everybody will be able to pay. Outside the fruit, cereals, and root crops, it must be remembered, a large area of this land is most suitable for dairying and mixed farming. On the Upper Preston area, to my personal knowledge, people are engaged in carrying on dairying to the greatest benefit to themselves, and the butter they produce and the cattle they grow would be considered creditable in the Eastern States. With a railway affording facilities for the collection of milk, no doubt a separator would be established, and also probably a creamery similar to those established in the Eastern States. The Leader of the Opposition knows both the northern and southern districts of New South Wales; and he knows, as I know, what has happened on the Tweed and Richmond rivers. Land that 15 or 20 years ago was virgin scrub is now magnificent dairying country.

MR. BATH: We have nothing like that over here.

MR. EWING: I should not like to say that. We do not know yet what we have here.

MR. BATH: We have nothing like that quality of land.

MR. EWING: That quality is certainly magnificent, and I should like to point out what a wonderful success dairying has been in that district. It has practically saved the northern portion of New South Wales. We want to give every possible encouragement to mixed farming. It is necessary a man should hold at least 1,000 acres of first-class land and 1,000 to 2,000 acres of second-class land as well; because he could go in for cultivation of fruit, root crops, and cereals on the first class land, and have sheep running on the outside land, thereby making an excellent living. The particular proposition now before the House exemplifies the principle I have described. There is a large area of first class land, and a large area of second and of third-class land. It is wonderful how second and third-

class land fenced and ringbarked—there is a little poison in the district, but that is easily eradicated—how such land is improved by the depasturing of stock. In this particular project, we have land of all qualities, and there is no question whatever that the whole of the land at an early date will be selected. The Upper Preston has been settled for many years. Between that place and the end of the railway line, a distance of 30 miles, there is a large area of land such as I have described. At Boyup Brook and in the vicinity of the 98,000 acres now in the hands of the Government there is, as will be seen on reference to the map, a great deal of settlement. These people having gone out such a long way with practically nothing in front of them in the absence of a railway, are they to be left practically to starve? Of course every settler cannot have a railway to his door; but a project of this immense value to the people of the Upper Preston and to Boyup will undoubtedly prove a paying proposition, even without the timber, which I shall mention later. This railway is placed before the House as a payable proposition, and in that respect it differs materially from some agricultural lines which have been commented on by members from time to time. The Leader of the Opposition, speaking a few minutes ago on the Hopetoun-Ravensthorpe railway, stated that he had paid a visit to the Goomalling-Dowerin railway and had been disappointed at the fact that the line runs through the centre of a sand plain. I myself was disappointed at the fact of its running through a sandplain, because I did not know that such was the case. But I have had a large experience of that class of country, and know that one may have to run through a sandplain for five or 10 miles in order to reach good country. Again, one cannot see what is on either side of the sandplain, but frequently the sand is small in area and good land exists on the other side of the sand hills or close at hand. I have not seen the plans of that railway, but I took the trouble to visit the Lands Department this morning and to make inquiries, apart from Ministers altogether, as to the possibilities of the line; and I am satisfied that there is a magnificent stretch of first-class agricultural country on either side of the line. The hon.

member himself will admit that at the point where the line ends the land is good.

MR. BATH? What is the country like which carries good jarrah timber? Is not that inferior for agriculture?

THE PREMIER: It is not very suitable for agriculture, but it is all right for fruit growing.

