

to-night. If the House sat to-morrow, the Municipal Institutions Bill could be proceeded with.

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 9.50 o'clock until the next day.

## Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 16th October, 1900.

Papers presented—Seat Vacant, North Perth—Question: Railways Report—Question: Salary of Civil Service, weekly average—Question: Water Police, Fremantle—Question: Minimum Wage at Government Printing Works—Question: Grants to Agricultural Societies—Question: Travelling Allowances of various Departments—Question: Agricultural Development in North-West—Question: Agricultural Training Farm—Question: Army Horses and Mules, local breeding—Question: Mineral Phosphates, reward for discovery—Question: Commissioner of Crown Lands, to change title—Question: Murgoo Telephone Office—Goldfields Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Noxious Weeds Bill, first reading—Fremantle Tramways Bill, first reading—Trades Unions Regulation Bill, first reading—Hampton Plains Railway Bill (private), first reading—Health Act Amendment Bill, in Committee to Clause 16, progress—Patent Acts Amendment Bill, second reading—Circuit Courts Judge Bill, second reading, in Committee, reported—Annual Estimates, in Committee of Supply, debate resumed, adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

### PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1, Beer Duty Act Regulations; 2, Minimum Wage in Government Contracts, further Telegrams from Premiers; 3, Travelling Allowances of various Departments, Return.

By Mr. MOORHEAD (in charge of Hampton Plains Railway Bill): Plans of proposed route (see report, later).

Ordered to lie on the table.

### SEAT VACANT, NORTH PERTH.

THE SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that the seat of the member for North Perth (Mr. Oldham) has become vacant, according to the Con-

stitution Act; he not having attended in his place here for two consecutive months, without permission of the House.

### QUESTION—RAILWAYS REPORT.

MR. MORAN, without notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways, Whether the annual Report of the General Manager of Railways would be laid on the table before the Railway Estimates were discussed.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. B. C. Wood) replied:—The report is now ready, and will be laid on the table to-morrow.

### QUESTION—SALARY OF CIVIL SERVICE, WEEKLY AVERAGE.

MR. RASON, for Mr. Quinlan, asked the Premier: 1, What was the average cost of one week's salary for the whole of the civil service of the colony, excluding teachers only. 2, What would be the total amount payable by taxpayers for services unrendered if every Government servant entitled thereto availed themselves of two weeks' holiday per annum in addition to those public holidays already allowed in the civil service.

THE PREMIER replied:—1, £12,405 11s. 3d. 2, £24,811 2s. 6d.

### QUESTION—WATER POLICE, FREMANTLE.

MR. HIGHAM asked the Premier, Whether, in view of the many accidents and frequent losses of life occurring on the South Quay and jetties of Fremantle, and the acknowledged smuggling taking place there, it was the intention of the Government to reorganise and enlarge the Water Police Service.

THE PREMIER replied: An increase in the number of the water police is shown on this year's Estimates, sufficient for all requirements. Changes in the force will take place in the near future.

### QUESTION—MINIMUM WAGE AT GOVERNMENT PRINTING WORKS.

MR. WILSON (for Mr. Ewing) asked the Premier, Whether the Government intended to comply with the request of the Typographical Society that the minimum rate of wage paid to the employees at the Government Printing Works be £2 15s. per week.

THE PREMIER replied:—Employees in the Government Printing Department have 18 days more holiday, on full pay, than employees in private printing establishments, and taking this into consideration, the lowest rate paid ranges from £2 14s. to £2 17s. per week of 47½ hours. The Government is unable to promise to make any alteration at present, but the matter will receive further consideration.

#### QUESTION—GRANTS TO AGRICULTURAL SOCIETIES.

MR. RASON asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether the Government intended to give effect to the wishes of the Producers' Conference, and place the subsidies to agricultural societies on a more equitable basis.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—It was not the intention of the Government to alter the system of subsidies during the present year, but the necessity for an amended system was under consideration.

#### QUESTION — TRAVELLING ALLOWANCES OF VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS.

MR. VOSPER asked the Premier: What travelling allowances, fares and freights were allowed to married men with families whilst on transfer, in each of the following departments: 1, Education; 2, Railways; 3, Police; 4, Post and Telegraphs; 5, Crown Law; and 6, Public Works.

THE PREMIER replied:—The answer would be found in a return he was about to lay on the table.

#### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH-WEST.

MR. DOHERTY asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether the Government contemplates taking any steps to prompt the development of tropical agriculture in the North-West.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—Yes; the matter is at present receiving the attention of the Department, and Mr. Surveyor Dreyer, who is now in the Kimberley district, has been instructed to report on the matter.

#### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL TRAINING FARM.

MR. LOCKE asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether the Govern-

ment is taking any steps to establish a training farm for the education of young men in the various branches of agriculture.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—The matter had been under consideration, but no definite scheme had been arrived at up to the present.

#### QUESTION—ARMY HORSES AND MULES, LOCAL BREEDING.

MR. LOCKE asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether the Government were prepared to take any steps to encourage the breeding of horses and mules for army remount purposes.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—Recommendations on this subject had been made by the Agricultural Department, but had not yet been dealt with.

#### QUESTION—MINERAL PHOSPHATES, REWARD FOR DISCOVERY.

MR. MONGER asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether the Government intends to offer any substantial reward for the discovery of mineral phosphates within the colony.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—It was not the intention of the Government to offer any such rewards at present.

#### QUESTION—COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, TO CHANGE TITLE.

MR. MONGER asked the Commissioner of Crown Lands, Whether it is the intention of the Government to give effect to the resolution carried at the last Producers' Conference, to the effect that "In the opinion of this Conference, the time has arrived when, in the best interests of agriculture, the industry should be represented in the Government by the designation of 'Minister for Agriculture' being conferred upon the Minister holding the portfolio for Lands."

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS replied:—It was not the present intention of the Government to give effect to the resolution referred to. The Minister of Lands was already practically Minister of Agriculture also.

#### QUESTION—MURGOO TELEPHONE OFFICE.

MR. MITCHELL asked the Premier: 1, Whether any steps are being taken to

re-open the Murgoo Telephone Office.  
2, If not, why not.

THE PREMIER replied:—1, Yes; as soon as possible. 2, Answered by No. 1.

#### GOLDFIELDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, and read a first time.

#### NOXIOUS WEEDS BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS, and read a first time.

#### FREMANTLE TRAMWAYS BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS, and read a first time.

#### TRADES UNIONS REGULATION BILL.

Introduced by MR. WILSON (for Mr. Ewing), and read a first time.

#### HAMPTON PLAINS RAILWAY BILL (PRIVATE).

Introduced by MR. MOORHEAD, and read a first time.

On further motion by MR. MOORHEAD, Bill referred to a Select Committee, consisting of Mr. Kingsmill, Mr. Monger, Mr. Oats, Mr. Piesse, and the mover; with power to call for persons and papers, and to report on 30th October; also leave to sit during any adjournment of the House.

MR. MOORHEAD laid on the table the plans and papers in connection with the proposed railway.

Ordered to lie on the table.

#### HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Clauses 1 to 3, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 4—Governor may proclaim combined districts:

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL moved to strike out of the third line the words "and the district so formed shall be called a combined district." The reason for striking out these words was that later in the clause the district was properly called the District Board of Health, and this removal of superfluous words would avoid confusion.

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

Clauses 5 to 15, inclusive—agreed to.

Clause 16—Closing public buildings:

MR. MOORHEAD: It would be better, in the interests of the public, that the name "local" (local board of health) should be retained in the first portion of the clause, instead of the suggested words "Central Board." The object of section 153 of the present Act was to give to the local board authority to approve, or otherwise, of the erection of buildings, the board having authority to prevent such erection unless approved. The clause substituted "Central Board" as the authority for giving or withholding such approval, thereby taking away from the local authority in many instances the right now possessed under that section. In Perth, for instance, where the local board of health was the municipal council, the effect of this change would be to take from the municipality the right of approving of the erection of buildings, and that right would be handed to an irresponsible body like the Central Board of Health. It would be within the knowledge of the House that the Central Board were practically the nominees of the Governor-in-Council; whereas the municipal council, which also was constituted a local board of health, were representative of the ratepayers; and in his opinion the local board was the proper representative body to have the power of sanctioning the erection of buildings, or otherwise. In mining centres removed some distance from the Central Board, this clause would inflict great hardship upon persons who wanted to build. He moved that the first paragraph be struck out.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Reading Section 153 of the Act, it would be seen that "local" was inserted in error, "Central" having been intended. It was the authority of the Central Board which it was desired to obtain.

MR. A. FORREST: It would be impracticable for builders in country districts to obtain the approval of the Central Board in Perth.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: By the existing Act, certain authority had been vested in the Director of Public Works which it was now desired to vest in the Central Board. The latter had a controlling power over the local boards, and all members knew that many local

boards were indifferent to the public interests.

MR. A. FORREST: What about the Central Board?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: To see to these matters was the Central Board's duty. Local boards were frequently permeated by local influences, from which the Central Board were removed.

MR. MOORHEAD: What surveyors or engineers of the Central Board were intended?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: For the administration of an Act like this, passed for the good of the community, there must be a controlling power over local boards. The representations made to him by the Central Board were well founded, and the Committee would not be acting wisely in supporting the amendment.

MR. SOLOMON: Local boards were in a better position to judge of the suitability of buildings than were people living a hundred or a thousand miles away. The Attorney General should accept the amendment.

MR. A. FORREST: The Perth Municipal Council, being the local board of health, were not aware that this Bill would be considered to-night, and consequently were not quite ready with amendments. These he would table to-morrow; he therefore moved that progress be reported, and leave asked to sit on Thursday.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

by the owners of that patent—who, of course, are not the original patentee, but the persons to whom the latter has sold his right—to have the term extended for a further period of seven years at least; and they may perhaps endeavour to represent that in the circumstances they are entitled to have an extension for even fourteen years. The procedure adopted for the extension of a patent under our Act is that a petition is lodged by the patentees with the Governor, praying for an extension of the patent. The Governor then, under the Act, transmits that petition to the Supreme Court, and the Supreme Court then inquire into the reasons given in support of the extension, which they, in their discretion, either grant or refuse. No doubt very strong reasons could be urged for the extension of that patent; and, if successful, the patent would be extended for a further period of seven years. A question has arisen in the consideration of this Bill as to how far our Patent Act is governed by the operation of a patent granted under the Imperial Act at home, because the Imperial Act contains a kind of dual clause for the extension of a patent. The procedure is: A petition is lodged with Her Majesty, and is sent from the Queen to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. They take the place of the Supreme Court with us, and they either grant or refuse an extension of the patent; or, if they please, they grant a fresh patent. If they grant a fresh patent, of course the patentees will have to come here to get it registered; but if they grant merely an extension of the patent, the better opinion seems to be that there is no necessity to come here for the extension. In order to meet that view of the case, this Bill is brought in; so that, if the extension be granted by the Privy Council at home, it shall not be deemed to be an extension of the patent within the terms of our local Act, so as to compel us to register it here. Hon. members will therefore perceive that the object of the Bill is, as Clause 2 shows, to place first in the hands of the Executive, namely the Governor, the right to say whether he shall pass or reject a petition altogether. By ordinary practice at the present time the duty of the Governor is to pass on the petition to the Supreme Court. Of course there is a discretion

# PATENT ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

## SECOND READING.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (hon. R. W. Pennefather), in moving the second reading, said: This Bill has for its object the regulation and controlling of applications for the extension of patents; and I may inform the House that the particular patent which is, to some extent, practically the subject of this Bill, is the McArthur-Forrest patent—[MR. MORAN: Hear, hear]—which hon. members know is a patent extensively used on the gold-fields of this colony, as well as throughout the whole of Australia. This patent very shortly expires by effluxion of time, and no doubt an attempt will be made

even now ; but it is a discretion so rarely exercised that the passing on of the petition is considered the ordinary course. This Bill, by Clause 2, gives an express power to the Governor to refuse to send on the petition.

