

On motion by Hon. T. F. O. BRIMAGE, debate adjourned until the next sitting.

SUPPLY BILL, £1,000,000.

Received from the Legislative Assembly, and, on motion by the MINISTER FOR LANDS, read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eight minutes past 9 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 22nd July, 1902.

Election Return, Swearing-in—The late Premier, Letter from Mrs. Leake—Papers pre-ented—Questions to Ministers, length of notice—Libel Prosecution (R. C. Spear)—Railway Siding at Sawyers' Valley—Death in Fremantle Lock-up—Land Purchases at Rocky Bay—Drainage Scheme, Perth Suburbs—Water Rate at Jeederville, Refusal to Strike—Sitting Days and Hours, Amendment, division—Government Business, Precedence—Printing Committee: Hansard Reports, to Curtail; division—Sessional Committees—Supply Bill, all stages—Address-in-reply, second day of debate; Amendment—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

ELECTION RETURN—SWEARING-IN.

The SPEAKER reported having received a return to the writ issued for the election of a member for the Murray (in room of Mr. W. J. George, resigned), showing that Mr. William Atkins was duly elected. The member, being sworn, took the oath and his seat.

THE LATE PREMIER.

LETTER FROM MRS. LEAKE.

THE SPEAKER announced that he had forwarded to Mrs. Leake the resolution passed by the House sympathizing with her in the loss she had sustained by the death of her husband; and that

he had received the following letter, which she asked him to read to the House:—

21st July, 1902.

Please convey to the Legislative Assembly my sincere thanks for their kind sympathy to myself and family; also my deep appreciation of the honour paid to my dear husband in placing on record his services to this State.—Yours truly, LOUISA E. LEAKE.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, Report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the conduct and completion of the Coolgardie Water Scheme. 2, Regulations under Lands Acts. 3, Regulations under Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act. 4, Regulations under Trade Unions Act. 5, By-laws under Cemeteries Acts. 6, By-laws under Parks and Reserves Act. 7, By-laws under Roads Acts. 8, Report dealing with reserves "B" under Permanent Reserves Act. In regard to the first paper, he said the appendices and evidence had not yet been printed, nor had he in hand a sufficient number of copies of the report to be able to supply each member with one at present; but in a couple of days he would have the whole report and the evidence and appendices printed, so that each member should have a copy.

Order: To lie on the table.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS, LENGTH OF NOTICE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Walter James), addressing members generally, requested that in giving notice of questions to be asked on a future day, the replies should be made returnable in not less than 48 hours. Two days' notice was short enough in the case of questions involving much research. In the case of urgent questions, Ministers would endeavour to reply at once.

LIBEL PROSECUTION (R. C. SPEAR).

Mr. J. L. NANSON asked the Premier:—1, Why, after the defendant had pleaded justification, did the Crown enter a *nolle prosequi* in the charge against Richard Clarke Spear of criminally libelling Mr. Justice Parker. 2, Seeing that the defendant pleaded justification, and that the charges were made against a Judge of the Supreme Court,

will the Government take what steps may be necessary to reinstitute proceedings against Richard Clarke Spear for libel. 3, In view of the fact that the defendant Richard Clarke Spear, has already twice been put to the expense of defending himself on another count, will the Government provide him with the necessary funds for his defence in a farther trial, in which the charges in respect to which he has pleaded justification could be investigated. 4, By whom were borne the expenses of the prosecution in the two previous trials of Richard Clarke Spear, and in the third trial in which a *nolle prosequi* was entered. 5, What was the total amount of all such expenses, including solicitors' costs and fees to counsel.

The PREMIER replied, as follows:—
1, To the first charge made against Mr. Spear he relied upon the defence of privilege, contending that the article complained of was a report of what transpired in Parliament. This defence prevented Mr. Justice Parker from meeting the charges made, and no evidence could be given by him inasmuch as the defence assumed that the article was libellous. Two trials were had on this issue, and at no time was justification suggested. After the second trial Mr. Justice Parker was interviewed by Mr. R. S. Haynes, who showed the learned Judge the following letter received by Mr. Haynes from Mr. Spear's mother:—

Sydney, 12, Jersey Road, Paddington,
December 3, 1901.

Dear Mr. Haynes,—Will you lend me a helping hand in this matter. You already know it. My son is committed for trial for alleged libel on Judge Parker, Perth. It is fearful to think of. I do trust that you will endeavour to help him through. Richard Clarke Spear is the defendant. I am an old friend of your dear mother, and was one of her favourite pupils in dear old Maitland. Years have rolled by and the anxieties of life are upon us. My sister, Mrs. Bond, requested me to write you on the subject. She is very much distressed about it, and so are all the family. I don't remember you Mr. Haynes, except as a little boy in your dear father's schoolroom. I will close this sad letter and trust that you will do all in your power. He is too young to be placed on trial. For God's sake try and do what you can for him. I was shocked almost to death when I heard of it. I never took a part in a defamation of character, and it cuts me to the heart. We are all journeying on the same road, and as the lesson in the Catholic and all schools says, "What doth it

profit a man if he gain the world and lose his soul."—P.S.: If you are acquainted with Judge Parker show him this letter, or see him. —Yours ever sincerely, C. E. SPEAR.

Mr. Justice Parker, on the representations of Mr. Haynes, and on reading the above letter, wrote the Crown Solicitor as follows:—

Judge's Chambers, Perth,
12th December, 1901.

Re: v. Spear.

Dear Mr. Burnside,—The Hon. R. S. Haynes yesterday read me a letter from the defendant's mother, who is greatly distressed at her son's position. In these circumstances I shall be content if you abandon the prosecution.—
Faithfully yours, S. H. PARKER.

It is to be borne in mind that up to this date there had been no suggestion even that the article in question was true in any particular. Upon that letter the farther proceedings were abandoned, and Mr. Spear, who was aware of the reasons, expressed his gratitude to the Crown Solicitor for the action of the learned Judge. On the 17th December Mr. Justice Parker wrote stating that immediately on his return from England he would ask for a Commission to inquire into the charges contained in the article read in Parliament. Cabinet agreed to this, and subsequently decided that a prosecution should be instituted against Mr. Spear in respect of an article (called article No. 2) appearing in his paper, but which was not the article read in Parliament. On his return to Western Australia Mr. Justice Parker was informed of what had been done, and replied as follows in a letter, with which I entirely concur:—

Perth, 31st March, 1902.

Dear Mr. Wood,—I have read the information against Spear and his plea. I am not inclined to proceed with the prosecution, because I virtually promised Mr. Haynes, in reply to Spear's mother's appeal to me, that I would abandon the prosecution, and also because the article upon which the information is founded is mild compared with the article read in the Legislative Assembly, and I desire an inquiry into all the charges made against me. Before I left for England, in December last, I wrote the Attorney General that I should ask for a commission to deal with the matter, and this I propose doing. I may add that I doubt if a jury would find that the libel bears the meanings alleged in the information. When the last trial was on Mr. Burt told me he did not think there was much in the article upon which the present information is laid, and if there is a doubt about its meaning the jury should certainly give Spear the benefit of

it. Consequently it seems to me advisable to enter a *nolle prosequi*—Yours faithfully, S. H. PARKER.

Upon this letter a *nolle prosequi* was entered. The defendant had pleaded justification to portions only of the statements in article No. 2, and the circumstances in connection with that plea are shown by the Crown Solicitor's memo. on the file at page 69. 2, No. The only matter which concerns Mr. Justice Parker is the article read in Parliament; with what journals of the class of the *Spectator* may charge on their own initiative. Mr. Justice Parker should, I imagine, feel no more concern than any other member of the community. The preservation of the honour and integrity of the Bench is the plain duty of the Government: that duty would be violated if notice were taken of such charges in such journals. 3, Most certainly not. Mr. Justice Parker desires and has more than once expressed his request for a Commission to deal with the charges contained in the article read in Parliament. As Mr. Spear shielded himself by the plea of privilege on two trials when he was charged with libel in publishing that article, Mr. Justice Parker has no redress except by a Commission. The Government have decided to appoint a Commission as soon as the debate on the Address-in-reply is terminated. 4, By the Government, who will always gladly bear all expense in defending Judges from such attacks as were embodied in the article read in Parliament. 5, £84 7s. 6d.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SIDING AT SAWYERS' VALLEY.

MR. JACOBY asked the Minister for Works and Railways: Whether he could state when a commencement would be made with the construction of the new loading siding at Sawyers' Valley.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS AND RAILWAYS replied: On or about 1st August.

QUESTION—DEATH IN FREMANTLE LOCK-UP.

DR. HICKS asked the Colonial Secretary: Whether the man who was found dead in the Fremantle Lock-up on July 15th received medical attention at any time between his admittance and being found dead.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: Medical attention was not received in this case, as there was no indication that it was needed. Deceased was taken to the lock-up at 9 p.m., and was visited at 10 and 10.45, when he was breathing naturally, and, as far as could be observed by the police officer, did not require special attention.