MR. EWING: In the particular district the jarrah timber is about 30 miles from the Donnybrook station. In his report Mr. Inspector Brockman, a gentleman well known to me, and an officer not likely to exaggerate in any shape or form, estimates the quantity of jarrah timber on either side of the line at 1,600,000 loads; and this is to be exploited as soon as the railway is constructed. I myself know of not one man, but half a dozen men, willing to invest their money in spot mills when these forests are opened up. The Premier stated last night that arrangements have been made with the holders of conditional purchase areas to sell the jarrah on their land at the same price as the Government royalty, namely, 1s. per load in the round. This is gratifying in the extreme. If the sleeper-hewer, for example, wants to carry on his avocation when the railway line is completed, he will, if he goes to the Upper Preston, have the right to purchase the jarrah at that price from the agriculturists on whose land the timber grows. A reference to the Railway Commissioner's report shows beyond doubt that the freight on timber is a most important factor in the railway revenue. Last year I think something like 21 per cent. of the total goods traffic of Western Australia was in the shape of timber, and it is well known that timber freights are high and pay well—this applies more especially to freight on sleepers. Therefore, we may hope that the timber alone from the district will return from the inception working expenses, interest, and sinking fund on this proposition. I think the facts and figures placed before the House by the Premier prove conclusively that such will be the result from timber traffic alone. If the railway will from its inception return working expenses, interest, and sinking fund, I do not suppose a single member of the House will take exception to it. The Leader of the Opposition has moved just

now the same amendment which he states he intends to submit in regard to every railway proposition before the House at the present time. He claims that sufficient information is not before hon. members. I think, however, that the Premier and the Ministers in charge of these Bills are willing and anxious to give all information in their possession so that hon. members may thoroughly understand the question, and in the language of the Leader of the Opposition give an intelligent vote.

MR. BATH: We have no information.

MR. EWING: I fail to see what more information the Ministers can give than that obtained from the departmental officers.

MR. BATH: We want information as to how the construction of these railways will affect the financial position.

MR. EWING: So far as this proposition, at any rate, is concerned, the Leader of the Opposition must recognise it to be a payable one. We cannot hope, however, to build certain agricultural railways in this State and make them pay from the start.

MR. BATH: There is a limit to the burden the taxpayer can bear.

MR. EWING: Certainly; but it is impossible at the present juncture to take any other course than that taken by the Government. We must open up the resources of the State, but it must be quite evident that we cannot do that and settle the people on the land if the question is going to be asked whether the railways be built for the purpose will return interest and sinking fund from the day they are opened. The Leader of the Opposition must appreciate that position, and must well know that it is impossible for the Government, and that it would be impossible for him if he were in power, to carry out these progressive works from revenue. He must know full well what burden he would have to place on the backs of the people if he attempted to carry out a policy of this kind from revenue.

MR. BATH: The burden is placed on the shoulders of the people now.

MR. EWING: Yes; in the shape of interest and sinking fund.

MR. BATH: Yes; and they will still have the principal to pay.

MR. EWING: The Government are about to spend two-and-a-half or three millions in opening up the country during the next two years. What taxation would the hon. member have to put on the backs of the people if he attempted to carry out such a policy from revenue?

MR. BATH: You are putting it on the backs of the people now.

MR. EWING: I have only this answer to make: there is going to be stagnation in Western Australia, and agricultural districts and mining districts are not going to be opened up, if a policy of that kind is to be pursued. I would not be a party to it; because, if we have faith in our country, if we are to have our lands settled, then it is our bounden duty to place the people on the land and give them every access to the nearest market. Unless we are prepared to do that, we must discourage people from coming to Western Australia. It is idle to say that people 50 miles distant from a railway line can grow wheat or any other product with commercial success; that is an impossible proposition. The hon. member must know that people who have been settled in the Dowerin district for 50 or 60 years, since the earliest history of Western Australia, have carted their produce to Guildford, and I ask the hon. member whether he will say for a moment that this has paid them. I say that it has not paid them, and that they have only been living from hand to mouth. At this juncture, one cannot get people to settle here under such conditions, while Canada is offering every inducement to immigrants: people have their passages paid to Canada, and are taken in hand by the Canadian Government pretty well from the moment they set foot in Canadian soil, and are put in a position to make a living for themselves. A great deal more is done in Canada than is done here. It must be the policy of any Government in power to develop our lands, and unless we are prepared to take some risk the land will remain dormant and we shall not get population. Opposition members talk about placing a burden on the people, and point to the fact that the indebtedness amounts to £64 per head; but what is going to reduce that indebtedness if it is not the settling of every possible acre of our cultivable lands? That is the indi-