MR. MOORHEAD : On what ground ?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : For the good of the community. These people have had a monopoly of this patent for fourteen years.

MR. MORAN : Quite long enough.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : And even if they have not made enough money out of it by this time, I think they ought to be very well satisfied. If they have seven years more granted to them, it will mean that this Parliament will have to follow the example of Victoria, and purchase their patent rights.

MR. MOORHEAD : Are you deciding the case already ?

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL : The object of this Bill is to give the Executive of the day the right to determine, for the benefit of the whole community, whether they shall pass on the petition at once to the Supreme Court. That, of course, will block the applicants in one act. It may be said : why should we interfere with vested rights ? The answer is, these are not vested rights. The original term for which the patent was granted will soon expire ; but when it comes to granting an extension for a further period of seven years, we have a perfect right to interfere. I beg to move that this Bill be read a second time.

MR. JAMES (East Perth) : I regret very much indeed that a Bill of this kind should be introduced.

MR. MORAN : We are very glad.

MR. JAMES : I have no hesitation in saying that this Bill is introduced for the express purpose of robbing a company of its property. There is no other phrase I can use which will convey my meaning.

MR. MORAN : That is not so.

MR. JAMES : It is a deliberate attempt to rob a company of a right conferred upon it by law. I desire to repeat that to the House, fully realising the responsibility of the statement. According to the Attorney General, the Bill is admittedly aimed at an existing patent, under which, by the law of this country, certain rights have been conferred. Whatever

be those rights, they have been conferred by an Act of Parliament ; and they are rights vested in the owners of this patent. It is proposed by this Bill to pass a special piece of legislation for the purpose of interfering with the rights which the Parliament of this country have conferred.

MR. MORAN : Does not every Act interfere with somebody's rights ?

MR. JAMES : If that be not the object, what is the need of introducing such legislation ? We realise that every Act of Parliament interferes with rights ; but Acts of Parliament do not interfere with vested rights.

MR. MORAN : Certainly they do.

MR. JAMES : There are hundreds of decisions of courts of justice which point out that no construction will be placed upon an Act of Parliament, the effect of which would be to deprive persons of their property, unless the court be driven to that construction ; because the court will not believe that an Act of Parliament could be so grossly unfair as to rob people of the rights which Parliament had conferred upon them. It is to be regretted that legislation of this kind should be introduced, not for the purpose of amending our law, but to strike at a particular company.

MR. A. FORREST : Thus saving the country £50,000.

MR. JAMES : The Attorney General was right in pointing out that such was the professed object of this Bill ; not to amend our law, not to rectify any defects that the working of the law has shown do exist, but to give the Government power to deprive a company of the rights which their patent confers on them. I appeal to hon. members to approach this question with the utmost caution, and in considering this Bill hon. members should not be influenced by the amount of profit this company has been making out of the patent. The law as it exists at the present time as to extension is the same here as in the old country. So far as Clause 2 of the Bill is concerned I do not know whether the Attorney General considers it a declaration of the existing law or whether he treats it as being the enactment of a new law. If it is a declaration of the existing law it is much wider and should not be introduced into a Bill like this. This should not be called a Bill to amend the Patent Act, but a Bill to rob

and despoil the owners of the Forrester-McArthur patent.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Ah!

MR. JAMES: Judging by what the Attorney General said and the approval which his remarks received at the hands of one or two members, this Bill is aimed at one company; we must admit that.

MR. A. FORREST: We should protect the country.

MR. JAMES: When we talk about protecting the colony, if once we begin a principle like this we shall always be amending legislation, interfering with rights, and when a patent becomes of great value an agitation may then be got up to take away from the patentee his rights and give them to the public.

THE PREMIER: Why not give them 100 years then?

MR. JAMES: If an Act of Parliament gave a person 100 years he should have it.

THE PREMIER: Then let him have it.

MR. JAMES: Let him have it or pay him if you take his rights from him. But this Bill proposes to take away certain rights from certain individuals.

THE PREMIER: It gives them only what they are entitled to.

MR. JAMES: If you interfere with the law you interfere with their rights. Does the existing law provide that the question of extension should be left to the Supreme Court? If you create a tribunal in the Governor-in-Council, giving the Governor-in-Council the discretion to deprive a person of his rights, then you upset what rights the person is entitled to. Why should we not be honest, and if we rob, rob openly. I want to point out that this is open robbery as clear as can be. This Bill is aimed at one particular company, to rob them of their rights.

MR. MORAN: They are open robbers too.

MR. JAMES: They are not; because under the law they are entitled to certain patent rights. It is suggested that we should confer on the Governor-in-Council the right to say whether the extension should be granted or not. Surely hon. members will agree with me when I say that we know no more partial tribunal for settling a question like this than the Governor-in-Council; it is the Ministry for the time being.

MR. MOORHEAD: To pronounce their opinion.

MR. JAMES: They have already pronounced their opinion by the speech of the Attorney General, and if that is their opinion we no doubt have their decision. We are going to submit the determination of this question to a body which is controlled by public opinion, which is not a fair tribunal for the time being. If that were the existing law and if a patentee obtained a patent with a full knowledge of that, then there is no argument for altering the law; because there is the law and the patentee must submit to it; he must take his rights subject to all defects. But it is proposed to alter the law, and I say without the least hesitation this alteration is simply for the express purpose of enabling the Governor-in-Council to deprive certain individuals of the rights they have. We ought openly to admit that, and not to say that this is a Bill to amend the law generally when it is to rob certain patentees. So far as Clause 2 is concerned, as to the effect of the extensions in the old country, I believe it is a moot question whether extensions in the old country will operate here, and I think it is a point whether the patentee under existing legislation should have his rights determined. We should not arrogate to ourselves the right to determine the law: the Supreme Court can do that. It is a question whether extensions granted in the old country are covered by legislation in this country. My opinion—and I give it for what it is worth—is that it is questionable whether the extensions in the old country would operate in this country. But whether they would or not, we have no right to determine that question for ourselves. On that point I would suggest to the Attorney General that really the benefit we gain by Clause 2 is by no means commensurate with the evil we do in passing legislation like this. It is a serious and bad example. When we pass on to Clause 3, in the mother country a patent is, as a rule, referred to the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council. The Supreme Court here exercises the same powers as the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council at home.

MR. MORAN: What is the use of talking; the other House will not pass this.

MR. JAMES: I do not think the other House will pass it. I should be sorry to think that the Upper House would pass the Bill. But the Bill seems to me to be all the more humiliating, because it is entirely unnecessary: it does not carry the existing law any further than at present. Clause 2 deals with the first point, whether extensions in the mother country operate in this country. I may express my opinion for what it is worth: I do not think the extensions do operate in this country; but that is a matter for the Supreme Court to determine. The second point is, assuming the application for extension should be made in this country, to whom should it be made? If members turn their attention to the Patent Act of 1888, they will see that according to Section 30 a person has to present a petition praying for extension; and any person is entitled to oppose that petition; any member of the public may do so, or the Government may authorise a person to oppose the petition. A petition is presented, and it rests with the Governor-in-Council whether that petition shall be referred to the Supreme Court. It says here:

If the Governor-in-Council shall be pleased to refer any such petition to the Supreme Court, the court shall proceed to consider the same.

It is not a question of an Act of Parliament at all. If the Privy Council can do it under this section they can also do it under Clause 3. Under Section 30, so far as I can see, it is not incumbent on the Governor-in-Council to refer the question to the Supreme Court. That may be my opinion; that may be the opinion of the lawyers of the country; but the persons who have these rights should be allowed to have the question determined by the Supreme Court. Then we have to get over a further difficulty. Supposing the patentees go to the Supreme Court and get their report, it rests with the Governor, and the Governor entirely, whether the extension shall be granted. The Governor, under Sub-section 5 of Section 30, may say, I will give you twelve months' extension, or six months' extension, or whatever extension he may think fit. So far as I can see, Section 30 deals with this matter.

THE PREMIER: Then this Bill will do no harm.

MR. JAMES: Surely it will do harm if we are introducing legislation which strikes at certain proprietary rights. If this Bill is not needed and does not carry existing legislation further, what need is there for it?

THE PREMIER: And what harm can be done then?

MR. JAMES: Because we shall be creating a bad precedent: it introduces the principle of spoliation. Further than that, if we want to deprive persons of their rights, why not pay for them? I do not think the extension of a patent in the mother country would apply here. But whatever extension there is rests with the Governor-in-Council: that appears to be the existing law. This Bill does not appear to be necessary, but if members think it is, then I say it is a Bill that ought not to pass, because it is not a Bill to remedy the Act generally, but it is a Bill for the deprivation of certain persons of what the law gives them. It is either unnecessary or a robbery.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): There appears to be a little commotion amongst legal members in regard to this Bill.

MR. MOORHEAD: They are always on the side of justice.

MR. MORAN: They are always on the side of justice or against it: there are only two sides. This question resolves itself, apart from what the legal gentlemen say, into this. Our aim and object is to prevent 500 companies being robbed by one company any longer in Western Australia, and I think we ought to call this Bill an Act to prevent legalised robbery by the cyanide corporation. This company has been robbing and plundering the gold-mining companies all over the world. The company even robbed and plundered the original patentees. These people are pirates, they are not the inventors, and even supposing they were, what does it matter? The member for East Perth (Mr. James) has delivered himself of a learned disquisition on this matter, and he commenced by saying that this is a horrid Bill to rob, thief, and spoliator. Yet he says we are doing that under the present law. I am inclined to ask that if this Bill does not

do any more than we have been doing, why should there be all this waste of time by hon. members? According to the hon. member, the Governor-in-Council can give an extension for one year or two years as the case may be. We should prevent this company from doing what they have done in every part of the world, getting mining companies into their claws. We all know that. The transcendent ability which would be required on either side of the question could not possibly give scope to itself under three years' argument. The proprietors of these patent rights fought out the question in South Africa and in every gold-mining country, and litigation once commenced, might go on for years.

MR. MOORHEAD: In the meantime the patent would expire.