QUESTION—LAND PURCHASES, ROCKY BAY.

MR. DIAMOND asked the Premier: 1, Whether it was true that large purchases of land had been made on behalf of the Government on both sides of the Swan River, in the neighbourhood of Rocky Bay. 2, If so, under what authority such purchases had been made. 3, What was the object of such purchases. 4, What was the total amount of the purchase money up to date. 5, What was the amount of commission paid to or due to the agents employed. 6, Whether it was the intention of the Government to make farther purchases.

THE PREMIER replied: 1, Yes. 2, Under the authority of a decision of Cabinet. 3, The Government is of opinion that the question of building a dock at Fremantle should be decided without farther delay. To enable Parliament to adopt the scheme so strongly recommended by the late Engineer-in-Chief and his successor, together with the necessary railway deviation, and to do so without compelling the State to pay exorbitant prices for land resumed, the Government authorised the purchases in question. The purchases made include an area large enough for all requirements, and a liberal margin surrounding station sites, by the sale of which the people of this State will obtain some benefit from the large increment resulting from the construction of this public work. The purchase also includes a large foreshore frontage for future harbour requirements. 4, £44,181. 5, Mr. J. P. Learmonth, who has purchased the whole of the land, is the only paid agent, and he is under oath not to take, either directly or indirectly, any profit outside his commission of 5 per cent., but all commissions received by him from the vendors are to be credited against this sum. Mr. Gardiner, at the urgent request of the late Premier and his Ministers, agreed to check prices and

supervise, and assist the scheme on behalf of the Government, but declined to accept, either directly or indirectly, any payment, rebate, or commission from the Government, or from the agent, or any other person. 6, The Government intend, unless Parliament otherwise directs, to resume the balance of the land necessary to complete the scheme as early as possible, so as to take advantage of the land values established by adjoining purchases. The rents of the houses, etc., purchased will return interest of about 2 per cent. on the total purchases to date.

QUESTION—DRAINAGE SCHEME, PERTH SUBURBS.

MR. DAGLISH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Whether he was aware of the urgent necessity for establishing a drainage scheme in the suburbs. 2, Whether some provision for this work would be made on the Estimates by a vote for each suburban municipality; or 3, Whether the Government would undertake to introduce a measure establishing an elective board to deal comprehensively with the subject so far as the whole metropolitan area was concerned.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, 2, 3, The whole question of metropolitan and suburban drainage has received consideration, and it is intended at once to appoint a commission, whose duty it will be to submit a comprehensive scheme.

QUESTION—WATER RATE AT LEEDERVILLE, REFUSAL TO STRIKE.

MR. DAGLISH asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the refusal of the Metropolitan Waterworks Board to strike a water rate at Leederville, and to the consequent exorbitant charges for water imposed upon the residents. 2, What steps the Government proposed to take with a view to remedying this.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, No. 2, The Metropolitan Waterworks Board acts under statutory authority, which can only be altered by Parliament. The chairman of the board states that, owing to the low ratable value of property in Leederville, the board cannot, for financial reasons, con-

sent to adopt a water rate in lieu of the present system of fees which was adopted after consultation with the municipality.

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

THE PREMIER moved formally:

That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, at 4:30 p.m., and shall sit until 6:30 p.m., if necessary; and, if requisite, from 7:30 onwards.

MR. R. HASTIE (Kanowna) moved an amendment:

That the figure "4" be struck out, and "2" inserted in lieu.

A motion similar to this was always moved at the beginning of a session; yet as the work of each session proceeded, members found there was more work to be done than there was time to get through it. A start on a better plan should be made now. The experience of last session was that after sitting till ten o'clock at night, most members were pretty well tired of business; therefore it would be better and more conducive to the despatch of business if the sittings started earlier, as proposed in the amendment. Some other States in Australia had already started sittings at that hour, and although the alteration might be inconvenient to some members, he believed that after a little while all would be far more content with it than having to go rolling home about twelve o'clock at night. (General laughter.)

MR. P. STONE (Greenough) seconded the amendment. The House sat only three days a week, and the hours might be extended with advantage, particularly for country members.

THE PREMIER (in reply): It was to be hoped the House would not agree to the amendment. Not every member was able to come at two o'clock, as that would seriously interfere with his business duties. Already the demands Parliament made on the time of members were sufficiently exacting, or so exacting as to exclude a great number of men who desired to enter Parliament, as those men felt that the demands of Parliament would unduly conflict with their business interests. His experience, and he thought that of every member, was that we really did no good practical work until we got well on in the

sitting every night. The earlier we commenced, the more talkative and loquacious the House appeared to be. It must be the experience of every member—even though he had only been here one session—that really all the work was done from 10 o'clock onwards.

MR. TAYLOR: In a very thin House.

THE PREMIER: No one could say we sat too late, and if the extra energy which would be demanded of members in the event of the House sitting the additional hours mentioned were put into the shorter hours they sat now, it would result in far more satisfactory work than was obtained at present. Not every member could afford to give up the whole of his time to his parliamentary duties.

MR. A. E. THOMAS: Country members gave up a good deal.

THE PREMIER: One did not like to be personal, but the hon. member should be the very last to talk of what country members did. Whilst in the position of Premier, or holding a Ministerial portfolio, a change of hours would make no difference to him, because he had not seen his private business, or even his private office, since he took this position. If we increased the hours of sitting, some members must either go out of Parliament or give up their business.

MR. J. L. NANSON (Murchison) would support the amendment if it were —

MR. J. M. HOPKINS (Boulder) rose to a point of order. He thought the Speaker ruled last session that the mover of a motion having replied, no other member had the right to discuss it.

THE SPEAKER: No.

MR. NANSON: If the work demanded of a member of Parliament had to be performed only in this Chamber, he would have been ready to support the amendment; but every member knew a good deal of work had to be done by members in select committees, and there was also the usual routine of a member outside the House. Under these circumstances he did not feel inclined to support the amendment, although he had no doubt country members would view it with favour. The question was entirely one for the House to decide as a whole, acting for the greatest good of the greatest number. He should support the motion of the leader of the House.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	18
Noes	...	...	...	25

Majority against ... 7

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Atkins	Mr. Butcher
Mr. Connor	Mr. Doherty
Mr. Daglish	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Diamond	Mr. Foulkes
Mr. Harper	Mr. Gardiner
Mr. Hassell	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Huatie	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Holman	Mr. Hicks
Mr. Hopkins	Mr. Higham
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Hutchison
Mr. Piesse	Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Reside	Mr. Jacoby
Mr. Stone	Mr. James
Mr. Taylor	Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Thomas	Mr. Monger
Mr. Wallace	Mr. Morgans
Mr. Yelverton	Mr. Nanson
Mr. Moran (Teller).	Mr. O'Connor
	Mr. Phillips
	Mr. Pigott
	Mr. Purkiss
	Mr. Quinlan
	Mr. Bason
	Mr. Throssell
	Mr. Holmes (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived, and the motion passed.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

The PREMIER moved:

That on Tuesdays and Thursdays Government business shall take precedence of all Motions and Orders of the Day.

Put and passed.

PRINTING COMMITTEE.

"HANSARD" REPORTS, TO CURTAIL.

The PREMIER moved:

That the Printing Committee for the present session shall consist of the following members, viz.: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hopkins, and Mr. Harper; to assist Mr. Speaker in all matters which relate to the printing executed by order of the House, and for the purpose of selecting and arranging for printing returns and papers presented in pursuance of motions made by members, and all papers laid upon the table, whether in answer to addresses or otherwise; and that it be an instruction to the Printing Committee to consider the desirability of curtailing the Hansard debates with a view of reducing the present cost.

MR. C. J. MORAN (West Perth): There was a danger in this motion, for if passed, the sense that was spoken, or sometimes the nonsense, would not appear on the records of the House. It would be much better for the Assembly to follow the New Zealand practice and endeavour to curtail the time for saying things, and

not endeavour to cut down the record of things said.

THE PREMIER (in explanation): It was not intended to confer upon the Printing Committee the right to adopt a course of procedure for curtailing the *Hansard* debates without consulting the House; but the motion was that it should be an instruction to the Printing Committee to consider the desirability of curtailing the *Hansard* debates with a view to reducing the present cost. The committee might suggest that it might be done by means of condensing reports—and he thought that the reports might stand a great deal of condensation—or by a time limit. Personally, he favoured condensation of reports.

MR. H. DAGLISH (Subiaco): The committee proposed was too small for this purpose, and if an inquiry of the sort was to be made it should be by a special committee, rather than by having the work thrown on three members. We were dealing with what was probably as important a matter as could be brought before the House, and he would like to see the latter part of the motion expunged.

MR. MORAN: Let the hon. member move that the last portion be struck out.

MR. DAGLISH moved an amendment:

That all the words after "otherwise" be struck out.