rect benefit we gain from the building of these light agricultural railways. This particular proposition, however, cannot for a moment be doubted, if members will only consider carefully the figures placed before them; and I may say that in my opinion they are figures which cannot be controverted. Now, as to the traffic on this particular proposition of the Government, even for the Norseman railway, which the hon. member has so earnestly supported, and which I also have the pleasure of supporting, the traffic is estimated at only 10,000 tons per annum, 8,000 tons of firewood and 2,000 tons of ordinary through traffic. On the other hand, the traffic from the Donnybrook-Preston line is estimated at 15,000 tons per annum—some 4,000 tons of ordinary traffic, and some 10,000 tons of cereal and timber traffic. Therefore, this is even a better proposition than the Norseman line, which the Leader of the Opposition supported. In regard to that line the hon. member did not take up the position he now assumes towards this line, in asking that it be referred to a committee.

MR. BATH: We had a report on the Norseman line.

MR. EWING: I am not satisfied that the committee's report is so fully in favour of the line.

THE PREMIER (to Mr. Bath): You would not build the Norseman line on that report, would you?

MR. BATH: The difference between the two is that in the one case there is no guessing at anything; the information has already been obtained.

THE PREMIER: And it shows that on the Norseman line we will be losing to the extent of £11,000 a year.

MR. EWING: The hon. member can discuss that in his speech on the second reading. According to the information obtained, there is to be a loss of something like £11,000 per annum. Yet the hon. member is satisfied to start that line which is to be a losing proposition, and in the same breath he tells us that these other railways should pay interest and sinking fund, and become what he terms redemptive works from the start.

MR. BATH: I did not say that.

MR. EWING: The hon. member has made that statement in this House.

MR. BATH: No; I said that in constructing them we should safeguard our

selves by creating a betterment principle.

MR. EWING: I stand corrected, of course; but I certainly understood the hon. member to say that in his opinion all works constructed out of loan funds should pay interest and sinking fund from their inception.

MR. BATH: What I said was that we should have the betterment principle.

OPPOSITION MEMBER: Would the member for Collie support the Norseman line if it were proved that it would pay?

MR. EWING: I shall be very pleased indeed if it can be proved. When speaking last night I spoke in favour of the Norseman Railway, and it has my hearty support. I am now only pointing out the untenable position taken up by the leader of the Opposition when he states that he wants these particular lines referred to experts, while he has the expert's report on the Norseman line showing a loss of £11,000 per annum, and yet he is prepared to accept that particular proposition. Such a position is untenable. The Government have full knowledge of the value of these proposals, and the information is at the disposal of members. There is no doubt whatever that if experts were sent down to report on this railway proposal they could not give us any more information than we have at the present time. I believe the Minister for Works could tell the hon. member that he has during the last month sent an officer of his department to every district interested in these railway propositions, that he has all the information already at his disposal, and that the information gathered is here: it has been concentrated in the proposals the Government are asking us to accept. What more can we do? It simply means that members of the Opposition have told us that the Government should shelve the making of these railway lines—that is the policy the Opposition are taking up, to shelve these lines, by moving that they be submitted to experts. Here we are within, at any rate, three weeks of the end of the session —

MR. BATH: There is to be a special session in February.

MR. EWING: The hon. member knows perfectly well that these railways cannot be dealt with then; that the

special session is for discussing the question of taxation.

MR. BATH: We can make it for anything we like.

MR. EWING: The hon. member knows that the Government are calling that session for the one purpose alone.

MR. BATH: But they can call it for any other purpose as well.