MR. MORAN: We want to prevent this company from getting, by hook or by crook, a renewal of its patent. The whole of the mining community in this colony have been asking the Government to take up this matter, and fight the company for the remaining period of their patent; and why give them the chance of renewing it? They are going to draw from mining companies in Western Australia, unless we prevent them, more than the Government get from the dividend tax. I believe the dividend tax in this colony will not be equal to what that company will be able to draw if they levy on every mining company, as they will if the renewal of this right be given; and we know that practically every company has occasion to use cyanide for extracting gold in Western Australia, and that this process is going to be used all over the goldfields. How absurd, therefore, to tell us that because a company claiming a proprietary right in a certain process got permission to levy, for fourteen years, on every person or company in this colony using the cyanide process, therefore they should obtain an extension for seven or fourteen years more! I never heard of a more absurd argument from a democrat than we have heard this afternoon from the member for East Perth. Surely the hon. member is not protecting Western Australia, but the cyanide company in London. When we on the goldfields heard that the Government of this colony were going to introduce this measure, their action was recognised on

the goldfields as distinctly creditable to the Government for trying to protect the greatest industry in the colony from the undue exactions which this one company was trying to enforce on every company using the cyanide process. And it is the opinion of every member representing the goldfields, and probably every member in this House, barring the lawyers, that there is no legal right, beyond fourteen years, to claim a charge for the use of this process. Those who are interested in the greatest industry of this colony will watch the result of this measure; and I should be sorry to think another place would take on itself to throw out a valuable piece of legislation of this kind, especially when that other place has, by certain recent actions, out-heroded Herod in its democratic proceedings.

MR. A. FORREST (West Kimberley): I have to thank the Government for bringing in this Bill, so as to protect the interests of this colony. We know fully well the Government of Victoria had to pay a short time ago the small sum of £20,000 to buy out the patent rights of this company in Victoria. We also know that if the company's rights have to be bought out in this colony, the amount will not be £20,000, but more likely £100,000. We know that when any mining company, small or large, attempts to put up a cyanide plant, and before the company has actually begun to work it, a circular letter reaches it claiming a charge of 5 per cent. on any gold won by the cyanide process. That is a pretty good tax, and any company using the process has also to buy the cyanide, at a pretty stiff price, too. Those who manage gold mines or are interested in their working have plenty to pay without this extra tax being imposed on them; and to make gold-mining pay is not a mere affair of picking up gold, for where one mine returns a dividend, there are twenty which barely pay working expenses. That is a fact; and for any member in this House to get up and say this is a Bill to rob one company does seem to me absurd. It is more likely, as the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) said, that one company is trying to rob 500 or 1,000 other companies; and I do not think it comes well from the member for



East Perth to charge this House with trying to rob one company. It is the farthest from our thoughts in this House to do any injury to this company, which has certain rights for so many years, and these rights have not long to run. Surely this colony has a right to say whether it will renew that concession. If not, are we to ask the people of the colony to pay this large sum of money because we do not want to rob this one company? I say this one company has been robbing all the companies for a long time, and will continue to rob unless we put our foot down. I hope this Bill will be passed unanimously, and I am certain the good sense of the Upper House will also pass it. This is one of the concessions which have been given away when this colony had little or no gold, and we find now the position is unendurable. As far as I can see, we are doing no harm to this company, but are carrying out exactly what was given to the company to the very letter, and I fail to see that the company would have any cause for complaint. If the Governor-in-Council or the Supreme Court were to grant this further concession for seven years, they would be robbing the people of the colony out of perhaps half a million of money.

MR. OATS (Yilgarn): I have studied this matter for some years, and it is doubtful whether the McArthur-Forrest people had any right to the patent. I look at it in this light, that as West Australians we should consider that the enormous profits going into the pockets of the McArthur-Forrest people from the users of the cyanide process in this colony would be a great help to this colony if the money could be retained here; and I think the amount which these persons require for using the cyanide process would mean the difference, in many cases, between a company being a dividend-paying concern or otherwise. I shall vote in favour of the Bill.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): There is another objection to this measure which has not found utterance. I agree with all that has been said by hon. members representing goldfields, with regard to the unpleasant nature of the McArthur-Forrest cyanide exactions. The claim made by these people for using the cyanide process is a great inconvenience and a source of loss to the gold-

mining community of this colony, and, therefore, a loss to the whole community. It is also a fact that during the period which the McArthur-Forrest syndicate have held this patent they have used it as a means of extortion and oppression, and their whole proceedings have been characterised by a vulture-like rapacity which may reflect credit upon them from a commercial point of view, but does not reflect credit upon them from any other point. We have seen that their patent rights have led to endless litigation all over the world, and the only effect has been to put a large harvest into the pockets of the legal fraternity. The position is that the company have the right, or rather the privilege, of applying for an extension of their patent; and when this application is made, the Governor-in-Council would, under the present law, be bound to refer the matter to the Supreme Court, where arguments *pro* and *con* could be heard and the matter decided on its merits. That may be a fair arrangement as applying to ordinary cases, and the Supreme Court may be expected to decide every such matter on its merits; and if there is no good reason for not renewing the right, the court will no doubt recommend the Governor-in-Council to renew it. The misfortune is that the proprietors of this patent are a very wealthy corporation, and if any individual or company brings objections against the application, the objectors will have to fight wealth, and this may involve years of litigation and an almost impossible amount of expense. This Bill provides that any patentee in the future who may desire to renew his patent must go to the Governor-in-Council, who can, at his absolute discretion and without showing any reason, refuse to renew the patent. That would apply not only to the McArthur-Forrest Company, but to all patentees, and that is the objection I have to this Bill. If we regard the McArthur-Forrest Company as having got enough from the users of the cyanide process in this colony, we ought to take a straightforward course by laying it down in this Bill that, for special reasons applying to this particular patent, in the event of an application coming before the Governor-in-Council for its renewal, it should not be renewed. That would be far more straightforward, and by so doing we

should avoid the difficulty, which is a serious one, if we place every inventor or patentee at the mercy of the Governor-in-Council or the Government of the colony for the time being. If the patent were an article of war, for instance, and there were a great outcry against it, the Government of the day might avail themselves of the popular feeling and refuse to grant a renewal of that patent; or a patentee applying for a renewal might be an unpopular person, or a patent itself might be of an unpopular character, and we might have the Government of the day restrained by no scruples whatever.

MR. GEORGE: Not in Western Australia, surely!

MR. VOSPER: In speaking of a Government without any scruples, I of course speak of the future only; and if that condition arise, instead of the patentee having the privilege of going to the Supreme Court and there having his application dealt with on its merits, and obtaining such justice as the present law provides, he would be placed at the mercy of the Ministry of the day, who might for personal or political reasons refuse to do him that justice which he is now able to get under the law by applying to the Supreme Court. We should say, straight out, that we refuse to grant renewal of the cyanide patent, or that we refuse to grant a renewal to the particular holders of the patent; whereas if the Bill be passed in its present form, it will refer to all patentees and inventors, and this in my opinion may be a hardship on them. I may say that inventors and the public generally have not got that sublime confidence in the Government of the day which is shared by the member for the Murray (Mr. George) and myself; and if patentees are to be placed at the mercy of the Ministry for the time being, these patentees may as well be placed at the mercy of ravening wolves. We should say, straight out, that we are aiming at this company, and we should leave all other inventors out of consideration in this Bill. To pass the measure as it is would place all inventors at the mercy of the Government of the day, and that would be an exceedingly dangerous innovation.

MR. MOORHEAD (North Murchison): I agree with many of the remarks

made by the member for East Perth, for I think the principle which underlies this Bill is dangerous, inasmuch as it is aimed at an individual interest. We had on one occasion in this House a piece of legislation of a most opprobrious character, aimed to protect the interests of a certain individual; and I remember a very strong censure being passed by the Judges of the Supreme Court on that measure when it came before them. It is probably within the recollection of some hon. members that proceedings were taken against the then Chairman of Committees of this House (Mr. Traylen) for infringing the Constitution Act; and the country was much astonished, on the second day of the trial of that man, to see Mr. Burt (then Attorney General) walk into court with an Act which had been rushed through the House for protecting that individual. I remember there was at the time a good deal of comment, both by the Press and the public at large, on the expediency of such a measure; and now we have a similar measure sought to be passed through this House, not protecting an individual company, but aimed at what one gentleman has styled the "robbery of a company." I listened with attention to the speech of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), and I may be pardoned when I say that I with difficulty followed his line of argument. If argument at all there was in that speech, it was tantamount to this, that because lawyers derive a considerable profit from litigation, therefore this measure should be passed to protect the public. I do not think that is a sufficiently good argument to address to hon. members, who are now asked to pass a measure which deprives a company of the protection given them by the existing law. I fail to see that a company can be charged with robbery who are merely obtaining the benefits of a contract entered into with them by the Government of this colony. Under the existing Patent Act, the company who are now aimed at obtained letters patent. A section of that Act gives them the right to apply for a prolongation of these letters patent; therefore, if they apply under that section, they are acting legally; and, although this may be news to the Premier, they are acting in accordance with the statutory authority of this colony; and I think it is absurd

and childish for any hon. member to say that they are robbing because they are availing themselves of this or that statutory right. The law recognises that the company have a right to charge a royalty; and as long as the law recognises that, then I think the company are in no worse position than any other company who have a right to charge a royalty to those using their patents. Now what is the principle aimed at in the Bill? In the first place it is, as the Attorney General has said, against one particular company.

MR. MONGER: Quite right, too.

MR. MOORHEAD: Consequently I submit that this Bill is a reflection upon the administration of law in this colony. It is based upon the idea that these patentees will, as a matter of course, obtain a prolongation of the patent. I should like to point out very briefly that before a person can obtain an extension of a patent, the Court must be satisfied of many things: first, what profits the assignee is obtaining, and what profit the original patentee is obtaining; secondly, what profits the original patentee will be entitled to under the extension of the patent; and many questions of similar import, all tending to show what the protection to the public will be if the prolongation be granted, and how it will affect the public if such a prolongation is extended. These are questions which I submit our judiciary in this colony are quite able and impartial enough to try; and by seeking to remove from the purview of the Supreme Court the decision of a question of this sort, we are casting a grave reflection upon the impartiality of our legal tribunals. And, thirdly, I submit that this Bill has, underlying it, a bad principle. After the speech of the Attorney General, hon. members can have no doubt that this question is to be referred to a tribunal which has already made up its mind. The language of the Attorney General was: "We wish to settle for ever any doubt there may be upon a decision of this character. We do not want a prolongation or an extension of the patent, and therefore we take away from the construction of Section 30 of the original Act any doubt which may exist upon the right of the Governor to determine the matter in Council." In the first place,

as I have already pointed out, we, by doing that, cast a grave reflection on the impartiality of existing tribunals, and refer the decision of this question to a tribunal by which it has practically been decided. I therefore say, on these grounds, that I support the observations of the member for East Perth (Mr. James), and I shall be very happy indeed, not only to vote against this Bill, but to do all in my power to oppose it in Committee. If the Attorney General be successful in carrying this Bill, I would suggest to him very respectfully that it would be well to insert in the Act itself a definition of the word "patentee." It is most extraordinary that in all our Acts there is an omission of that definition; and if this Bill be passed, considerable difficulty may arise from time to time with regard to the construction or position of an assignee under the Act.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I did not intend to speak with regard to this Bill, but the speeches of the member for East Perth (Mr. James) and the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) have induced me to do so. It seems to me this Bill does not seek to interfere with any contract which already exists, but it seeks to give discretion to the Governor-in-Council to decide whether a contract already existing shall be prolonged.

MR. JAMES: What about Clause 2?

THE PREMIER: The words of Clause 2 are that the registration shall not be valid or effective beyond the term mentioned in the original letters patent. Well, it seems to me it would be quite competent for this House to pass a Bill to the effect that there shall be no patent laws in the colony at all, after the expiration of the patents now existing. A good deal has been said about existing laws, but the same power that made those laws can pass this Bill.

MR. JAMES: But this Bill is aimed at one company only.