THE PREMIER: The House would, he hoped, support this proposal, which was introduced advisedly. We had a Printing Committee whose number was limited by Standing Orders, and the committee already dealt with very important matters, because it rested with that committee, in the absence of express direction from the House, to determine what papers should be printed. The committee had a special knowledge of this particular work, and were in other ways qualified to consider the question. When we had such committee, which *primâ facie* were qualified, we should avail ourselves of their services; and he hoped that, during this session, we should not have, as last session, a select committee moved for every day. It was carried to an extreme last session, and he hoped it would be avoided this. We could have the value of the advice of this committee, and it would then be competent for the

House to deal with the matter, or to refer the suggestion to a select committee.

MR. C. HARPER (Beverley): This motion was asking three members to express the opinions of the House, and those members were not instructed in any way as to what the House wished. They were asked to give their opinion of what should be done. That was not quite a fair position to put them in. If the members of the committee were to make suggestions the House should first say what it wanted. Was it with the question of cost only, or with the question of policy in respect to full reporting of debates, that the committee were to deal? To refer such a matter to the committee without giving full instructions would be hardly fair.

MR. HASTIE (Kanowna): Surely the motion meant the committee were to consider the subject, report to the House, and let the House deal with it.

THE PREMIER: Exactly.

MR. HASTIE: Then the motion could do no harm, but would merely have the effect of putting members in possession of the facts.

MR. NANSON (Murchison): The Government should accept the amendment, and make a farther motion later on, when there would be a fitter opportunity for full discussion.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. W. Kingsmill): One advantage of passing the motion would be that the committee could make necessary inquiries and report, after which the House would be in a better position to deal intelligently with the question than if it were now debated.

MR. F. ILLINGWORTH (Cue) supported the amendment. Why should such a question be submitted to a committee of the House? No committee should be asked to take such responsibility. Was it not desirable that members' utterances should be recorded? Every member had a right to free utterance in the House; and was it to be left to the committee to decide how much of what was said should be reported? Similar suggestions had been made elsewhere, but it did not appear they had been adopted; and it would be most invidious to allow the members of a committee, which might be almost under the control of the Government, to eliminate, either from their own or from other

members' speeches, what they might think it undesirable to print.

THE PREMIER: That was not intended by the motion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: There was much to be said for limiting the duration of speeches, but nothing in favour of recording speeches in part only. What part should be preserved? Who would decide what was or was not important? Were a member's utterances to be cut down by a committee so that the meaning of his speeches might possibly be seriously altered? Members should set their faces against the proposal, by voting for the amendment.

THE PREMIER (in reply): Surely in moving the motion he had made it clear that this would not give power to any committee to eliminate from the report any member's observations.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This was the first step in that direction.

THE PREMIER: The committee would have no power to do anything save to inquire and report. The observations of the last speaker were therefore beside the point.

MR. MORAN: Then why appoint a committee if no power were given it?

THE PREMIER: The Government considered that *Hansard* was too expensive, and that it contained too long reports of not very valuable speeches.

MR. DOHERTY: The Premier's, for instance.

THE PREMIER: Possibly his own speeches also—he admitted that; therefore it was considered that a reference of the question to the Printing Committee would be the fairest course, for those gentlemen were amply qualified to deal with it, and had not yet declined the task. The Government had deliberately taken this action, and by it they proposed to stand.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie) agreed with the Premier. If it were proposed that the committee should decide the question, he would oppose the motion; but the committee were merely to inquire and to suggest.

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

Ayes	...	...	...	15
Noes	...	...	...	27

Majority against ... 12

AYES.

Mr. Atkins
Mr. Butcher
Mr. Connor
Mr. Daglish
Mr. Doherty
Mr. Hassell
Mr. Hicks
Mr. Holman
Mr. Illingworth
Mr. Moran
Mr. Nanson
Mr. Taylor
Mr. Thomas
Mr. Yelverton
Mr. Jacoby (Teller).

NOES.

Mr. Diamond
Mr. Ewing
Mr. Foakes
Mr. Gardiner
Mr. Gordon
Mr. Gregory
Mr. Hastie
Mr. Hayward
Mr. Higham
Mr. Holmes
Mr. Hutchison
Mr. James
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Kingsmill
Mr. Monger
Mr. Morgans
Mr. O'Connor
Mr. Phillips
Mr. Piesse
Mr. Pigott
Mr. Purkiss
Mr. Quinlan
Mr. Rason
Mr. Reside
Mr. Stone
Mr. Throssell
Mr. Wallace (Teller).

Amendment thus negatived, and the motion passed.

SESSIONAL COMMITTEES.

On motions by the PREMIER, other committees for the session were appointed as follow:—

STANDING ORDERS COMMITTEE.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Illingworth, and Mr. Harper; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and authority to confer on matters of mutual concernment with any committee appointed for similar purposes by the Legislative Council.

LIBRARY COMMITTEE.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hicks, and Mr. Daglish; with leave to sit during any adjournment and during the recess, and with authority to act jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council.

REFRESHMENT ROOMS COMMITTEE.—Mr. Speaker, Mr. Hopkins, and Mr. Jacoby; with leave to sit during any adjournment, and during the recess.

SUPPLY (TEMPORARY).

Message from the Governor received and read, recommending appropriation from revenue and loan funds for the purposes of a Supply Bill, £1,000,000.

SUPPLY BILL.

On motion by the TREASURER (Hon. J. Gardiner), the House resolved into Committee of Supply, a formal resolution being passed, upon explanation by the Treasurer that this supply was practically for [two months of the financial year.

Bill introduced accordingly, passed all stages, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

SECOND DAY OF DEBATE—AMENDMENT.

Debate resumed from the previous Thursday.

MR. J. L. NANSON (Murchison): Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to move an amendment to the Address-in-reply; but before I do so, and before I deal with the subject matter of the amendment, I wish to take the opportunity of congratulating the member for East Perth (Hon. Walter James) on his accession to the high and honourable position of Premier of this State. [MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] There is, I suppose, no member in this House who is more warranted in the trust reposed in him; and I only regret that at the very threshold of his career as Premier of this State, it should be necessary for me to move an amendment which the Government of the day may think fit to regard as an amendment of no-confidence. I may point out, however, that the attitude of those members who sit on this (Opposition) side of the House in bringing forward an amendment of this description is not personal to the Premier, nor to those members who sit with him. We who sit on this side of the House, equally with those who sit on the other side, join in wishing the member for East Perth a long career in his position as Premier. But we can only wish him that long life in his exalted position with a qualification, and it is a very important qualification. If the hon. member will see the error of his political ways, and if he will frame a policy in accordance with the wishes of those of us who sit on this side of the House, then so little are we animated by desire for office on our own part that we should be only too happy, only too pleased, to give him the utmost loyal support he can demand. These are our conditions, however, that he should frame and endeavour to carry out a policy with which we are in accord; and seeing that he has not done so, we should be wanting in our duty as an Opposition if we did not take the first opportunity of challenging the policy of the Government. If I may be allowed to say so, in my

opinion the hon. member missed a very great opportunity when he was summoned by His Excellency the Governor to form a new Administration; for if there is one fact or one profession which stands out more clearly than another in the career of the hon. member, it is that he was or used to be opposed to the principle of party Government; and yet the first great opportunity in his political career that presents itself, when he has the opportunity given him to form a Ministry which would command the support of at least three-fourths of the members sitting on this side of the House, when he has the opportunity of putting on one side all the blunders that have disfigured the administration of the previous Government of which this is practically a continuation—the same Government, except that it has a new Premier and a new Treasurer, a new head and a new tail—when he has these great opportunities, instead of availing himself of them, instead of forming that stable Government which we have been told in the Speech of the Governor is that for which his heart has most yearned, he forms a Government strictly on party lines, and a Government wedded to the blunders of its predecessor. If there is one member in the House more than another who, if we look at this matter from a party point of view, might congratulate the hon. member upon forming a Government on party lines, that member, I venture to say, is myself, because had he done otherwise I should probably have had very few supporters on this side of the House, and I might have been left absolutely in a minority of one. But it is not the duty of an Opposition to look at these questions from the point of view of party, but from the point of view of the interests of the country; and I submit, therefore, that the hon. member made a very great blunder—not by any means, I fear, his last—when he decided to carry on with the old Ministry and to carry on its policy, which in some particulars has already earned the strong condemnation of the country. Another direction in which he strayed from the path of political rectitude is when he dismissed from his counsels the one member of the Government who more than another has escaped the lash of public criticism. I can well understand that it is an old device when the