MR. EWING: That is a matter for the Government; at present it is the intention to call that session for discussing the question of taxation. Then it will be impossible for any member of this House to bring up any other question. When the hon. member thinks this matter over, he will see that he is not doing what is best in the interests of Western Australia. In this project we have one which he and some of those sitting with him in Opposition will not support, though they know that what the Premier told us was perfectly true—and he spoke not as Premier but as a man who has travelled this district through and through and knows exactly what are its possibilities; therefore having the confidence I have in his judgment, I am satisfied with the figures he then laid before the House. The Premier has got all the information it would be possible to get if half a dozen experts were to go over this particular line and make recommendations in regard to it. There cannot be a doubt but that their recommendations would be entirely in favour of the proposition now before the House. I hope members will give this railway their earnest consideration; and I think it is a proposition well worthy of being passed by this House at the earliest possible moment.

On motion by MR. LAYMAN, debate adjourned.

BILL—GREENHILLS-QUAIRADING RAILWAY.

SECOND READING.

Resumed from the previous day.

MR. T. H. BATH (Brown Hill): One can hardly expect the member for York to supply information in regard to this railway proposal. He is so much occupied with the secession movement, that he has no time to worry about the interests of his district or to supply information in regard to this proposition;

and it is unkind of the member for Ivanhoe to expect him to do so.

MR. MONGER: All the necessary information has already been supplied.

MR. BATH: In regard to this proposition, I may say that I have had an opportunity of seeing some portion of the country which is to be traversed by this line. I have also seen the reports, one of which was secured during the time I was Minister for Lands, in regard to the agricultural possibilities of the area which will be traversed by the proposed railway, and I would say that if there is any district in the State dependent upon wheat-growing, and perhaps the raising of stock as a subsidiary occupation, that warrants the construction of a spur line it is the country to the east of Greenhills district. But we have had in existence a railway from York to Greenhills for a considerable number of years; and even if we accept the theory of the member for Collie, that we should not expect these railways at the outset or for some years to be payable propositions, even to the extent of paying working expenses, yet after the lengthy period for which the Greenhills-York railway has been operated, one would expect at least that it should be no burden on the State for interest and sinking fund. Still we had the acknowledgment from the Minister for Works yesterday that this railway is not even paying working expenses. Then taking another part of the country that is somewhat similar in its nature and in the use to which it is put, the line from Northam to Goomalling, we have there visible to those who have travelled over the line the obvious fact that there is a considerable area of very fair land, some of it very good, along either side of that railway, the crops on it now showing that it is good agricultural land, capable of producing good yields of wheat or hay. But the fact remains, as acknowledged by a former Minister for Works and now the Treasurer, that the line is losing to the extent of £3,000 a year. And when we have these facts before us, when we know that these lines have been constructed for some time and facilities provided for the people to encourage them to utilise their lands by providing them with railway communication, is it not a reasonable thing for

members to expect, after the railway has been constructed and every facility provided and these people given every opportunity for utilising their lands to advantage, that they should relieve the taxpayers from the burden which was imposed on them at the outset?

HON. F. H. PRESSE: Those lines have cost too much money to construct.

MR. BATH: That will not account for the whole of the deficiency, because I have only to point out that there are railways in the Eastern States that have cost a good deal more than either the Goomalling or Greenhills line to construct, which are payable propositions to-day.

HON. F. H. PRESSE: They were constructed for a different purpose.

MR. BATH: They were constructed in agricultural districts, and only for the carriage of wheat and hay.

MEMBER: And timber.

MR. BATH: The hon. member will not try to tell me that timber is carried on the Jerilderie line in New South Wales and on spur lines off the overland route from Sydney to Melbourne—no timber at all; they are purely and simply propositions for the carriage of wheat, hay, and stock. That is the position so far as we are concerned. As I said before—and I want to set the member for Collie right on this point—I did not say I wanted these railways to pay interest and sinking fund from the outset—no man could reasonably expect the railways would do that. Railways are supplied for the purpose of providing facilities to people who are handicapped by reason of the fact that they have not railways. But when the railway is constructed, they should put all their land under cultivation and make it produce to the extent that the railway will be a paying proposition, so that after a year or two the general taxpayer should not have to bear the burden. Some members have an idea that the general taxpayer is a good old horse that can carry any burden placed on his shoulders. But I would point out to those members that if too great a burden is placed on the general taxpayer they are defeating the very object they seek to accomplish, the settlement of the land, because if you absurd too great a proportion of the revenue, necessitating increased taxation,

you limit the ability of the consumer to buy the products of the farmers. There are hundreds of families on the goldfields who find it difficult now to buy anything other than the necessities of life; to them fruit is a luxury absolutely impossible to secure.