THE PREMIER: We are not bound to arrange our legislation so as to suit exactly a decision which may be given by the Privy Council in England. We do not know what the Privy Council will do; but it may agree to give an extension of this patent for another fourteen years to these patentees, who reside in England, and why this colony should be saddled

with this terrible burden on that account I cannot understand. The remarks of the member for East Perth (Mr. James) went only thus far, that the law as it now stands is sufficient, and therefore this Bill is not necessary. We say in regard to this particular patent which has been discussed, that when the term mentioned in the original patent expires, we do not want to see the patent renewed in this colony. There is no doubt about that. We do not want to interfere with the term of the original patent, but we do wish most emphatically to say that we do not want the patent to continue in this colony for any longer period than the term of the original letters patent. I cannot think that this Legislature, in trying to protect the interests of the public, can be doing anything wrong. The company have a patent for a certain term, and we say, "When that term expires we will not give you a renewal of it; we do not want you to have a renewal; and if the law in England, or the law here, might favour you in that direction and give you an extension, we must alter our local law." It must be remembered that it rests with the Judges at home, or the Judges here, to say whether they think there should be an extension. The company have no right to an extension. The extension depends upon the decision of the courts at home, as to whether there is any objection to granting it, and of the courts here as to whether they think there is any such objection. One hon. member told us that by the Bill the Governor would have a right to say, "We will give you an extension for 12 hours, or 24 hours." Well, if that be the case, we may depend upon it the Governor will say: "We will not give it to you for more than five minutes," if the continuance of the patent is diametrically opposed to the interests of the colony, as would be the continuance of this patent. It is contrary to the interests of this country that the monopoly should exist longer than the term mentioned in the original letters patent. That being so, I say we are determined it shall not last any longer than can be helped, and in so doing I think we are acting like prudent people, by deciding this matter for ourselves, and by not allowing this patent to be renewed in this colony when the term

mentioned in the original letters has expired.

MR. VOSPER: You say more than that. The Bill refers to all patents.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): This Bill is, to a very large extent, one which must be interpreted by the learned members of this House; but it seems to me the argument has become a little confused; at any rate, it has confused me, if not other members. As I understand, a patent is granted for the encouragement of inventors. It has been suggested to me a moment ago that a great many people spend a good deal of time in trying to invent something of importance to the general public which may be a vast saving to the public, or which may bring large profits to the public as a whole. The idea we have in giving patents at all is to protect the brains of men who invent. We may not succeed in so doing, but that is our intention. The idea of a patent law, whether it be successful or not, is to give encouragement to men to use their brains for the public good. Take, for instance, the Wood reaper and binder. I suppose that invention has been of immense value to a very large number of people. Now it is very hard to say that, when a man has invented a reaper and binder which saves a large amount of money to everyone who uses it, he is a robber because he charges for or obtains a royalty on this patent, the result of his own inventive genius.

MR. HARPER: In this instance, the inventor does not get the benefit.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: He may not get it, but that is not the point at issue. The point at issue is that the idea of a patent is that the inventor who uses his brains and invents a labour-saving or profit-making appliance, should have the benefit of his effort and of his inventive power. Take the case before us, assuming for a moment that this patent is genuine, it has been doubted, and it has been said this particular patent is pirated from some other inventor; but that is a question we can hardly enter into. Whoever invented it, it has been of immense advantage to the mining community. It has enabled companies to extract a vast profit out of tailings which they never could have got but for the benefit of this particular patent. Now comes a time in

which, in consequence of the large output and of the vast amount of gold obtained by this particular process, a great, unusual, and unexpected profit is being derived by the people who own this patent. They have an existing right under the patent for a certain number of years and beyond that they have an implied right by application. These people take out a patent under the Act, and they have a right to the sole monopoly of this patent as the result of their efforts and their inventive genius. But beyond that they may apply to the court for an extension of time. Up to this time the patentees' rights have been confined to 14 years: we come to the point at which the patentees have enjoyed the rights for 14 years. The patentee goes to the court and asks to have his rights renewed for a further term, say seven years. It seems clear to me, arguing as a layman, it is for the court to say "yes" or "no" to that application or to moderate that application as it seems fit. The patentee asks for seven years; the court may grant one, two, or five years, or the court has the right to grant any extension it thinks right. The court ought to be and will be influenced by such evidence as is brought before it, and if it can be shown that the patentee has no further right, and that in the interests of the public or in fairness to the public he ought not to have an extension, I presume the court will not grant the extension. I believe very largely in the view taken by the member for East Perth (Mr. James) that the legislation in the Bill appears to be wholly unnecessary, because, as I understand the exposition by the member for East Perth, which was confirmed by the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead), the court has to be moved and when the court gives its decision, that decision must be approved by the Executive Council. Sub-section 5 of Section 30 says:

It shall be lawful for the Governor-in-Council to extend the term of the patent for a further term not exceeding seven . . . . . years

When this is granted we stand under the law in this position: if it is for the public good, the Executive will say they do not think the time ought to be extended. The Executive can extend the time for seven days or seven weeks or three

months, and then they have fulfilled all the conditions and covenants under the law. But what is proposed in this Bill is not that we shall take away the particular right—that might be advisable probably in the interests of the mining community; but the light in which the mining industry should consider this is, that although they have paid a considerable amount of money for this process, they have obtained a vast amount of gold and they would not have used the patent unless it paid them. Therefore the mining community ought in fairness to recognise this point. Coming to the other point dealing with the decision of the Supreme Court that these people are entitled to a renewal: it rests undoubtedly with the Executive as to how long the renewal should be. The Executive Council, knowing what is involved, would make the renewal as short as possible. I want to indorse the suggestion of the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) that we are not dealing under the Bill with one particular company, but with all persons; and it seems to me we are going a little too far in order to reach one patentee, the existence of whose patent is oppressive, when we have powers under the present Act to meet the difficulty. The Supreme Court decides whether the patentee is entitled to renew his patent, and then the question as to whether the time shall be for a month or a year is considered. When we have that power under the existing Act it seems wrong and too sweeping to take away the rights of anyone who may invent. This is what the Bill does: it takes away everybody's right, it takes away the right to extension of time for every patentee because the Bill must apply to all patentees. What strikes me is that this Bill is too sweeping in its character. If in the wisdom of this House it be deemed advisable to end this particular patent, the better way of refusing it would be to pass a resolution in the House saying that the power which rests or vests in the Executive Council should be exercised in this case and no extension granted, or only a limited extension. We do not know what valuable patents may arise in the future. A man may invent something of an important character and of great value, but during the term of the patent, 14 years, he may have no result,

but by an extension of a few years longer he could be rewarded for his genius. This is taken away from the inventor under the Bill. It seems to me that the argument of the member for East Perth is unanswerable; that for all just and lawful purposes we have power under existing legislation. I think hon. members who are interested, as I am, in seeing that this patent should come to an end as soon as possible will find that all that is necessary is in the Act, if the Executive only exercise the powers under Sub-section 5 of Section 30. Under that section an end can be brought to any patent which is inimical to the interests of the public.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (in reply): I do not intend to make any reply as to the merits or demerits of the patentees of this great invention, or rather the persons who at present hold the patent, because they are not the original patentees. I have myself known from long personal experience what the McArthur-Forrest people have done in other countries, because I had it brought under my notice. I was six months chairman of the commission which was determining the question whether this patent was valid in South Africa. That commission travelled throughout Australia and New Zealand. In that case the whole evidence was directed to whether the same patent in use was that applied for and granted to the patentee. It appears when the patent was first granted the strength of the solution was not determined, and the fact is that as a matter of practice it was thought by the patentees that the solution had to be of a certain strength, otherwise the gold could not be extracted. But it turned out afterwards that in order to make the process effective, the solution had to be a dilute solution, and so dilute that it was foreign altogether to the original patent: that was shown in the case which came before the court.

**MR. MOORHEAD**: The Lake View Consols.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**: This occurred about six years ago, long before the Lake View Consols was heard of. Those gentlemen who exercised the rights of the patentees demanded and got from the gold companies of South Africa 10 per cent. of the gross return. That was a monstrous demand to make.

**MR. JAMES**: How can you say it was monstrous?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**: No doubt it was monstrous. In addition to that, their income amounted to three quarters of a million. It appears that this demand became so outrageously unfair to every fair-thinking person, and to those persons who had to submit to its crushing effect, that they clubbed together and the patent was upset in the South African Republic. The people of the Gold Recovery Company were very smart, and they came to all the colonies—this one too—amended their specification and registered in the office here, without saying a word to anyone about it. That was one of the objects I had in view in the Act which was introduced last year, to prevent a repetition of that kind of thing. It is a monstrous thing when a man under the pretence of an amended application obtains a patent.

**MR. JAMES**: The Court of Appeal might upset that.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**: My friend may say that the Court of Appeal might upset that, but when one has to fight a wealthy company like this, one is rather shy. I know that the expenses of the litigation I had some experience of amounted to £400,000. It was an uphill task. Then we come to the question of the extension beyond the period of 14 years. We know that the patentee can apply for an extension for another seven years.

**MR. JAMES**: Does not the present Act, under Section 30, leave it to the Governor-in-Council as to the term of the extension?

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL**: No. If the hon. member says it does, then all his argument is futile. It is unnecessary for him to attack the Bill, because according to the hon. member's contention, this Bill is only declaratory of the law as it is. I openly say it is not declaratory of the law as it stands: it is to take away the right to demand a renewal of the patent. This is a case for the benefit of the whole of the mining community, and the Government must have regard to the interests of the mining community rather than the interests of individuals who are making a large thing out of the patent.

Question put and passed.  
Bill read a second time.

At 6:30, the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, Chair resumed.

#### CIRCUIT COURTS JUDGE BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I beg to move the second reading of this Bill. It is a short measure, being a Bill merely to authorise the appropriation of a salary for another Judge of the Supreme Court. For a long time past there has been a demand for another Judge. The Government have tried to avoid appointing another Judge, because we thought that litigation might not continue to the same extent as it has done lately. We were also aware that in South Australia, which has double the population of this colony, only three Judges are appointed, and we thought that perhaps the work of the Supreme Court here would not increase, and that the appointment of a fourth Judge might be avoided. But in doing that we were aware that the Circuit Courts Act of 1897, providing for the holding of sittings of the Supreme Court in certain districts, was not being carried out, and it is the general opinion both in this House and the colony that the Circuit Courts Act shall be brought into existence, especially on the goldfields, and that populous districts should have the advantage of sittings of the Supreme Court for all cases. This has not been possible without increasing the strength of the Supreme Court bench. The preamble of the Bill sets forth the reasons why the Government have considered it desirable to appoint another Judge, in order that the Circuits Court Act of 1897 may be carried out, and sets forth that the salary of another Judge should be provided. Whatever may be said in regard to the past and the action of the Government in not recommending this House to provide a fourth Judge, I think everyone will agree that the time has arrived now for this step to be taken, and I therefore move the second reading of the Bill.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I am glad to welcome this Bill

and the proposed appointment of a Circuit Courts Judge. I hope that when the Bill passes, as I feel sure it will, the time of the new Judge will be given, if not exclusively, at any rate sufficiently to carry on the Circuit Courts on the goldfields and in other principal centres of the colony. We really require this assistance, for the sake of persons who are compelled to go into Court; and I hope that full attention will be given to the larger centres of the colony—I will not say distinctly and solely on the goldfields, though they must be the principal centres. The necessity which has existed for a long time for the holding of sittings of the Supreme Court in the several large centres on the goldfields and elsewhere, justifies the appointment of a fourth Judge; and if it were not so, I do not know that I should be prepared to support the Bill. The scattered condition of our colony and the long distance which separate one portion of the community from another make it in the highest degree inconvenient for people to be obliged to travel long distances to Perth, whether as litigants or witnesses, for attending trials in the Supreme Court here; and this inconvenience and waste of time to all the parties concerned will be greatly reduced by the holding of Circuit Courts. I hope the Bill will pass, and that the new Judge will be for the Circuit Courts work.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

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

#### ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

##### IN COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY.

Debate on financial policy resumed from 11th October; third day.