ship of Government is amid the breakers and in danger of foundering, that it may be necessary in certain contingencies to find a Jonah, and cast him overboard to appease the angry waves. But in this instance the captain of the Government ship, though he did find a Jonah, certainly threw the wrong man overboard. If he wished to dismiss a colleague from the Treasury benches, there are other members who were more entitled to dismissal, and in regard to whom the country would have been more pleased if they had received their *congé* than the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth). On that eventful morning when the fate of the James Administration was hanging in the balance, and the member for Guildford (Hon. C. H. Rason) learnt that he was to be included in the Ministry, I can well understand the feeling of relief that came over him and the fervour with which he no doubt sang a *pæan* of praise, that old song with a variation, "Holmes, sweet Holmes!" I should have thought also that if the new Premier were considering whom he should throw overboard, he might have turned to his unfortunate colleague who had had charge of the railway administration and had come in for so much adverse comment. But when we heard the Speech of the Governor at the opening of the session, a light began to dawn on me as to why the member for Pilbarra (Hon. W. Kingsmill) had been retained; for, having made a hash of the railways, it was in accordance with the fitness of things that he should be placed in Ministerial control of those cookery classes which occupy so prominent a place in His Excellency's Speech. I can only hope, for the sake of the digestion of the community, that he will be more successful with regard to these cookery classes than he has been in relation to his administration of the railways. As to the member for Cue (Mr. Illingworth), who has been so scurvily treated, I hope that, like another Jonah—only he is undeservedly a Jonah—he will, after a due interval passed in the recesses of the Government cross-benches, appear safe, sound, and smiling upon the welcome shores of the Opposition. In his policy speech delivered in the time gone by, the Premier endeavoured to impress upon the audience that there was no great line of cleavage

based on principle between the members of this House. Upon that point I venture to join issue with him altogether, and it is for that reason I am bringing forward an amendment on the Address-in-reply based upon the railway policy of the Government. I propose to move, as an amendment on the Address before the House, to strike out the last clause of the motion, with a view to inserting the following:—"We desire, however, most respectfully to inform Your Excellency that the railway policy and administration of your advisers does not command the confidence of the majority of the members of the House." I need hardly point out that, in a country like Western Australia, where many of the settlements are separated from the coast by a tract of wilderness, and where many of those settlements depend for their food supplies upon what can be brought to them from outside, the railway policy of the country must, to a very large extent, affect the general prosperity of the population. The subject of railway policy and administration falls into several groups; at least two. There is first the question of raising the railway rates; then there is the question of the adoption of the Commissioner system; and finally there is that most unspeakable blunder, if not worse, on the part of the Government, the appointment of Mr. George to the position of Commissioner of Railways. Although it is now a month, certainly a good many weeks, since the Government first decided to raise the railway rates, the country has all that time been waiting for an explanation from a responsible Minister of the department why the rates were raised. When a deputation waited upon the Commissioner—I think it was a deputation, but anyhow the statement appeared from him in the Press—he stated that if it were found there was no necessity for raising the rates, the Government would immediately revert from the position they had assumed and bring the rates back to their former level. Surely a statement of that description augurs in itself a very weak sense of the responsibility attaching to a Government, when it makes so far-reaching a change in the administration of the railways as is involved in increasing the rates to the users of them; in other words, to the public as a whole.

We find that the Government, having launched with so little consideration into this vital change, have already discovered their mistake and are prepared to remit the increased rates with regard to agricultural produce. I must confess I do not wonder at it. Indeed, I congratulate them upon the fact that, having made a mistake, they have had the courage to admit it. But I do not think they cut a very good figure in the matter. In one sense they cut a very sorry figure. They have shown by their own admission that they have depressed the agricultural industry by the threat of these rates, and then when they find that they have made a mistake, and that the feeling of the country and of every responsible person is against them on the point, they are compelled to turn round and say, "Well, in that particular instance we made a mistake." No doubt the Government have seen they were wrong in one instance, and will also, if this amendment is sufficiently pushed home, see reason to have a sort of death-bed repentance on the subject, and to give way in regard to the rates on other articles of merchandise. If the Government should repent on that subject, if they should decide to change their mind while they have yet time, I have no doubt they will be given a longer lease of office, and I hope they will be given that lease of office on the condition that they bring their railway administration more into accord with the undoubted needs of the country. It is a singular fact that the very time the Government chose to raise these rates was when the railways were earning more than they had earned in proportion to the mileage in any previous year in the history of Western Australia, save in the year of the great boom, 1897. You would have thought, seeing the railways were doing so well and were earning more than they had ever earned before, save in one instance, that the Government would not choose a time like that to raise the rates. It cannot be much inducement to the users of those railways to find that the more they contribute to the revenue of the country in railway rates, the more the Government are determined to tax them. Last year the gross earnings of the railway per average mile worked amounted to £1,070, and if we go back to 1897 we find that is

the only year when a similar figure was reached. In that year the amount reached £1,103. In 1898 it dropped to £1,047; in 1899 £791; in 1900 £930; and in 1901 £1,000; and yet this is the year, the year in which the gross earnings of the railways were more per average mile than they have been since 1897, that the Government chose to impose this additional burden upon the community. It would almost seem as if the rates had been raised in obedience to that remarkable dictum of the Premier, uttered in the Town Hall a week or two ago, in which he declared in effect that the best way to secure satisfactory administration of the railways was to keep piling burdens upon the shoulders of the consumers, and that then you would so stir up the consumers that they would compel the Government to administer the railways properly! There may be something in that, from one point of view. I do not know if the Opposition needed stirring up on the subject, but we are determined, as representing the community, to stir the Government up on this question of railway rates; and I can only hope that the prescription of the Premier will have the desired effect, and that he will, through the agitation that is arising over this subject, return to the paths of sanity and wisdom in relation to it. While the gross earnings of the railways last year were higher than they have been ever before, save that one exception I have mentioned, we find that the working expenses per average mile have gone up very considerably. In 1897 the working expenses per average mile opened amounted to £696; in 1898 £807; in 1899 for some reason or other they fell to £560; in 1900 they rose again to £636; in 1901 to £731; and in 1902 to £920. Members who occupy the Treasury benches opposite—at least the original ones who have gone through the whole period since the late Mr. Leake was first chosen Premier—came into office pledged to sound economical administration. Well, what do we find? With regard to the railways the first effect here of the sound and effective administration which they were to give us is that the working expense per average mile worked has risen from £696 in 1897 to £920 in the year they were holding office. Even in the short space of one year it has risen

from £771 to £920. From a glance at these figures you can date the time when members opposite took office. Immediately they get into office, up go the expenses, notwithstanding all their protestations with regard to sound and economical administration. Then, of course, as the expenses went up so much we find that the earnings per average mile, after paying working expenses, were smaller than they have ever been since Western Australia got that great and new impetus which sprang from the discovery of Kalgoorlie and the rich mines on the eastern goldfields. In 1897 our railways earned, per average mile, £407; in 1898 only £240; in 1899 £230; in 1900 £294; in 1901 £228; and in 1902, the year in which the so-called economical administration assumed office, they dropped to £155. Surely that in itself is a grave indictment against the hon. gentlemen who occupy the Treasury benches. They came into office pledged to secure more efficient administration, pledged to secure economy, and yet the first result we see is that instead of economy having been secured, the railways cost more to work and their earning power is enormously diminished. It might be thought that one reason why the Government decided to raise those railway rates was that our railways were not paying, that they were not a magnificent national asset; but I would point out that notwithstanding all the Administration have done to diminish the credit of our railways as a national asset, notwithstanding the enormously heavy working expenses and the much decreased profits last year, if you take the actual profit on the loan capital expenditure on these railways, you will find they succeeded in earning interest to the amount of $3\frac{1}{4}$ per cent., and if you take interest on the total capital expenditure, that is money spent not only out of loan but also out of revenue, then they have succeeded in earning an interest equivalent to a little over 3 per cent.; and if you do not take into account the expenditure of the last two months you will find that the railways, during the first ten months of the last financial year, earned sufficient to pay $4\frac{1}{4}$ per cent upon their loan capital value. But during the last two months, for some reason or other which it is not for me to

explain, but for which I suppose we will get an explanation, if it be possible, from the Treasury benches, the expenditure has gone up by leaps and bounds, as if to signalise the entry of the hon. member for East Perth to the position of Premier. We have in the last month of the financial year an absolutely abnormal expenditure on the railways. During the last two months the expenditure on the railways reached £326,390, and the earnings during the same period £277,000, making for the two months an excess of working expenses over earnings of £49,390. I sincerely hope that those two months are not to be a sample of the railway administration of what, by courtesy, we call the new Government; but if in that time they can succeed in making a deficit of something like £50,000, it is alarming to contemplate what will be the deficit at the close of the financial year. If we compare the expenditure during those two months of May and June of the last financial year with the expenditure for May and June of 1901, we shall find that during the latter period it amounted to only £216,485, and that the expenditure for last month alone therefore exceeded the combined expenditure in May and June of 1901 by no less than £5,000. Last month's expenditure was double the expenditure for May and June of 1901. That, surely, requires some explanation from the occupants of the Treasury bench. We find, in consequence of the extravagant régime of the present Government, that the proportion of working expenses to revenue has been consistently on the up-grade. In 1898 it amounted to 77·11 per cent, in 1899 to 70·91, in 1900 to 60·40, in 1901 to 77·19, and in 1902—here again comes the usual record—it amounted to 85·3. And if we take the figures quarter by quarter for last year, if we take the proportion of working expenses to revenue for each quarter of the last financial year, we shall find it has increased from 82·5 per cent. in the September quarter to 101·6 per cent. in the June quarter. As I have already said, some explanation is demanded of figures of this sort; and I trust that when the endeavour is made to give us the explanation, it will not appear, as it does at present, that in order to support the policy of increasing the railway rates, an endeavour has been

made to blacken the financial character — if I may say so—of our railways, which are the greatest asset this country possesses, and the greatest security for our indebtedness. I sincerely hope it will not be found that the Government have done anything to unduly press the case, or to make the railway finances appear worse than they are, in order to buttress up the position they have assumed in regard to raising the railway rates. If it be a fact that in the past the rolling-stock has been allowed to get into a condition of disrepair, and that during the last financial year it was necessary to make up for some of the lee-way of the past—I am simply assuming, and I do not state it as a fact—if that be the case, then I submit that no Government have a right to attempt to undo in one year what has been spread over a period of years. If it has taken several years for the rolling-stock of the railways to get into a condition of serious disrepair, then several years should be occupied in bringing back the rolling-stock to a proper condition.