MEMBER: Fruit is a luxury in Perth.

MR. BATH: For the man on the goldfields with a wife and family, fruit is not often seen on his table; and it is because so large a proportion of his income is absorbed in paying taxation into the Treasury to make up the losses made on these works. The result is that the agriculturists cannot find a market for the sale of their products which the workers would be only too pleased to purchase if a greater proportion of their income were available for these things. What I do say and have said before is that I am prepared to support any proposal to construct a railway in any district where the people desiring it can assure Parliament that the line will not be a burden on the general taxpayers, and that those desiring the railway are willing to contribute, on the betterment principle, some portion of the cost of the work. The idea of the member for Collie in regard to this matter reminds me very much of the idea of the Irishman who, when he wanted to lengthen his blanket, cut a piece off one end and sewed it on the other end. That is precisely the idea of the member for Collie. He wants the general taxpayer to bear the burden, and to that extent desires to limit the taxpayer's power to purchase. The hon. member must recognise, as everyone else recognises, that the home market is the best possible market the agriculturist can secure, for when he has to go to the outside market he has to come down to the most economical producing stage in order to compete with others in the world's markets. The hon. member's idea was tried in the Eastern States, and has been dropped because when tried on railway systems there it has been found to be a failure. Those States have built public works out of loan funds, and put the burden of interest and sinking fund on the shoulders of the general taxpayer. But there is a limit to possibilities in that direction, and they soon found that limit. They found that the greater portion of their revenue was eaten up by interest and

sinking fund, and that the farther they went the more parlous did the position become. Those other States have already had to adopt the principle of saying to people who desire railway communication, "If you want the undoubted benefits which this railway will confer on you, you must at least contribute some proportion of the amount which those benefits will cost." If we want to be in a position of safety or stability so far as this State is concerned we should adopt precisely the same position. If the House is prepared to make a proposal for the betterment system in connection with these railways I have no desire to ask that an advisory board should report on this proposition; because if the people have to give a guarantee that the railway is not to be a burden on the taxpayer after a certain time has elapsed, by giving that guarantee they show their confidence in the possibilities of the district, and it is the best guarantee the State can have. In Victoria when people want a railway to any district the ratepayers and the shire councils in the district have to submit in writing a guarantee that they will find so much money, the money necessary to pay the interest on the outlay on the railway, before the Government begin to think of constructing the line.

MR. EWING: We get higher prices for the land by building these railways.

MR. BATH: If the hon. member will look at the maps he will see that a large area has already been taken up for which the Government cannot exact higher prices. After all, where the higher price obtained goes into ordinary revenue and is utilised in the way it is, securing higher prices for the land is not a greater advantage. If we could place money in a fund as they are doing in Queensland to-day, either for the purpose of constructing railways—

MR. MONGER: Since when?

MR. BATH: A Bill was passed through this year by Mr. Kidston. The money is to be utilised either for the construction of railways, or for sinking fund purposes, or for the redemption of the State's debt; but it is not to be used as revenue.

MR. MONGER: It is about time they had a sinking fund in Queensland.