SIR JAMES G. LEE STEERE (Nelson): Before this discussion closes, I feel it incumbent on me, as representing both sides of the House, to express my great regret and disappointment at there being no provision on these Estimates for increasing the accommodation and conveniences for members of this House. Hon. members will recollect that last year some plans were prepared and placed before a committee of this House, who approved of them; and I certainly

expected that when this had been done, there would have been some provision made on this year's Estimates for carrying out those improvements. Shortly before Parliament met this session, I had an interview with the then Director of Public Works (Mr. Piesse), and placed before him the necessity for having something done this session; and I stated to him that I would refrain from making an application for having painting and other colouring work done to the present rooms, because I thought this expense would be useless in view of the intention to build refreshment rooms and other additions to this building. Mr. Piesse took those plans, and had a few alterations made in them in allocating the different rooms which I suggested; and then the plans were, I believe, returned to him, and a copy sent to me; and I certainly thought that the then Director of Public Works (Mr. Piesse) would have placed this matter before the Cabinet. I cannot say whether he did so or not. It may be that in consequence of his resigning office about that time, the necessity for these alterations was not brought under the notice of the Government. Of course it is scarcely necessary for me to point out to hon. members the great need there is for increased accommodation; but I will enumerate some of the requirements. Take, first of all, the Clerks' room. That is so lumbered up with papers and books that there is not room for the clerks to do their work. Then take that little Library room. Why, it would be scouted as insufficient by a mechanics' institute in some small country town. Then we have had, on occasions during this session, as many as four select committees which ought to have been sitting at the same time; but there was only one room for their sittings, the work of Parliament being thereby much impeded. Again, we have no accommodation whatever for the *Hansard* reporters in transcribing their notes. The Public Works Department have given up two little rooms during the time Parliament is in session for the convenience of the *Hansard* reporters; but these rooms are given up at great inconvenience to that department. Then there is the room of the Opposition, another room which has been taken away from the Public Works Depart-

ment, by whom it is really wanted, but they have been obliged to give it up at great inconvenience to themselves. There is no possibility of Ministers having a room to themselves; and as far as our refreshment room goes, it is probably large enough, but it has such a barn-like appearance that I am ashamed to take into it any member of Parliament who comes from another colony. It looks almost indecent, I may say, to be the refreshment room of the Parliament of this country. Probably a great number of members here have been in the Parliament Houses of the other colonies, and have seen the great conveniences their members enjoy. I do not wish to see such magnificent rooms erected for this Parliament, nor do I wish to see new Parliament buildings put up at a great expense; because I think, as far as our Legislative Assembly chamber is concerned, it is a very nice room indeed, and will last our Parliament for years; but I do think it absolutely necessary that there should be increased accommodation, not only for carrying on the work of Parliament, but to afford greater conveniences to members of this House. And this is more especially important in view of the fact that after the next general election we shall have an increased number of members here. Therefore I hope the Government may even yet see their way, before the Estimates are closed, to provide for going on with these works at once. Having looked through the Estimates, I am personally of opinion that I can see where sufficient saving can be made to pay for the required accommodation. I forget the exact amount the alterations were estimated to cost, but I think it was something like £5,000; and for that expenditure we should get sufficient accommodation here to last this Parliament for many years to come. I hope that before we separate some arrangements will be made for putting up those buildings; and they ought to be proceeded with immediately, so that they may be ready for the next Parliament when elected.

THE PREMIER (in explanation on one point): I regret that the Speaker should think that we have not been mindful enough of our own comfort, and the comfort of this House; but I can assure hon. members that this matter has not



come under my notice. I had very great difficulty in arranging the Estimates, and no one ever brought this under my attention; in fact, my memory does not serve me very well as to what we did in the matter last session. I was under the impression that we had not made up our minds as to our future habitation, that we had our eyes upon a certain site, which I believe we all approved by resolution.

MR. GEORGE: What is that? Bombala for you!

MR. MORAN: It will be a long while before you get there.

THE PREMIER: I refer to the site of the old Barracks. But as for intentionally neglecting to do something for this House, I am sure that was far from my thoughts. I quite agree with the Speaker that the accommodation is not very good. The conveniences are not what they ought to be; but I think the reason for that is, we never intended to remain here. There was an idea of improving this building, and making it suitable for new Houses of Parliament. In order to do that, we should have to buy the Town Hall, or a portion of it. Without that there is no room. At one time the Government did intend to make that purchase, and I hope it will be made.

MR. A. FORREST: The building is for sale.

THE PREMIER: But then, that is not possible now. We have had so much to do; we have had an immense revenue, but still the demands on us are so great that we could spend a good deal more than is available. I do not know what items the hon. the Speaker referred to in the Estimates as being capable of excision. I should like to know what they are; but probably it will be found that they, too, have been promised. I do not know any items which could easily be got rid of. However, when we come to discuss the items, perhaps someone will be able to suggest economies.

MR. VOSPER: In the Premier's Department.

THE PREMIER: If you touch the Premier's Department, you must cut out every item in it.

MR. GEORGE: That is it. Try your own department.

THE PREMIER: We will try yours.

MR. GEORGE: I have none yet.

THE PREMIER: You never will have one, I think.

MR. GEORGE: Shall I not?

THE PREMIER: I will look into the matter, and see what can be done. The difficulty is what to do, and what to alter.

MR. VOSPER: There is plenty of room upward.

THE PREMIER: I have no doubt this chamber could go up higher if the roof were taken off, and we have generally felt rather crowded in this old room. I do not know whether the plans prepared by the late Director of Public Works (Mr. Piesse) made such provision. I do not remember to have seen them, and do not know whether they included provision for taking off the roof of this chamber. With the space at our disposal, this is rather a troublesome building to improve; still I will have a look at the plans, and will see what can be done.

MR. PIESSE (Williams): I regret I was not present when the Speaker made his remarks this evening with regard to the proposed accommodation to be provided for members and officers of this House, otherwise I should have been only too pleased to follow his explanation. But, as I understand, he made reference to the want of accommodation here, and to plans which were prepared last year, submitted to members, laid upon the table of the refreshment room for some days, looked into by hon. members at the time, and, I understood, approved of by them. Of course, amongst the many duties the Premier has to fill, no doubt the matter, which was not made a Cabinet matter and was not fully discussed, may have escaped his observation. During the course of the session of 1899 we had plans prepared for certain additions to the Public Offices which were to be ultimately made use of by the Public Works Department, but which, in the meantime, would have served to accommodate the members and officers of this House. At that time my attention was drawn to the inadequacy of the accommodation provided for the *Hansard* and Press reporters, and, I think, it was the wish of the House that some proposed designs should be submitted. The intention was to carry out a wing, for which provision had been made, from the public

buildings at the back of these premises ; and the intention was not to interfere with the present chamber, or with the rooms at the back, but to erect a wing with a basement, the basement to be used for storing records, and the rooms above for offices ; and these other rooms, which would have been on the same design as the present Government Offices, would have been made use of for other purposes in connection with the Assembly. Such plans were prepared. The estimated cost of these additions was put down at something like £9,000. If we had decided to erect those buildings, no doubt the accommodation so much needed here would have been available ; and ultimately, as I pointed out, when we erect new Parliament Houses, these buildings could then be used for the purposes of the Public Works Department, and no doubt such additions would be very useful and necessary. I much regret the matter has not been attended to this session, during which I may say it was fully my intention to bring it to the Premier's notice. I am sure the Premier is not in any way to blame in regard to this delay, because it was a matter which the Public Works Department had in hand. Although these plans were upon the table for the perusal of hon. members, at the same time it was a matter not fully discussed by the Government as to ways and means, and whether it was desirable to carry out the work. It was my intention, had I continued to fill the position of Director of Public Works, to bring this matter under the notice of the Premier ; and I regret that circumstances prevented my doing so. There is no one regrets more than I do the inconvenience to which those engaged in the official work of this House are subjected in carrying out their duties. No one knows better than I the inconveniences the *Hansard* and the Press reporters suffer from the want of accommodation ; and we must not forget that there is no accommodation for the officers of this House, and scarcely any for the members. The accommodation is so limited that the proposal which I made at the time would, I think, have met all immediate requirements until provision could have been made for the erection of permanent buildings. I hope now that attention has been drawn to the matter, it may receive some consideration at the

hands of the Premier. He has already said he will look into it, and probably he will have an opportunity of so doing ; and if I can in any way assist in bringing about the necessary changes, I shall be only too pleased to do so. I think that should meet the case. No one knows better than I, and I am sure hon. members are aware, that we need some further accommodation, and that accommodation should, if possible, be provided during the next recess.

MR. VOSPER : The matter now stands adjourned for the next ten years.

MR. PIESE : No. I think it is a matter which might be considered on the Supplementary Estimates.

MR. WALLACE (Yaloo) : As one of the country members who has to make the Legislative Assembly my home for the greater part of the time I am in Perth, I feel much pleased with the Speaker for bringing this matter before the House to-night. I agree with him that to introduce a visitor into this Chamber, and then to take him through to the Refreshment Room at the back, which I think may honestly and fairly be classed as a mere barn, and then to take him out by the private exit of the Assembly rooms, where we come into a most dirty and disreputable looking place, which I think might well be called the "second cow yard" in Perth, would be most distressing. We have continually to trudge through inches of mud and water ; we are falling over heaps of stone and rubbish belonging to the Municipal Council ; we are blocked up by iron pipes and rope yarn that have no connection with members of Parliament, nor with this House. I think I might mention, while the Speaker is here, that the interests of the country members have not been studied to the extent they might have been, because, to a great extent, of the fact that no country members have been on the standing committees of this House. I have heard it said, " Let those members go on such committees " ; but I for one have not had an opportunity of getting on. Gentlemen like the Speaker and the Premier, living in town and having their homes here, do not see the necessity for country members being better accommodated than they have been. I know if the Premier had to endure what country members have to

put up with, some alteration would soon be made. Country members have to make this their home.

THE PREMIER: Not their home, surely. We shall have to charge you for it, if that is the case.

MR. VOSPER: So you do.

MR. WALLACE: I do not think that any member gets anything in the Legislative Assembly without paying for it. I want to bring under the notice of the Premier, that while I would be anxious to see the Parliamentary buildings erected, I believe we are not now in a position to commence such buildings. But I agree with the Speaker in his reference to the plans which were laid on the table of the Refreshment Room, showing the additions and extension of the present buildings, which I understand provided private rooms for members, as well as for the officers of the House. I would ask the Premier to consider the question of placing something on the Estimates for additions to the present buildings, for I fear the time is not near at hand when we can erect those buildings which a majority of us wish to see erected on the west end of St. George's Terrace.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: When we are all dead.