THE PREMIER: And what becomes of the traffic in the meantime? (**MINISTERIAL MEMBERS:** Hear, hear.)

MR. NANSON: That question hardly accords with the Premier's reputation for perspicacity. Surely he can see that the traffic in the meantime must be attended to, that the rolling-stock must be repaired, but that the burden of the expenditure should be spread over a number of years. The matter can be adjusted by bookkeeping; but no attempt should be made to make persons outside the State who are interested in our securities fancy that our railways are going back, that their earning power is diminishing, and that Western Australia is, therefore, on the down grade. We can have no surer indication of the soundness and the prosperity of a country than the earning capacity of its railways; and I say without hesitation that no impression has, unfortunately, got abroad that our railways are no longer the property they used to be; and it is not so generally known outside the State as within it that the hon. members responsible for creating that impression were the very members who, when they sat on this (Opposition) side of the House, could never express any very strong

faith in the capabilities or resources of this country. And we know that the evil tradition clings to them still; that every great work undertaken for the development of Western Australia was opposed by these hon. members when they sat in opposition—[**OPPOSITION MEMBERS:** hear, hear]—and whatever may be the record of the present Opposition, I hope we shall never attack the Government when they bring forward proposals which will lead to the development of our resources and to making employment more plentiful for our people. The idea that the railways of Western Australia are not on so good a basis as those of the Eastern States, or that they are on a basis which necessitates the raising of the rates charged to the consumers of the lines is, I contend, absolutely fallacious. If we look into the earnings of the railways of Australia during the year ended 30th June, 1901, the latest for which figures are yet available, we shall find those earnings were: for New South Wales, 8·9 per cent.; for Queensland, 1·3 per cent.; for South Australia, 3·8 per cent.; for Tasmania, 1·2 per cent.; and for Victoria, 3·4 per cent.; while during that period our railways earned on their loan capital expenditure an interest of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.—as high a rate of interest as is earned by any railway system in the world at the present time.

MR. J. J. HOLMES: What is the difference in the capital cost per mile of their railways and ours?

MR. NANSON: We shall come to that, perhaps, later.

MR. A. J. DIAMOND: What about the passenger traffic?

MR. NANSON: I think the Government would have done well to bear these facts in mind before deciding to increase the rates. If we consider the Western Australian railways during the financial year ended June, 1901, earned $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., we have the best possible reason for declaring that no sufficient case has been made out for raising the rates. I know the peculiar theories held by the Premier with regard to railway finances, because he enunciated these theories in his so-called policy speech at the Perth Town Hall. The intention of the Government is, I understand, to compel the railways to earn interest not only on the loan capital expenditure, but on expendi-

ture which has been made out of revenue, and also to pay sinking fund and working expenses. Now, I submit this is exposing our railway system to an ordeal that is not expected of any other railway system in the world. That seems a strong statement, but it can be substantiated by reference to the best authorities on railway matters. Take, as an instance, the railways of the United Kingdom. What attempt are these railways, with their enormous capital of 800 millions, making to contribute towards sinking funds?

THE PREMIER: Many of them do not allow for depreciation.

MR. NANSON: Well, that will help to prove my argument.

THE PREMIER: It will not prove that you are right, though.

MR. NANSON: It may be that the Western Australian railways are managed in that respect better than English railways; but we find that, in the most prosperous year the English railways had ever known, they never succeeded in earning an average of more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest; and that year is purely exceptional. Look at the present railway earnings in the United Kingdom, and we find that nothing like $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. interest is returned; and even in that most prosperous year, out of a capital of 700 millions sterling, something like 60 millions utterly failed to earn a half-penny worth of interest at all. The United States has been made by its great railway policy. In that country, we find the railways do not earn interest exceeding something like 3·10 per cent., and that of their rolling-stock, two-thirds pays no interest at all, while more than 18 per cent. of their bonds are in default. Western Australian railways, under Sir John Forrest's administration, from the beginning of Responsible Government or from the discovery of the goldfields, never failed to earn not only working expenses but interest as well, and in some years brought in a handsome profit to swell our revenue. In one year in particular the railways paid interest on cost of construction, working expenses, and enough in addition to pay the interest on nearly the whole of our public debt. As to payments towards sinking fund, it is surely obvious that as the country progresses its railways become more valuable, and if they can be

kept in a state of efficiency there can be no need to burden them with a sinking fund. The English railways could never attempt to contribute towards sinking funds in respect of their enormous capital values; and in New South Wales, where the railways cost between 30 and 40 millions to build out of loan funds, we find that the railways were valued some years ago at upwards of 40 millions sterling. And surely we have a very poor faith in Western Australia if we think that, as the State advances, as population increases, and as the country is opened to settlement, our railways become less instead of more valuable! Another point regarding the railway policy of the Government is that although the Government have now given way to the farmer, they have not yet done anything to lessen the burden imposed on the goldfields by reason of the increased rates. Surely that is an injustice to the goldfields. [**MEMBER:** They feel it.] They do undoubtedly feel it. I should be glad to hear members representing the goldfields deny the fact. The goldfields population feel it as an injustice that their lines should be compelled to bear practically the whole of the burden of the unprofitable railways in the State.

MR. HOPKINS: They have always had to bear that.

MR. NANSON: Unfortunately, the Railway Department of Western Australia is somewhat slow in furnishing information to Parliament and to the public, and we do not yet know what, during the last or even during the preceding financial year, was the loss on the individual lines of railway. The latest figures I have been able to disinter deal only with the year ended June, 1900; and in that year the South-Western Railway incurred a loss of £44,626, the Great Southern Railway £33,436, and the Northern Railway £17,000 odd, making a total loss of £95,000. Now during that period the Eastern Goldfields Railway made an actual profit over and above working expenses and payment of interest of £58,000; and if we add to that one-third of the traffic between Fremantle and Northam—which is surely a moderate estimate of the goldfields traffic—we shall find that the amount we arrive at is almost precisely the same as the loss on those other railways. We

find therefore that the Eastern Goldfields Railway had been compelled in the past, and if the Government get their way it will doubtless be compelled in the future, to bear the whole loss on the unprofitable lines.

THE PREMIER: What would you do?

MR. NANSON: The Premier asks what would I do. So long as Western Australia is a country in the stage of development, and with our vast territory it will be for many years to come in that stage, we must have railways which for some years after they are built may be unprofitable; and I shall be the last to contend that we should always refuse to build a railway because it does not promise to earn a profit from the time it is opened. I contend that where there is a railway deficit, it should not be drawn solely from one section of the railway system, whether on the goldfields or on the coast, but should be drawn from the community as a whole; and that instead of being taken out of the pockets of the users of our railways, it should be drawn out of the general revenue, so that it will not press unequally on any section of the community.

THE PREMIER: Then you would reduce the rates on the goldfields railways to make up the loss on other sections?

MR. NANSON: I would not only go back to the former rates on the goldfields railways, but if it were possible I would still farther reduce the rates on goldfields traffic.

THE PREMIER: And you would reduce them below the paying point?

MR. NANSON: That is a point I am coming to. I am in favour of bringing the charges on the goldfields to the very lowest possible level.

MR. GORDON: They are at that now.