MR. BATH: They have adopted a very different course there for the last two or three years. The alteration has been forced upon Queensland by the very policy which the hon. member is now supporting. For years they indulged in this policy and were brought to the verge of bankruptcy, until a man strong-minded enough arose and said: "We must cease from borrowing: we must remove the deficit that exists;" and in three years he has been able to accomplish it in spite of great opposition. That is the sort of financing that is needed when a State gets into difficulties such as Western Australia is in to-day. It is absolutely unfair to impose a burden on those people already sufficiently heavily burdened. Throughout the metropolitan and goldfields districts there are thousands of men practically reduced almost to the starvation limit, at any rate to the lowest existence, to an existence from one day to another without any hope for the future as to their livelihood, or of bettering themselves. If the State builds railway lines to increase the value of lands lying along the routes, the State itself scores little advantage. If the member for Collie has land lying along these routes, he places a burden on the general taxpayer so that he may get an increment to the value of his land.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Is not the producer on those spur lines increasing his traffic on the other lines? For instance, the traffic from Goomalling goes to Kalgoorlie.

MR. BATH: The hon. member must realise that expense is involved in getting the traffic. If we build a railway we do not bring the traffic along it without expense being involved. We must have station-masters, engine-drivers, guards, and other officers. The train will not run on its own automatically. It is absurd to say that we can put down a line and it will run without any expense. The traffic involves its own expense.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I admit it; but does not the traffic help the other lines of the country?

MR. BATH: Certainly, to an extent; but we have had these railways constructed before, and at present our main trunk

lines are not paying propositions. The goldfields railway is bearing the burden for the South-Western and Great Southern Railways and for other propositions in the State. I point out to the member for Collie that there is a difference between supporting a project such as the Norseman Railway, and a project such as this. In the case of the Norseman Railway we open a portion of the Eastern Goldfields already served by a railway bearing the burden of the whole railway system of the State, but on the other hand in the construction of this line we are building a spur line to a railway which is itself a non-paying proposition.

MR. MONGER: I will explain that if the Minister will not.

MR. BATH: I hope the hon. member will. We must not have roseate views of Ministers as to what these lines have in prospect. We want information as to the prospect as it stands to-day. In the Norseman proposition the inquiry board did not deal with the prospects of the future. They reported on the prospects as they were at the time, and they showed a loss. They made no allowance whatever for the future.

THE PREMIER: Did not the State Mining Engineer refer to the future?

MR. BATH: Yes; but I am talking about the estimates as to the traffic, cost of construction, working expenses, interest and sinking fund.

THE PREMIER: All problematical.

MR. BATH: No; they had a knowledge of the traffic going over the road, which could go by no other means. There they dealt with the matter as it stood, but in these propositions we have prophecies as to the future. That is the difference between the two. The board of inquiry referred to the traffic as it was. Here we are asked to vote on propositions with prophecies and predictions as to what the future will bring forth. The future has a happy knack of giving the lie to many predictions. It has given the lie in the case of the predictions regarding the Dowerin Railway, also in regard to the Goomalling Railway, and the Greenhills Railway; and if what the officers say is true in regard to the Kojonup line, the lie will

be given to the predictions given by the Minister last session. We really cannot rely on what Ministers tell us, because last session when the railway lines were before the House the Minister for Works, now the Treasurer, used Mr. Muir's report in order to advocate the Katanning-Kojonup proposition, and he went on to say that Mr. Muir in giving evidence before the Royal Commissioner on Immigration said:—

I have been through to Collie. I know all this country. I would put a spur line, or light line, from Katanning, picking up Kojonup, and join the Darkan-Williams line again.

I interjected:—"He deals with it only from an engineering point of view. He is not an agricultural expert." The Minister said:—

I venture to think that, although Mr. Muir is an engineer, he has, after many years' experience in going through the country and forming an idea of the best routes to be taken, some knowledge of what is good agricultural land.

So Mr. Muir on that account was put forward not only as an expert on engineering matters, but as having considerable knowledge in regard to the agricultural possibilities of the areas to be traversed by these lines. Now, when the member for Perth brings up the departmental reports which predict a heavy loss on the Kojonup line, the Minister for Works says that Mr. Muir, although an engineering expert, has no right to give any prediction whatever as to the agricultural possibilities, and that the House should not place reliance on his reports. When Mr. Muir's opinion is favourable it is to be accepted, but when adverse it must not be accepted, but must be cast aside because Mr. Muir has no knowledge on which to base his opinion. The reports are utilised just to suit the purpose for the time being. I move precisely the same amendment which I moved in connection with the preceding Bill:—

That the words "*now read a second time*" be struck out, and the following be inserted in lieu:—"Inquired into by a committee of experts, who shall report upon the project at an early date."