MR. WALLACE: I hope the remarks of the Speaker will be remembered and followed out as far as the finances of the country will allow.

MR. MORAN (East Coolgardie): I think the way in which this session has been carried on is somewhat different from other sessions, as we have had the leading financial debate in the earlier part of the session. I do not intend to delay the House for more than a few moments this evening. I have already said in the early part of the session what I intended in regard to loan matters. I took great care in going into the figures, and I was enabled to lay before the House the conclusions which I arrived at, and which I think were correct. These conclusions have not been seriously denied by anybody. The leader of the Opposition has arrived at the same conclusions, in the very moderate speech which he made the other evening; but there are one or two points on which we differ, the totals being the same. The leader of the Opposition takes the reappropriations entirely as being applied to

new works. That would scarcely be found to be correct, inasmuch as in some cases it was only the lending of the vote from one authorised work to another. But the leader of the Opposition has under-estimated the amount of works in hand, and in doing this perhaps he acted wisely. He had no desire in view, nor have I, to place the financial position of the colony in any light except that which was an absolutely true and correct one. In these reappropriations I find that the whole amount, very often, will not have to be met by a fresh loan, but if the money has to be borrowed it will not have to be borrowed for new works altogether. It will be found that the whole £900,000 has not been expended on works which have already been estimated for. The way in which I went to work was that I took the estimated cost of the authorised works and then those proposed in this session of Parliament. In taking the engineer's estimates, we have arrived at the conclusion—the Premier admits it, and the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), who has now left us, said the other evening that there was no doubt about it—that when the works are completed the debt will be between 14 and 14½ millions sterling. I have no desire to go over what I said in the early part of the session, but I wish to intimate that I shall be very pleased indeed if the report of the General Manager of Railways can be laid on the table to-morrow, because I want to say something on the general question when the railway estimates come before the House. On that subject I may speak at fairly considerable length. In connection with this matter I think if possible we should have the report to-morrow. We should also have the promised report by the Government officers on the condition of the Midland Railway rolling-stock. That would be necessary to the general debate on the railways of Western Australia, as we know it is the wish of the country that the Midland railway shall be taken over, purchased, or got possession of somehow by the Government. One of the first things we want to know is in what condition is the rolling-stock on that railway line as well as in what condition is the rolling-stock on the Government lines. It is evident if it is intended to get that railway line by every legal means in our

power and to take it over, we shall have to refurnish it, if the rolling-stock is not good. Therefore we must take into consideration in what condition is the rolling-stock on that line, which carries so much of the traffic in Western Australia, and forms so important a length of railway between the northern and southern portions of this colony. I do not know whether the Treasurer, before he leaves this Chamber.—

MR. MONGER : It will be some months yet.

MR. MORAN : There is no question the Premier is going to leave, and that it is a matter of the deepest regret to everybody in this Assembly. But what I was going to say is this : we do not know what the decision of the Cabinet may be in reference to loans. It may be that the Premier and his Cabinet will place a loan, before the Premier departs from the head of affairs. I want to draw attention to the fact that there are about 50 odd millions of money lying idle in the banks of Australasia.

THE PREMIER : Who said that ?

MR. MORAN : We are told, and I believe it is a fact.

THE PREMIER : What do they want it for ?

MR. MORAN : Well, some of the other colonies have got some of the money, and at equally cheap rates as they get money in London. I do not know the exact figures; I have not been able to get them.

THE PREMIER : It would be a trouble to get that money, I think.

MR. MORAN : I think I shall be within the mark in saying that some of the Australasian colonies have borrowed five millions locally; and even little Tasmania, which is not to be compared with Western Australia in resources and possibilities, has got some of that money at between three and three and a half per cent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : At par.

MR. MORAN : At par : the leader of the Opposition says that. That is a very satisfactory loan, to my mind. I think three and a half per cent. at par for Western Australia would be a very satisfactory loan, and I maintain that three and a half per cent. at par is a very satisfactory loan for any young country : it is quite satisfactory enough for us. If the

prospects of this colony that the Premier speaks about and tells us of, and which we believe after having listened to the panegyric on this colony by the member for Coolgardie, which he gave in the Refreshment Room yesterday—that hon. member being an authority on gold-mining and finance—having listened to that description that this colony so far transcends every colony in wealth and possibilities, ought it not to be possible for the Government to give consideration to the fact that the other colonies have got money locally and would it not be wise for the Government to open tenders in Australasia and at home at the same time ? While I believe this, we know that caution is absolutely necessary. Nothing would be worse than to have a failure over a locally placed loan : that would not be good at all ; it would be just like floating a mining company or any other company where people around the place were supposed to take shares, but do not. If a mining proposition is placed on the market and half is taken up in Western Australia, it is much easier to float that company in London. Every mining man knows if shares are taken up in the country where the mine is, the London people have no hesitation in finding the capital. I do not know where I saw it, but I saw that there are 50 millions of money lying idle in the banks of Australasia.

MR. VOSPER : I saw it, too.

MR. A. FORREST : I think the banks owe that.

MR. MORAN : All the other colonies have ventured on the local market.

THE PREMIER : There is a great deal of fuss, though.

MR. MORAN : I only draw attention to this phase of the question ; and we know that Western Australia is now part of the federal union. The federalists in the other colonies told us—it was their principal argument throughout the campaign—that “if you federate you will get any amount of Eastern capital in Western Australia.” That argument was used by every speaker, including the Premier himself—that there would be more confidence in Western Australia if we joined the federal union. Here is an opportunity to prove confidence in Western Australia ; and as I said before, I have no doubt the Premier will be cautious and feel his way before

adopting any plan of that kind. On the whole, like the leader of the Opposition, I feel inclined to congratulate the Government as far as their Estimates are concerned for the way in which they handled them last year. I do not know if there is any other colony in Australia which could have got into a big deficit and got out again in the next year. I think therein lies great credit to the Treasurer. No colony at the present time has such a buoyant revenue as that of Western Australia; the only danger I see is that we are living at double the rate, in the way of extracting from the people of the colony, of any other colony.

We are working our railway system on half the population per mile of any other colony in Australia and any country in the world. We have about 96 people per mile of railway, and no other country is working on less than 200 people per mile of railway. Our public travel a good deal and use a tremendous amount of goods. The reason is this, that in the interior there is a great population, and we have to carry stuff to them. That is satisfactory as far as the railways are concerned; but it must not be forgotten that in every other colony there was more traffic on the railways before places became settled. When a place is more settled, the rate per head, using the railways, comes down. The late Commissioner of Railways knows that very well. We are living at a terribly high rate; we are carrying a fair amount of canvas, and the Estimates submitted by the Treasurer are moderate and safe; that they will be realised, I have no doubt. I do not think that our tariff will be interfered with at all this year by the Federal Parliament. It is beginning to be seen clearly that our tariff will not be interfered with soon; therefore our most certain source of revenue will remain untouched. Whilst on this subject, I regret the Premier has not been able to get the return as to the amount of customs duty paid on inter-colonial manufactured goods.

THE PREMIER: They are not able to get it.

MR. MORAN: If they are not able to get it for us, why were they able to get it for the Federal Committee? Mr. Owen gave a fairly approximate estimate, all must admit. Mr. Owen gave a special report: no doubt it was a very laborious

work, and I think he could get this estimate

THE PREMIER: They cannot get it.

MR. MORAN: Am I to understand, is it coming out, that we cannot find out what we are likely to lose on the sliding scale?

THE PREMIER: I will lay the papers on the table to-morrow.

MR. MORAN: If the estimate cannot be made now, I fail to see how it was made before. It is a peculiar thing that we are to estimate our customs duty and not know whether we are going to lose in the future one-third, one-half, or one-quarter, or any figure that we may chance to say. It appears that we cannot find that out; that we are to wait for events to prove what it will be. I confess that is rather surprising news to me, because I saw the Actuary, and I am committing no breach of confidence, I suppose, in saying that he told me he could get this estimate out.

THE PREMIER: It has been referred to him.

MR. MORAN: Further than that, I told the Actuary that I would move in the House for it, and he seemed to think it was quite a proper thing to be done, and he would have pleasure in doing the work. He said that he could not guarantee the accuracy of the estimate. We want to find out what amount of goods coming from the Australian colonies are manufactured there. The customs people do not seem to make a separate entry of these goods.

THE PREMIER: They do not keep a separate entry.

MR. MORAN: I saw the Collector of Customs, and he did not say that the work was impossible, although he said that there would be a considerable task in working the estimate out. It is very important that we should know how the country will be affected by the sliding scale. After next year it will be absolutely compulsory to know how we are going to estimate with accuracy the duty we shall collect from Eastern manufactured goods. If it is not possible to find that out, let the customs people for the next twelve months keep a close watch on the goods and find out how much the Eastern manufactured goods come to. That suggestion, I hope, will be carried out.

MR. PIESSE : Have it declared.

MR. MORAN : Yes ; it could be declared by the indenter. There are ways in which it could be done and it ought to be done. On that point the Committee will have no shadow of doubt. I think there is going to be an interesting debate on the railway vote this year. I feel sure the late Commissioner of Railways will have something interesting to say on the matter, and from what I can gather altogether we shall have an interesting discussion. I feel sure there is going to be some trouble on the goldfields this year with regard to water for the railways ; I am sorry to have to say that. I believe we are short of trucks. I should be foolish not to believe that when the General Manager says that he is very short, and it will be twelve months before he can get half the number he requires. Viewing all these facts, when the vote comes up, a very interesting discussion will follow on the railways. I have no more to say on the Estimates at the present time, but as the items come on for discussion I shall have occasion to speak more particularly in regard to one or two matters, especially on the railway question and the Mines Department. As a mining member I wish to say that the administration of the Mines Department has been everything that could be desired ; mining members are prepared to admit that. The Minister of the Department has performed his duties and given satisfaction to hon. members, I am sure. He has taken a deep interest in mining matters, and he has done his best to become acquainted with everything in connection with his department. He is a gentleman who is well thought of on the goldfields by all classes, I may say. He has absolutely administered his department beyond a shadow of blame from any quarter, and his name is held in high esteem. He is a man of honour, and that is a great thing in a Minister of Mines who has to handle leases worth hundreds of thousands of pounds. He is a man of high probity, and the goldfields people are not wont to grumble at his administration. It is only right to say this, because he went into the department knowing nothing of it ; but he took into that position his high personal character and an intention to

do by that department all that a high-minded man could do, and to make himself acquainted with the details. I have nothing more to say in connection with the Estimates. I think the Committee are anxiously waiting for the proposed Loan Estimates rather than the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure.