MR. NANSON: I believe the goldfields people have a different opinion. We have to bear in mind that now the war in South Africa is at an end, we are face to face with a very tangible revival in the South African goldfields, and it is significant that the newspapers in London are repeatedly pointing out that in South Africa one of the first results of the peace will be a large reduction in the railway rates there. If we wish the gold-mining industry in this State to hold its own in competition with a similar industry in other parts of the world, we

must do everything in our power to reduce the cost of production; and it cannot be said the cost of production is a very light item. One of the first duties of any Government is to endeavour so far as they can, not necessarily by reducing wages in the gold-mining industry, that being out of their province, but to reduce so far as is consistent with the general interest the cost of transport to the mines. [**THE PREMIER:** Hear, hear.] I am glad the Government are in favour of that, and it is evident they have got a ladder ready by which they intend to "climb down." It seems to me there is a great question of cleavage; but perhaps that cleavage may not appear, if it be true that the light of conviction is already breaking over the Premier. I submit it may be better in some circumstances to incur a slight loss on our railways, so long as we are helping forward the industries of the State, in order to get indirect advantage by promoting the prosperity of our industries. A recognised authority in England in connection with railways, speaking on the commercial lines of the United Kingdom, has stated that interest on capital never enters into the consideration of a manager in fixing the rates of a railway, but that he considers what the traffic will bear. So also in regard to our West Australian railways, it stands to reason that the guiding principle should be that we must not charge the traffic more than it can bear. I am convinced that in raising these rates the Government have imposed a burden heavier than our industries are capable of bearing. They have already admitted this is so in regard to the agricultural rates; and nothing has aroused my sympathy more than when, a few weeks ago, I was travelling through a portion of the country with the Minister for Lands, and was obliged to witness the very awkward position he was placed in; for while on the one hand he was preaching land settlement with all the vigour of a new convert, on the other hand he was complaining of the action of his colleague, the Minister for Railways, in making it impossible to settle people on the land. He was compelled to admit that on this question he was out of sympathy with his colleague; and so we had the astonishing fact that the Government, instead of acting as a

whole, were acting as disjointed atoms. I am glad to find that the occurrence of a Ministerial crisis has enabled the Minister for Lands to get his guns into position and bombard the Minister for Railways, compelling him to bring down these rates. I come now to the question of the future management of our railways, whether they shall be managed, as they have been in the past, by a Minister responsible to Parliament and to the people, and by a General Manager, or whether they shall be managed by Commissioners. I can understand that the Government, or rather the Minister for Railways, having got the railways into so much of a tangle, should have been only too glad to seize on any device for enabling him to throw some of the responsibility off his shoulders on to the shoulders of the unfortunate Mr. George. The member for Pillbarra (Hon. W. Kingsmill), who was then Minister for Railways, went to the other colonies to represent this State at the Premiers' Conference; and during that visit, in addition to the junketings, he found time to inquire into the Commissioner of Railways system of management; and having been in conversation with some of the Commissioners of Railways, he came back to this State an ardent convert to that system. Well, it rather amused me when he said the Commissioners in the Eastern States spoke highly of that system. I have always found, in my experience, that most men speak highly of their own billets.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. W. Kingsmill): When did I say that?

MR. NANSON: The hon. member was reported in the Press as making that statement after his return; but if he denies the statement, I am ready to accept his denial. I may assume, therefore, that the Railway Commissioners in the Eastern States did not express themselves as favourable to the Commissioner system. (General laughter.) I assume the hon. member owed his conversion to some innate process, and not to any special knowledge he acquired; that finding himself in a regular tangle, he decided to throw off some of his responsibility as Minister, and cast it on the shoulders of Commissioners.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That solution is not quite right, either.

MR. NANSON: However, the system which the Government have now adopted is not one incapable of being criticised. In the first place, they started out with the idea that they would go in for non-political control of the railways; then the spectre of the Labour party loomed large, and they decided to modify that intention; and now they have given us a system which is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red-herring. It is not non-political control of the railways, and it is not all-political control of the railways. I should be inclined to term it irresponsible control of the railways. The system they propose has all the disadvantages of non-political control, and absolutely none of its advantages. The question of rates, the question of wages, and the question of dealing with men employed on the railways, are all to be in the hands of the political head of the Railway Department; so we have this position created that, if a mistake is made and if fault is found with the administration, the Commissioner will be able to say it is not his fault but that of the Minister, while when the Minister is blamed in this House, or when a deputation goes before him, he will be able to say, "I am very sorry, but that is out of my control: it belongs to the Commissioner." Those of the public who may have grievances in connection with the railways will have to spend their time in hunting between the departments of railway control, between the Minister and the Commissioner; and I venture to think they will ultimately give up the quest in despair, and that if the Commissioner system is adopted they will give it very short shrift, and put in a Government that will not be afraid to take responsibility on its shoulders.

At 6-30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7-30, Chair resumed.

MR. NANSON (continuing): When we reached the hour for adjournment, I was referring to the Commissioner system of the Eastern States. Had that system in the Eastern States been an unqualified success, we could have understood the action of the Government in urging its adoption here; but instead of the system to appoint three Commissioners to control the railways having proved a success, we

find that, having been adopted in different States, it has been discarded by them all, I believe, with the exception of New South Wales. New Zealand, which adopted the Commissioner system first, abandoned it altogether, and has gone back to political control, with a general manager and permanent staff. Queensland, Victoria, and South Australia all started with three Commissioners, and each one of them has abandoned the system in favour of one Commissioner. In each of those States the Commissioner is virtually general manager under another name. It matters very little what name you give the permanent official at the head of the railways. That is a matter of very small importance. But the character and capability of the man appointed to the position matter everything. Some people seem to have an idea that if you discard the title of General Manager and call a man Commissioner, all sorts of wonderful results are going to follow. Some persons also think that if you have what you call non-political control of the railways, we are going to reach a sort of railway millennium. But as a matter of fact, in a country where the railways are owned by the State the term "non-political control" is absolutely a misnomer. I suppose the one State in which the Commissioner system has been a great success is New South Wales, and it is generally admitted its success is due, not so much to the system as to the man who had the administration of it in the first instance, the late Mr. Eddy; and even Mr. Eddy, strong and capable man as he was, would have been the first to admit he must have failed, and failed irretrievably, had he not been supported by a strong party in Parliament prepared to back him up. Therefore, while in New South Wales you had what is sometimes called "non-political control," the control was essentially political, for it had the Parliament and the country at its back. You will never be able to administer your railways in opposition to the wishes of the people who own those railways, and therefore I contend that the name is a matter of small importance, but everything depends upon the personality and capability of the man you appoint to control them. If we take the experience of the other States, perhaps Victoria offers the most striking example of how the

Commissioner system has absolutely failed. I have in my hand an extract from the *Age* newspaper—[laughter on Government benches]—an extract written some six or seven years ago, giving the experience of railway management in Victoria.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Always newspapers!

MR. NANSON: My friend the ex-Commissioner of Railways laughs at newspapers, although I fancy that on some previous occasions his laugh rather resembled the contortion of pain. However, the *Melbourne Age*, writing some six years ago, thus described the experience of Victoria with regard to the railway management by three Commissioners:—

We abandoned the political and took up the non-political system. Three expert Commissioners were appointed, to whom the future management of the railways was handed over absolutely. They have been experimenting for six years, and the unique experience gathered under this régime is that the last state is in every way worse than the first. Under the new system, of which such great things were expected, we have built more political lines than ever; we added enormously (nearly 7 per cent.) to the average working expenses per year, which used to range from 52 to 62 per cent. under the old order of things, but which have gone up to 70 per cent; we nearly doubled the staff of employees; we overmanned the service to an amazing extent; we paid extravagant prices for land required for railway purposes, increased the train mileage to such a reckless extent that the train service in very many instances is ridiculously in excess of requirements—in short, under the non-political system, our railways have gone from bad to worse. In not a single particular has there been an improvement. Political jobbery has been as rife as ever. To show how much worse off the State is in a pecuniary sense by making the experiment of handing the construction and management of its railways over to the absolute control of three Commissioners, we have ascertained from official data that the working expenses alone have, for the last seven years, exceeded the 1883 rate by the enormous sum of £265,404. But if we want to find out what has been the total cost of the experiment of management by Commissioners, we must also take into account the enormous sums squandered in construction, in land compensation, in building two stations where one would suffice, and in saddling the country with the maintenance of gates and sidings *ad infinitum*.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have seen articles just like that about the shortage of trucks.

MR. NANSON: And thoroughly justified, too. Of course, I did not expect the hon. gentleman opposite, who used to mismanage the railways, to think anything else; but that at any rate was the opinion expressed by a very influential newspaper in Victoria some years ago, and it is interesting on looking back to find that up to the present time that chapter of mismanagement has gone on unaltered. We look at the position of the Victorian railways to-day, and we find that in no particular is there an improvement; that although that condition of things was pointed out a few years ago, still this management continues, and in Victoria at the present time it is being seriously urged that the State should revert to the system of Ministerial responsibility of the strongest possible sort.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Nonsense!

MR. NANSON: That may or may not be nonsense. But in a minute or two I shall proceed to show that such is the position in Victoria.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: From the *Age*?

MR. NANSON: From the *Age* or *Argus*, if the hon. gentleman likes it better. He can take whichever paper suits him, but I imagine he does not like any sort of paper. A little while ago in Victoria they were dissatisfied with the administration of the railways, and they appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the subject. In regard to that Royal Commission the *Age* reported:—

The serious disclosures made by witnesses before the Royal Commission on railway management afford another illustration of the necessity for reform in the present system of railway management in Victoria. If there is one branch of the service more than another that should be efficient it is that which has the care of the rolling-stock, for not only does it form one of the most valuable assets of the Railway Department, but the safety of the travelling public depends largely on the efficiency of the locomotives.