MR. F. MONGER (York): I must express my surprise at the attitude adopted

by the Leader of the Opposition, and at the methods he has adopted this evening and at the line of argument he pursued. In my early remarks I may say that if he had only fought when he was representing Western Australia the other day with the other representatives of State Parliaments in the same manner in which he is apparently fighting against something that appears to me and to most members on this side of the House, at all events, he would have been doing good. He went over to the other States as representative of Western Australia, and we saw his name occasionally in print but ever since he has come back to Western Australia we have never seen his name out of print and his support by argument to every proposition which means advancement to the State he is a member of always most cordially given. We come now to the extension of a line of railway like the one under consideration, which I may tell members sitting on the Opposition side was to have been the first agricultural line submitted by a previous Government; and when I tell them that the Government engineer and the Government surveyors who have surveyed and engineered this particular line say this land is without doubt the best piece of agricultural land to be tapped by a small line of railway, I think they may reasonably waive those little defects which they may consider they should deal with. I will admit that the construction of the first 12 to 14 miles of the first agricultural line ever built in Western Australia, from a financial standpoint has not been a success. I will admit it most freely, for the simple reason that the line, instead of being constructed for 14 miles should have been constructed for 40 miles. Had it been constructed on a 40-mile basis instead of 14 miles it would have been a payable proposition. I would also point out to members that this first agricultural line of railway cost nearly £1,000 a mile, whereas in the present instance the Government propose to extend it a further 30 or 35 miles at an expenditure of something like £1,150 a mile. There is a big difference. You have seen the figures and there is no need for me to go through them; but

as far as I can gather, 12 months from to-day, if this line is carried out, there will be under cultivation 50,000 acres which will serve this line. Surely that deserves some little amount of consideration from members on the Opposition side. Within 12 months from the construction, a hundred thousand acres will be under cultivation. [Interjection by MR. SCADDAN.] There is no sandplain on the route that this proposed line takes.

MR. SCADDAN: Then the map is wrong.

MR. BATH: It is a good bit of country, I will admit that.

MR. MONGER: It was only a few months ago that the Premier did me the honour to take a trip through this particular locality. There are other routes which certain people were desirous should be adopted. Members will give the Premier credit for knowing country when he sees it. He did not go through that country in the nice portion of the year. He went through in the middle of March, when there are no pleasures in traversing that part of Western Australia. At the time I asked the Leader of the Opposition if he would be kind enough to accord his company to the party going out, but for reasons, business or otherwise, he did not accept the invitation.

MR. BATH: I was away up on the Murchison in March.

MR. MONGER: However, I gave the hon. member an opportunity of being present. I likewise extended the invitation to several others who sit on the Opposition side of the House, but none of them cared to take on the hardships of the trip.

MR. BOLTON: Say it again.

MR. MONGER: Yes, I will say it. The member for North Fremantle was I believe going through greater hardships than we were, when he was traversing the wilds of the North-West, about Pilbarra. An opportunity was given to any who felt disposed to avail themselves of it. In the course of his remarks the Leader of the Opposition made reference to the great work that Queensland is doing in connection with the construction of her agricultural and other railways.

MR. BATH: No; I did not make any such reference.

MR. MONGER: I would like to tell members that it is time Queensland did something in that direction or in the direction suggested by the hon. member's speech.

MR. BATH: I only referred to Queensland's straightening up the finances.