MR. GEORGE (Murray) : I do not think that in the last session of the last Parliament of the present Premier it would be a criterion if the voice of the member for the Murray were silent even on financial matters, of which he is supposed to know nothing ; therefore I propose to take up a few minutes this evening in placing before hon. members my views in regard to the Estimates, and trust I shall be acquitted of being a croaker if my views do not partake of the rosy character which commends itself to the Premier. There is nothing in connection with politics which differs from the ordinary rules by which we govern our private affairs ; and if it is wise to be prudent and cautious in our business, it should not be unwise nor imprudent if we are cautious in matters concerning the colony. The Premier the other evening delivered an able and lucid speech—which I did not hear, although I have read a report of it—and I can join in the congratulations which were showered on him by saying he made a speech that was a credit to him as Premier of the colony, as a Western Australian, and as a man. I can only hope that future Premiers—if ever there be any future Premier, about which I am sceptical—will be buoyed up with the same confidence which the right hon. gentleman feels in the country which has given him birth. There are a few remarks in his speech to which I wish to draw attention. One thing he said was that there was a great tendency to increase the departmental expenditure, which he considered to be too large at present, that every effort should be made to curtail it and even to reduce it, and that the present limit could not be exceeded. It seems that after the right hon. gentleman has heard from so many members of Parliament frequently, during many years, criticism of his financial policy, he at last sees that there should be economy used in connection with the affairs of the country ; and it would also appear that he is at length seized of the fact that for a country of

180,000 people with a revenue of nearly £3,000,000, it is remarkable that the salaries and wages shown in these Estimates amount to over £2,000,000 a year, for governing a population of only 180,000. The Premier seems to be aware that this is rather a large amount for a small population to pay, especially considering the large number of persons who are receiving State pay, and who therefore have to be deducted from the total of 180,000 people. Making this deduction, there remains a very large expenditure to be paid by a comparatively small population; therefore I agree with the Premier in connection with that; but where I do not agree with him is in connection with a point he made in regard to increases of salary. He said there are some increases of salaries, but very few, and they are chiefly confined to amounts under £100 a year.

THE PREMIER: No. I said £300. The report you saw is a mistake.

MR. GEORGE: I generally find the newspaper reports are correct, but I accept the right hon. gentleman's correction on this point. To test the matter, I referred particularly to the salaries paid in the Treasury Department, and I find that while there are 12 persons whose salaries are under £100 per year and who are to get increases from £5 to £10 per head—sufficient, I suppose, to give them a trip to the seaside or to Bunbury—yet the other officials in that department number 173, and their rate of advance ranges from £25 to amounts considerably higher. Yet the Premier states that there are only a few increases, and that these are almost entirely confined to persons receiving £100 a year or under.

THE PREMIER: I did not say that. See the *Hansard* report.

MR. GEORGE: As the Premier does not admit he said "£100 a year," I will leave that point. Still the poor unfortunates in that department, whom we would expect to see receiving a decent increase, number only 12, while those receiving larger amounts number 173. I have not been able to go through the whole of the departments in tracing out these figures. I find also that what this House deprecated considerably last year in reference to the Premier's department—which he then described as his little ewe lamb, and told us it would cost only a

few hundreds a year—I find there has been an additional clerk there, evidently a highly-trained official, receiving £425 per annum. The Premier may not be aware of this, but I believe this additional clerk is a gentleman whose absence from his late department is not deplored but rather welcomed, and whose capacity for carrying on work of very little moment and for drawing a considerable salary was unique even in the annals of State departments; and so to increase the solitary companionship of the one ewe lamb in the Premier's department, this gentleman has been transferred from another department and placed there, where, under the wing and ægis of the Premier, he may revive those latent virtues which have cost the country so much money during so many years. Another matter the Premier took credit for was that the Government have introduced free education into this country. I am willing to believe that free education has come to this country during the time of the Forrest Government, for it would have been impossible for free education to come in the time of any other Government, as there has not been one; but I do hope the Premier will admit that members on this (Opposition) side of the House have battled for free education for years, as conscientiously as members on the Government side.

THE PREMIER: The Opposition kept it back for one year, at any rate.

MR. GEORGE: The right hon. gentleman is never at a loss for repartee; and if he should go to the Parliament of Federated Australia, he will benefit by the many lessons he has gained here from the member for the Murray. I am not going to pose as a financier. I understand how to change a shilling, but I do not understand how to back a bill, though I know how to charge in a proper way in my own business; and I want to bring these matters down to the point of view which hon. members may readily understand, and in order to do that I will bring them down to the point of view from which I should view them if they were matters concerning the Black Swan Foundry. We find that the revenue for last year was £2,875,395; we wiped away a deficit of £240,000 and expended in other ways £2,615,000; leaving a credit balance of £12,000. I can congratulate

the Premier on having done that, for as it is a most unusual sensation for an individual such as myself to feel completely out of debt, so I should imagine it is in the case of the Treasurer of the colony. But if the Premier will look at these facts for a few minutes, they may give him occasion to pause and consider. Taking the estimated revenue from Railways, I find that as nearly as can be the amount received exceeded the amount estimated by £80,000. Analysing the estimate, I find the Railway excess over expenditure was £96,000 and the Customs excess was £55,000; these together making an excess of £151,000 on these two items alone. Taking away the £80,000, the difference between the estimated and the realised revenue, we get a factor of £72,000, as to which we have a right, without being called croakers, to ask ourselves and the Treasurer where has that £72,000 gone? We have £72,000 of difference between these two excesses; and if we take away the credit balance of £12,000 from it, there remains £60,000 which calls for explanation. Therefore we have this £60,000, the estimate of which was not realised; showing that those who made the estimate last year did not carefully foresee or were too sanguine. My own opinion is that there was too much hopefulness, to the extent of £60,000 on this point alone; and I would ask the Premier, supposing there had not been this revival of trade which neither he or anyone in the colony could have foreseen, where would our Estimates have been if it had not been for this increase in the earnings of Railways and in the receipts of Customs? I make this point to show that last year there has been too much sanguineness in regard to the Estimates. I will ask the Premier to look at the Estimates for the last two years. I will give him one item which year after year, I am afraid I must say, has been systematically under-estimated. It is, as the Premier would say, "an old and valued servant of the Crown," who has been in the service since government of any sort came about; and this is one of those officers referred to by the Premier as having "grown grey in the service;" one who will be here when the Chairman and the rest of us have gone to our last account. I refer to the

gentleman who comes under the name of "Incidental Expenses." In 1897-8, in the Treasurer's Department we find this amount was estimated at £5,505, and the actual expenditure was £15,000, a difference of nearly £10,000; in the next year the amount was estimated at £8,000; yet the actual expenditure was £11,404. Take the year just closed: the estimate was £8,000, yet the actual expenditure was £14,235 19s. 11d. That is the item of "Incidental Expenses" in the Treasurer's Department. I do not say the amounts have been expended wrongly, but that in making out the annual Estimates and in order to obtain a balance, known facts are written down. In those three years, the total difference between the amounts placed in the estimate for incidental expenses was over £20,000. Take the present year's Estimates connected with matters of the same sort: at page 18 we find various items with regard to the Legislative Assembly, and evidently the experience of the previous two years show that the amounts estimated for expenditure were under-estimated to the extent of £500. At page 31, under "incidental expenses, £5,000," we find also the Glasgow Exhibition expenses estimated at £3,000; yet the Premier admitted in his speech that the amount of the expenses at the Glasgow Exhibition would be about £10,000. Turning to page 52, there has been a cutting down in the Lands Department, and how the Minister of that department permitted it I do not know. There have been hundreds of pounds cut out of some other departments amounting to about £12,000; yet we find a manufactured excess on the year's Estimates of some £8,000. I maintain that this excess of estimated receipts over estimated expenditure is incorrect. Year after year I have taken the trouble to go through a number of items, and have got every remark made with regard to the different items, so as to refresh the Premier's memory when he may be at fault. On page 15 I find items about which, from my point of view, there should be no mistake; or, if there is a possibility of difference, it should be in only a few items; yet in connection with the items on page 15 I find that in 1898-9 there was a difference of £24,521 19s. 9d., made up as follows:



Actual expenditure, £459,872, and estimate expenditure £435,000; leaving an excess of expenditure on charges exclusive of the estimate and provided by statute (items which are almost, I may say, as absolutely determinable as the interest one has to pay on a mortgage) amounting to £24,500, made up in this way: Loan Act expenditure, £369,414 9s.; amount voted, £343,276 5s. 8d.; leaving a gross difference of £26,138 3s. 4d. But there was a saving of the interest on Treasury bills to the extent of £1,074 15s. 11d., and on Schedule D (the pension list) of £541 7s. 8d., making a total saving of £1,616 3s. 7d.; thus giving a net excess in that year of £24,521 19s. 9d.

THE PREMIER: We borrowed a little more money in the year, and had to pay a little more interest.

MR. GEORGE: No. It is a question of interest and sinking fund and Treasury bills.

THE PREMIER: If you borrow another loan, you have more interest to pay.

MR. GEORGE: I have brought forward these figures to give the Premier an opportunity of dispelling my doubts, once and for all. I can assure the Premier I am over-brimming with admiration for him, and affection too; and if he can show me my figures are wrong, there is nothing will give me greater pleasure, though I shall be surprised. Let us take the same figures for the following year, that is the year just finished: we find the excess of interest paid on Treasury bills over the estimate was £25,381 12s. 9d.; yet there was a saving on Schedule D. (that is on pensions) of £500. That was the Premier's contribution to the revenue of the country, by not drawing his pension. And there was interest on Loan Account, £2,867 1s. 1d., making a total of £336,711, and leaving a net excess of £22,014 11s. 8d. I want the House to distinctly understand in connection with this matter that I am quite prepared to believe that the Premier can give an absolutely clear explanation, that there are doubtless causes for these differences. I do not suppose anybody has benefited by the under-estimating regarding these items, or rather by the absence of estimating; but my point is, if there be, year after year, an undetermined quantity of this sort for which the Treasurer has not the means of making

an estimate, then let us look at the facts fairly, boldly, plainly and honestly in the face this year, and ask ourselves, what is our present position? I claim that if these figures be gone into, even although there may be an explanation made as to this item of interest, there is no provision made in these present Estimates for a factor which has appeared year after year during the last five or six years of this Parliament; and we have just as much right to make provision for a matter of this sort as for any other expenses in connection with this colony.

THE PREMIER: Interest is provided by law, and not voted annually.

MR. GEORGE: I do not care whether it is provided by law or voted for. The money has to be found; is not that so?

THE PREMIER: Yes, but it does not require a vote.

MR. GEORGE: But the money has to be found.

MR. MORAN: There is an authorisation to borrow.

MR. GEORGE: The fact that the interest has not to be voted for by Parliament does not obviate the circumstance that we have to find the money.

MR. MORAN: But the Government have the authorisation.

MR. GEORGE: But the money has to come every year out of revenue.

THE PREMIER: But there is a special Act authorising us to borrow and to pay the interest.

MR. GEORGE: I am afraid the Premier does not quite understand my point. I am quite certain that what he has done regarding this interest is perfectly honest, honourable, legal, and in accord with the traditions of the House. I hope that is sufficient to say. But year after year this money had to be provided, and it will have to be provided for the current year.

MR. MORAN: If they borrow more loans.

MR. GEORGE: Without borrowing more loans. Let me tell the hon. member interjecting that the excess was £22,000 last year and £24,000 the year before. The Premier can issue about £880,000 worth of Treasury bills. Is that correct? [MR. MORAN: Yes.] He can borrow that sum. If he issue that £880,000 of Treasury bills, will he not have to pay interest for it? Then if he has to pay

interest for it, where is the provision in the Estimates for that interest?

MR. MORAN: It is not there.