In Victoria for the last two or three years, according to this Commission, they have been consistently mismanaging their locomotive department. They have an unenviable record with regard to railway expenditure owing to faulty locomotives, and they have also an unenviable record with regard to under-manning that important branch of the service and over-

manning other branches. Then in Victoria large sums have been spent in re-grading lines with a view of reducing the cost of haulage, but notwithstanding the large sums spent in re-grading, we find that the locomotive expenses in that State have gone up since 1897-8 to £222,000 per annum; that half a million sterling has been added to the operating expense of the Victorian railways since 1896; and it is declared by the hostile critics of the Victorian railway administration that, if the figures were fully disclosed, they would show a far worse state of affairs. But these are the official figures which the Government of the day admit.

MR. MORAN: They must have a stores account.

MR. NANSON: Probably; and notwithstanding—subject of course, in what I say, to the contradiction of the late Minister for Railways (Hon. W. Kingsmill)—people in Victoria say the remedy is to engage

The most sagacious and energetic manager that is to be secured for money, and that he must be assured of substantial backing in Parliament, for to stop the long-standing drain on our strength demands vigorous measures. Freights will have to be lightened considerably, yet so skilfully that the total income from them shall increase.

In Victoria they pursued the same policy as the present Government are pursuing here, the policy of raising freights; but in New South Wales, where that policy was abandoned and low freights instituted, the railways are an astonishing success in comparison with those of Victoria which, by reason of this policy of raising freights, have become a by-word throughout Australia. The reason given for the deplorable condition into which the Victorian railways have fallen is not altogether flattering to members of Parliament. We are told they have been brought into that condition by "lazy and unscrupulous politicians." Well, that is perhaps rather severe; but there can be no doubt that if we wish to have a strong railway administration, we cannot get it except by having strength in the Ministry of the day. There is no patent device by which we can shuffle off responsibility from one shoulder to another and expect to get good results. The Minister for Railways must be alone responsible; and

if the railway management should be unsatisfactory, it should be possible for the country and for Parliament to lay the full burden of responsibility on the Minister, as well as on the Government of the day.

THE PREMIER : For questions of policy, undoubtedly.

MR. NANSON : Not only for questions of policy, but for questions of administration.

MEMBER : For matters of detail ?

MR. NANSON : We see in the report laid on the table of the House to-day by the Royal Commission on the Coolgardie Water Scheme, that if the Commission have disclosed one thing more than another it is that there should be the most vigilant care on the part of the responsible Minister to see that the administration is sound. Merely to place policy in the hands of the Minister and to leave the administration to someone else is to pay Ministers for work of the simplest description. Each of the first half-dozen men we meet in the street could provide us with a policy. It is an easy matter to devise a policy, but difficult to devise a policy that is practicable and capable of being carried out; and the only safeguard to the country, if the Minister is to be responsible for policy, is to insure that he must be in the fullest sense responsible for carrying out that policy and for departmental administration. Now I come to the last chapter in the indictment against the Government with regard to the railways, and that is the appointment of Mr. George to the position of Chief Commissioner, concerning which I should like to say that, although there appear to be some sinister circumstances connected with it, I regard Mr. George as absolutely free from blame in the matter of the appointment. Mr. George has so much confidence in his own abilities that I feel perfectly sure, no matter what position might be offered to him, he would be quite willing to accept it, no matter how difficult it might be. If Mr. George were offered the position of Archbishop of Canterbury or Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, or commander of a line of battleship, I am sure that in any one of these positions he would have the fullest confidence in his own ability to fill it successfully.

THE PREMIER : He had not courage enough to join your Ministry.

MR. NANSON : I am not referring to the courage of the former member for the Murray, but to his confidence. The two qualities are not altogether the same.

MR. DOHERTY : He was afraid to face his constituents.

MR. JACOBY : Hear, hear. That was the reason.

MR. NANSON : There can be no doubt, however, that Mr. George was slightly surprised at being requested to take the position; but a few moments' reflection showed him, to his own satisfaction at any rate, that he was the one man not only in Western Australia but throughout the civilised world who was capable of filling the post. But does anyone in this House suppose that had Mr. George not been a member of Parliament he would have been offered the position of Commissioner? [**OPPOSITION MEMBERS :** Never.] Why, what are his claims to the position? I understand, looking at his claim to be an expert, that Mr. George at one time managed a line of railway, not of the first importance, but I suppose of some importance—it ran from Jarrahdale to Rockingham, a distance of some 20 miles; and he has also been in charge of men engaged in railway construction. That, I believe, represents the sum total of his railway experience; and it is a peculiar coincidence that the gentleman who has been selected by the electors of the Murray to take Mr. George's place (Mr. W. Atkins) possesses precisely the same qualifications as Mr. George possesses; and I am beginning to wonder whether the Government, in appointing the two other Commissioners, will not endeavour to deprive the Opposition of another supporter; whether they will not offer a commissionership to the new member for the Murray, who, there can be no doubt, has some excellent qualifications for the position as judged from the Ministerial standpoint. He has managed that vastly important line in his time, the Jarrahdale-Rockingham railway; he has had experience in the construction of public works also; and I defy any member of the House to point to a single particular in which the present member for the Murray is not just as well, and perhaps better, fitted to fill the position of Com-

missioner of Railways than is Mr. George. Now surely, when the Government were casting about for a man to fill a position of such vast importance, to manage a railway system in which something like seven to nine millions of capital is involved, one would have thought an attempt would be made to go, if necessary, outside of West Australia, to choose someone who had the fullest experience, and who was generally recognised as an expert in railway management. It has been said by good English authorities that if one wished to find a railway expert not employed by a railway company, one could not find three such men in England. If that be so in a country possessing a population of something like 40 millions, what reason have we to suppose that in Western Australia, with its population of something like 200,000, we should be so gifted as to possess, in Mr. George, the one heaven-born railway administrator? It is too absurd to imagine for a moment that Mr. George should possess those valuable qualifications. There is just a possibility that he may. I admit there is one chance out of a thousand that he may succeed in answering the expectations which the members of the Government benches now affect to believe he possesses. But before the appointment of Mr. George was announced—when it was simply hinted at—I doubt if there was a single member on the Government side of the House, with the exception of those in the secret, who did not scout the very idea of Mr. George being appointed. It was difficult to take it seriously. Most of us regarded the rumour as a mere joke, some absurd fabrication in which there could not possibly be an atom of truth. And in an appointment of this kind there is involved a question of political principle. I do not wish to bring forward what may be regarded as insinuations against the conduct of members on the Treasury bench; but I must confess that if insinuations of that kind are made, there is a certain amount of circumstantial evidence justifying them; because what necessity was there for haste in appointing Mr. George to this position, when it was known that Parliament would meet very shortly, and that the whole question of appointing Commissioners could then be decided? Speak-

ing in the mildest language possible, it is in vain to deny that the haste with which this appointment has been pushed through is, to say the least of it, indecent. [OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear.] Here we find the country committed to Mr. George for a period of, I believe, five years, at a salary of £1,500 a year. Now surely the right course to have pursued was to obtain the assent of the House to the principle of commissioner management, and then to appoint a manager or commissioner. Why, I again ask, was Mr. George of all men selected to fill this position? We know the opinion of him expressed by members on the Government side of the House. Again and again have we heard them refer to him in terms which showed they believed his political ability, at any rate, to be beneath contempt. I suppose there is not a member of this House who has come in for hotter or sterner or more cutting castigations from members of the opposite side than has the late member for the Murray. And from what time are we to date the period of their conversion? They denied his possession of any kind of political aptitude, and not merely of any kind of political aptitude, but of many kinds of practical aptitude. They almost denied that he was capable even of managing his own affairs, far less those of the country. Certainly the way in which they spoke of him was capable of the inference that they regarded him as a person of no weight, of no consideration whatever; and yet this is the man who was picked out to manage the railways—a man whom the members of the Government previously held in the deepest contempt, at any rate as a politician; and if, as a politician, he is so much beneath contempt, what reason is there to suppose that he will be any more of a success in the position of General Manager?

THE PREMIER: There are lots of able men who make bad politicians.

MR. NANSON: Granted. But even supposing for a moment that members opposite were unduly severe in their strictures on Mr. George while he was in the House, they cannot pretend that he has that knowledge of railway matters which would be found in a man who had spent the greater portion of his life in dealing with railway business, and who

was regarded in railway circles as a man of unquestioned ability. We may refer the matter to the country at large, to the railway service, or to the members of this House—I do not care to what tribunal it be taken; but even in this House, if it were not a case of the present Government going out of office, I unhesitatingly say we should find a majority of members not prepared to indorse Mr. George's appointment. And I should like, before concluding, to enter a strong protest against such appointments, which cannot be regarded as of other than a political character. Happily, in the past history of the Parliament of Western Australia, we have had very few similar appointments; and I do not know one to which exception can be taken. There was the appointment of Mr. Wm. Paterson to the managership of the Agricultural Bank; and on both sides of the House it was agreed he was the man for the position. We had the appointment of Mr. W. F. Sayer to the position of Parliamentary Draftsman; and no protest was raised against that, because both sides recognised Mr. Sayer's eminent qualifications. But there is no equal unanimity of opinion in regard to Mr. George.