MR. MONGER: I can quite understand it is necessary for her to straighten up finances, with her big debt and her small sinking fund. I would like it to be borne in mind how great that sinking fund is compared with Western Australia; a sinking fund of £68 at the end of June 1905, as compared with 1½ millions in Western Australia. However, I think the Government have done a fair thing in introducing this particular line of railway, which has been under the notice of the people of Western Australia for the past two years which, as I said in my preliminary remarks, should have been the first agricultural line extended, and which according to the Government surveyors and engineers is likely to be the most productive agricultural line now under consideration or considered in the past.

MR. SCADDAN: There was not this particular route two years ago.

MR. MONGER: I am glad of that interjection for the simple reason that ever since I have had an opportunity I have said it is not for members of Parliament to say to Ministers that a line must take one particular direction, a point north or a point south. When members of Parliament start engineering, they show that they have, or appear to have some particular interest in one line. As far as I am concerned, I would not care if the line went a point north or a point south. In accordance with the reports of such men as Mr. Muir, Mr. Brockman, and Mr. Dartnell and others, I believe the line is going in the proper direction.

MR. SCADDAN: There are one or two others you might mention.

MR. MONGER: I have read them all.

MR. SCADDAN: What about the report of Mr. Burnett; have you read that?

MR. MONGER: I will give that in.

MR. SCADDAN: Have you read his report?

MR. MONGER: I say with all due deference I believe that the Government have in their wisdom taken the most advisable and best route in the interests of the people of the State living eastward of York and to the eastward of Beverley.

MR. SCADDAN: Have you seen Mr. Burnett's report?

MR. MONGER: I have seen the lot of them. This is the first time I have had an opportunity of making any remark to which any sort of publicity will be given. I do not care what Mr. Burnett may have said, but I say that from these recommendations and the plan shown this is the most desirable and the most advisable line that could be taken in hand. Do you want any more clear statement? Would you like to come out with me in the course of a few weeks to visit the country?

MR. SCADDAN: In the course of a few minutes I would.

MR. MONGER: Mr. Brockman is a man known practically from one end of Western Australia to the other. From the Kimberleys in the far North as an explorer, an explorer of the latest portion of Western Australia which has been placed on the maps, down to Eucla in the far South, and if any man can be found to come and say that Mr. Brockman as an explorer and surveyor, and Mr. Muir as an engineer are not capable of advising, and of advising far better than any member in this House as to the route which this particular line of railway should take, he is cleverer than I have for a moment thought him to be.

MR. SCADDAN: He only went over the one route; he did not recommend any other.

MR. MONGER: You are talking of something you know little about, and if you make an innuendo like that you have evidently heard one side of the story. I shall be glad to hear any unpleasant remarks you may have to make about that gentleman, and I will tell you plainly that if they are unpleasant you would not care to repeat them in his presence, outside the precincts of the privileges which Parliament gives you.

MR. SCADDAN: Are you authorised to make that challenge in the House?

MR. MONGER: Yes.

MR. SCADDAN: Put up your money.

MR. SPEAKER: Order!

MR. MONGER: However, I have heard things of that sort before, and it is unfair for members sitting on the Opposition side to for one moment lead the public to think that any unfair tactics have been adopted. I challenge them to consider the reports as furnished to the Government. I challenge them to go round and make personal inspection, and if the Government surveyors and engineers have made a mistake and members can point it out, no one would be more pleased than myself to be one of the first to get up and say that the recommendations should not be made. In talking about the line I have only a few words farther to say. Along this line there are half a million acres of first-class land, a big proportion of which has already been taken up. To be particular, 479,000 acres of first-class land are to be found along this line, and are available for settlement, capable of producing, not in the language of those who come from South Australia, so many bushels to the acre, but so many bags to the acre. I have seen a wheat crop in this country which 20 years ago was looked on as absolutely valueless, but which is now capable of producing eight or nine bags of wheat to the acre. When we have country lands within a reasonable distance of this line which originally cost £4,000 per mile to construct as against £1,150 as proposed at the present time, I say it is the duty not only of members of the Opposition but members sitting on the Government side to give every support to the Bill. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

On motion by MR. H. BROWN, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at five minutes past 11 o'clock, until the next day.