THE PREMIER: That does not affect the precedents.

MR. NANSON: And if the appointments of Mr. Sayer and Mr. Paterson are to be regarded as precedents for the appointment of Mr. George or of any other politician to a highly responsible position for which he has had no special training, then I submit it will be for the House to decide whether it be not the duty of Parliament to shut down upon these political appointments—[OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear]—because it is evident that if once we allow such a principle to be abused, as it has been abused in this instance, we open the door to political corruption of the grossest character.

MR. DOHERTY: It is already open.

MR. NANSON: I am not accusing the Premier of having done anything wrong in that connection. I am perfectly convinced that if he had had a say in this matter, he would never have appointed Mr. George. In indorsing that appointment he has taken on his shoulders a heavy burden. This mistake has been

made; and it is freely stated outside this Chamber that Mr. George was appointed because his presence in the House was not desired.

THE PREMIER: You know better than that.

MR. NANSON: I do not say that, nor do I believe it. I give the Ministry credit for having better sense than to suppose they could make their path smooth in this Assembly by dislodging one member of the Opposition. But members of the Government must be prepared and must expect to hear insinuations of that kind made, when it is utterly impossible to explain the appointment on any better grounds. You cannot show that Mr. George, of all men, should have been picked out for this position, when absolutely no attempt was made to widen the area of selection, and let it be known elsewhere that in Western Australia you were open to appoint a Commissioner of the highest qualifications and ready to pay him a fair salary. The Government did not attempt to find out who was fitted for the position, and they did not invite applications from outside the State. When the intention of the Government to appoint Mr. George to that position first became known here, the idea was received with ridicule; and if a bad construction is put on the action of the Government, they cannot blame members on this side of the House, nor can they blame the country at large, but have only themselves to blame if the opinion gets abroad that the appointment was made, not from a desire to promote the interests of the country, but to remove a strong political opponent. I am somewhat interested to learn how members on the other side will vote and speak on the amendment which I am about to move. We have lost several members who used to sit on this side and have gone over to the Government benches; though in doing so I am perfectly prepared, as I should expect in my own case, to admit that they have acted with most conscientious motives, and I hope they will be equally conscientious when they vote in the division on this amendment. I cannot understand how it will be possible for members to say they are opposed to the raising of railway rates, or are opposed to the appointment of Mr. George as Railway

Commissioner, and who yet vote against an amendment of this description. If members are opposed to these planks in the Government platform, naturally they should vote against the Government. Still, if members are opposed to the Government on these points, it will be interesting to see how they reconcile that divergence of view when they support that proposition and also vote with the Government. I know the argument, that the urgent need of the country is constitutional reform and that the Government should be maintained in office if only to bring in a Redistribution of Seats Bill and a Bill for constitutional reform in regard to the electorates, so that we may with all possible speed get to the country; but I submit that the question of constitutional reform is not a monopoly of the James Government any more than it was of the Leake Government. Members on either side of this House are equally pledged to constitutional reform, and no one knows better than members of the Government that if they were to leave office to-morrow, any Government chosen to succeed them would make the redistribution of seats a first plank in their platform. Redistribution of seats has ceased to be a party question. The last general election was fought on it, and just as many members on this side of the House were pledged to support redistribution as were pledged on the other side. It is a point on which there is unanimity of opinion in regard to principle, though there may be some difference in regard to details. We on this side might, perhaps, be inclined to deal more drastically with the other House than the Premier proposes to do, or we might be more inclined to keep the present number of members rather than reduce the number as proposed by the Government. But no Parliament can be justified in allowing a Government to carry on a policy that is injurious to the best interests of the country, merely in order that legislation of a certain type may be carried out by that Government, and especially when we remember that their successors would be equally ready to carry a Redistribution of Seats Bill through Parliament. Even if a new Government were not ready to bring in such a Bill, the majority of members in this House would have the

means of imposing their will on that Government, and the Redistribution of Seats Bill would have to be brought in, or that Government would have to vacate office in favour of another Government. Every member knows that redistribution of seats is a question that does not belong to either party, no matter what Government is in power. I contend that the first duty of Parliament is to see that liberty is defended and justice is upheld. That may seem to be a meaningless generality, but at a later stage of this session it may be necessary to show that the members of the Government are not so enthusiastic in upholding liberty or defending justice as the people have a right to demand. The second duty of a Government is to see that there is sound administration; and in regard to the railways, looking back to the policy pursued here and its results, it cannot be said that there has been sound administration, or that the policy of the Government in the immediate future gives great promise of sound administration. At any rate, if we look to the vital and pressing needs of the country, there can be no question that sound railway administration is perhaps the most important matter this House can devote its attention to. If the railway policy is wrong, it stands to reason that every industry in the country must suffer, that employment must necessarily become scarce, that people will be driven away from our shores, and that instead of the prosperity which we enjoyed for many years under the administration of Sir John Forrest, we will have a period of acute depression. That is what a bad policy of railway administration means, and you may pass all the Redistribution of Seats Bills you like, yet nothing can prevent the consequences of bad railway administration being felt severely by the country. A Redistribution of Seats Bill will not make our industries more prosperous. It is a matter rather of justice to the people. But the administration of the railways strikes at the pockets and at the prosperity of the people, and at their means of obtaining employment. I contend that members who are not well disposed to the railway policy of the Government, yet will vote to keep the Government in power, are incurring a grave responsibility. Their votes on the subject will

be remembered when their speeches are forgotten; and when we see the results of the railway policy of the Government, when we realise that this policy is bringing depression on the country, then the people of the country will bear in mind the action of those members who, against their own convictions in regard to railway management, were willing to support the Government for reasons other than those which should influence the votes of members on this occasion. The duty of the Opposition is clear: it is to test the feeling of the House on the question of railway administration; and we on this side of the House having pointed out the danger, then whatever evils follow, the responsibility will not rest with us. It will, however, be none the less a matter for very grave regret that the vital interests of the State should suffer, and that the Government by their policy should be wedded to the principle that the country exists for the benefit of the railways, and not the railways for the benefit of the country. I beg to move, as an amendment on the motion before the House:

That the last paragraph in the proposed Address-in-reply be struck out, and that the following words be inserted in lieu thereof:— "We desire, however, most respectfully to inform your Excellency that the railway policy and administration of your advisers does not command the confidence of a majority of the members of this House."

HON. F. H. PIESSE (Williams): I second the amendment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Walter James): I desire to move the adjournment of the debate; to be resumed, if the House will allow us, to-morrow afternoon at 4:30 o'clock, when the first speaker on behalf of the Government will be the member for Pilbarra (Hon. W. Kingsmill). The mover of the amendment has made statements and dealt with figures which will need to be replied to in some detail, and the late Minister for Railways will deal with them to-morrow and go into the matter fully. For these reasons I ask that the debate be adjourned.

Motion (adjournment) put and passed, and the debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 12 minutes past 8 o'clock until the next afternoon.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 23rd July, 1902.

Questions, Length of Notice.—The late Premier, Letter from Mrs. Leake.—Question: Land Purchases, East Fremantle.—Question: Railway Shelter Sheds.—Question: Coolgardie-Esperance Railway Survey.—Question: Agricultural Area, Chapman-Motion (postponement), Land Purchases Supply Bill, £1,000,000, second reading, etc.—Address-in-reply, third day, adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

QUESTIONS, LENGTH OF NOTICE.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. Jamieson) asked that in future 48 hours' notice be given of questions to Ministers, as it was not possible always, owing to pressure of work in the various departments, to obtain information in answer to questions within 24 hours; but whenever the information could be obtained within that time it would be supplied.

THE LATE PREMIER.

LETTER FROM MRS. LEAKE.

THE PRESIDENT: I have received the following letter:—

July, 21st.

Dear Sir,—Please convey to the Legislative Council my sincere thanks for their kind sympathy to myself and family, also my deep appreciation of the honour paid to my dear husband in placing on record his services to this State—Yours truly, LOUISE E. LEAKE.

QUESTION—LAND PURCHASES, EAST FREMANTLE.

HON. M. L. MOSS asked the Minister for Lands: If the Government are aware that the agent appointed by them in connection with the purchases of land at East Fremantle for railway or harbour works purposes has charged and been paid commission by the vendors of the properties.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: Yes; Mr. J. P. Learmonth, who has purchased the whole of the land, is under oath not to take, either directly or indirectly, any profit outside his commission of 5 per cent., and all commissions received by him from the vendors are to be credited against this sum.