MR. GEORGE: It is not in the Estimates. What would be the interest on £880,000 at  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.? It would be £30,800. We do not know whether these bills have or have not been issued. We will take it that they have not. Part of the year has gone; and instead of taking this possible £30,800, I am going to take £20,000, on the supposition that the bills have not been issued. That sum I am justified in taking by the experience I have gained year after year from the Estimates laid before us. Take the £20,000, and take the £10,000, which the figures I have given the House show has been under-estimated, and they will prove that this item of interest has been under-estimated year after year, and I find there is £30,000 wanted. I am not much of a financier, but it seems to me those are the figures about as clear as I can put them. Take from that £30,000 the £8,000 excess which the Premier tells us about, and we have a deficit of £22,000, and it will take a lot of explaining to explain that away. There is another point I want to make regarding these items, and I am making it in the hope that some future Minister, at any rate, who may be here, may learn a little lesson, and may see the pitfalls in which he may stumble; and I shall also ask hon. members who are not aspiring to the honourable positions of Ministers to look at the little pitfalls which all of us, including myself, have been falling into year after year. It is just as well, when we are about to "speed the parting guest," that we should let him see the pigeon-holes which we can get into, and should allow our imagination to run riot regarding the contents of the pigeon-holes to which we have no access. Let us take the Colonial Treasurer's Department, vote "Miscellaneous Services." I will ask hon. members to turn to page 31 of the Estimates. Let them look at the vote for last year, and at the expenditure for last year, and they will find that the vote for last year was £90,339 4s. 6d., and the expenditure £91,924 9s.; and most of us would say, "Well, that is a jolly good estimate. That man has kept his head screwed on right; he knew what he was doing." Now I am just about to

show what he was doing and whom he was doing. I spoke about my old friend "Incidental Expenses." Hon. members will see that there for themselves; it is the third item. The vote was £8,000, and the department managed to ingeniously expend £14,235 19s. 11d. That has been going on year after year, and this year the estimate for incidental expenses has shrunk down to £9,000, when year after year the incidental expenses in that department have amounted to between £12,000 and £14,000. Now is not that a little bit too much hopefulness? Is not that too much of "the sun in our eyes," to write those figures down in that manner? I appeal to the Premier, more in sorrow than in anger, and ask him, does he not think he ought to alter those figures a little? Coming to Item 5, we find £45,000, subsidies to municipalities at 10s. in the pound estimated. Somehow or other the Treasury managed to give away only £30,000, so it had £15,000 left over; and yet with that £15,000 in hand, they managed to expend more than the original vote, and £45,000 was expended on the municipalities. Let us turn over the next page and start with "J." I do not know what "J" means. It is the second initial of my name, and the first of the Premier's Christian name. Mr. "J" starts work, and he seems to have been a very energetic man for a civil servant. First of all, he starts with Coolgardie. He gives Coolgardie £200 for the purchase of a steam engine; then he goes to Cue and gives it £25 in recognition of the fire brigade's services. [A MEMBER: A good example.] Certainly: I do not object. I say "J" is a good, useful man. Then we find an item, "Resumption of Avon Location Y for York Recreation Ground, £691 17s." I am not an authority on constitutional practice; I do not know very much about what this House can or cannot do; but I was under the impression that a House of Representatives, by whatever name it may be called—the House of the people—was composed of representatives sent here for the purpose of supervising expenditure and determining what should be done with the revenue of the country; and yet I find that Mr. "J" comes in and never says a word to the members of this House, and here we get item after item expended without any authority. As a

rule, when these matters have come forward year after year in this House, there has been no discussion in regard to them.

THE PREMIER: They come on in the Excess Bill.

MR. GEORGE: I do not think hon. members saw the items, but I am trying to make them see them to-night. The Premier says they find a place in the Excess Bill. They are always bound to come in somewhere; they are here in these Estimates; but I say they should not be here. And a little lower down we find that we have resumed some place with an unpronounceable name down at Bunbury. [MR. MORAN: Leschenault.] I think that is what they call it, but my pronunciation of foreign names is not very good. Then we come to another little item, "Compensation for improvements to Pastoral Lease 66/467, under Land Act, 1898, £12 6s. 3d." I think that is playing it a little bit low down even on our friend Mr. "J" by charging him with the odd threepenny-bit. This next item is a thing I cannot get over: "Compensation to Mr. J. B. Roe for loss of office as district registrar of births, deaths and marriages, Perth, £350." I am not going to dwell on these items, further than to point them out to hon. members; I intend to deal with them when we go through with the Estimates in detail, but I want to draw attention to these facts. We find that "J" has had to come in as a sort of compromiser for thieves, rogues, and villains. I suppose that language is not unparliamentary? Here we have "Money remitted on account of land receipts stolen *in transitu*." "Cash stolen from the Postmaster for Greenbushes." Well, I know no Treasurer can foresee such things as this. That is where Mr. "J" comes in. Then again, we come to "Deficiency in Advance Account, late Warden, Hall's Creek." I do not know where Hall's Creek is; but here is £410.

MR. GREGORY: The next item is stronger.

MR. GEORGE: But without reflecting upon this man, I am speaking with regard to the finances. This is an amount to be made up out of public revenue. Then we come to "Defalcations of E. Von Bibra, £10"; and yet, if hon. members will turn to *Hansard* of a few years ago, they will find the Premier told this

House distinctly that there were no such defalcations; and yet we see £10 here, and other items in the Excess Bill of last year. Then we come to another little item, "Gratuity to widow, £275"; gratuity to another widow; gratuity to somebody else; and to another widow. Then we come to a "Compassionate allowance." I think we must have been hard up for words. I do not know why one item should be called a gratuity, and another a compassionate allowance. Then we get "Compensation to the widow of the late George Harris, workman at Dardanup Bore, £371 2s.," and a whole lot of similar items. There is £50 for the Drakesbrook Cemetery, to enable the people in my district to bury their dead in the neighbourhood, instead of taking them to a cemetery 15 miles distant. We might not object to that, because there are other cemeteries provided for. Then we come to "Resumption of additional land for Perth Park, £1,600." I am going to tell this House that there is close on £17,000 which has not been expended, and which has already been voted for this purpose and used for other purposes in respect of which this House has given no vote. Now I ask this House if that is carrying out the duties we are sent here to perform; and I ask the House further, without any disrespect to the Premier, whether such powers of distributing public money should be placed in any man's hands. That the money should be given away without control year after year is a serious matter, and it was this which caused me to move that motion which was branded by the Premier a few evenings ago as being ridiculous; and I say there is no man in this House to whom should be entrusted unlimited power over the finances of this country. I acquit the Premier in every possible way of trying to mislead the House, but I say that his over-sanguineness in this matter of estimating has landed this country in a most unenviable position. I find that there is about £17,000 gone away in this fashion. I blame Parliament as much as I blame the Ministry. We have been foolish enough to sit here—myself included; we have gone through our duties in a perfunctory fashion, and when we next go before our constituents, it is our duty to tell them plainly what the procedure has

been in the past, and let them judge us by what we have done; and those who come back to this House, if any of us do, have the duty of seeing that no Premier, however estimable, shall have the power to mess up the finances of this country in the way I have this evening shown them to have been messed up. I have been scrupulously careful, as far as I could, to refrain from dealing with loan moneys, because I think it is matters of revenue that we should look at, in our public just as in our private life. The wages a man earns every week he brings home to his wife. That is the money she has to account for; and if she outrun the constable and get into debt, there is generally a difference of opinion. These estimates are brought before us to show what our wages will be for the year, and what will be our expenditure; and if I have proved my point, I have proved that we have had shown us year after year Estimates which, but for the good luck of an upspringing colony, would have been absolutely falsified so that even the Premier himself would have been afraid to look at them. I say there have been under-estimates of loan expenditure of over £30,000; and my conclusion, looking at the matter from a plain business point of view, is that instead of having an excess of £18,000 the Estimates should show a deficiency of £22,000.

THE PREMIER (in reply on the debate): I am much obliged to hon. members for the way in which they have dealt with the Estimates, and I should not have risen to speak at all at the present time but that I wish to say a few words in acknowledgment of all the kind statements that have been made by those who have spoken in regard to myself and my long connection with this Assembly. Now that I am, however, addressing the Committee, I may say one or two words in regard to some of the matters that have been referred to, especially to the remarks of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) as to the practice that we have adopted in recent years of issuing Treasury bills. I quite concur with the hon. member that if the Government placed a loan on the market at a satisfactory price, having a currency of 40 years or even longer, that is far preferable to financing by short-dated

loans. Of course everyone knows and everyone admits it is far better to know you will not have to repay the money for some years; and the Treasurer, so far as he is individually concerned, if he knows he will never have to repay the loan, but that some successor of his, in the distant future, will have to do so, that is a far better feeling than to know that in a year or two or three you probably will have to find the money yourself. All the financing of public loans is a question of the market and the price. Unless a colony is insolvent or in a bad financial position, which no man I suppose will say this colony is in at the present time, it all depends on the condition of the market and the price you are prepared to pay for the money whether you get it. If you want money at a cheap rate such as we are accustomed to get it at—3 per cent.—you cannot go to the market, if the market is disturbed by wars or rumours of wars, or by financial depression or failure. The whole matter of raising loans comes to a question of price. Even if the market is not good, if you are willing to pay high for the loan you can get it. No colony or country having been accustomed to raise loans at a certain rate can afford to change that rate very easily, because it interferes with the price of your stock that has been bought by investors hitherto. If you change the rate at which you sell your stock, it very often has a prejudicial effect on the value of the stock itself, and our plan during recent years has been to raise our loans at 3 per cent. At one time we had a premium, more than par, for the loan; that was the first time we went to the market. Since then our loans have been raised at a discount. That is very disadvantageous; at least it is disadvantageous because in the first place you do not get as much money as you want. For every £100 you may lose £5 or £6, and that money is required for the work you have to construct. You have eventually to raise money to make up the deficiency between the amount you have got for the loan and the amount that is required. I do not know what is done elsewhere, but probably in some places where new loans are raised at a discount, more money is asked for in the appropriations than the work will cost, making allowance for the discount that will have to be paid.

MR. MORAN: You have never done that.

THE PREMIER: In the original authorisation we have not, but since then we have on some occasions got authorisations in order to bring the loan up to par, but we have not done that sufficiently.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have recouped from loan moneys, which you ought not to have done.

THE PREMIER: We have raised some loans in order to make up to par the amount received. That is one way of doing it. It is perfectly legitimate. The only question is if you require £100,000 for a work, are you to ask for £110,000 for it? If you ask for £100,000 and get £90,000 only, then you have to raise another £10,000 afterwards. There is always a desire—hon. members may find it out when they have to manage large financial operations—on the part of a Treasurer to make his authorisations as small as he can: there is not only a desire but almost an obligation on him to do that. He is always buoyed up with the hope that the market will be good when he puts the loan on the market, and that the discount will not be large. That is the plan. The hon. member for Central Murchison seemed to think that financing by Treasury bills is a mischievous plan; that it is a plan which is very bad. If it is a bad plan it is adopted by every country in the world. I do not suppose you could carry on the business of the country without some power to raise money temporarily.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have raised one-fifth of the whole loan on Treasury bills. No country in the world has done that.

THE PREMIER: Have we raised one-fifth? I do not think so, because £300,000 is in our own hands and can be converted into inscribed stock by a stroke of the pen. I do not think that is a fifth; perhaps it is one-seventh. That is to pay our way. I can only say, owing to the difficulties in the London market connected with the depression in 1897, and then the war and the different war scares we have had, if we had not had this means of raising money by Treasury bills we would have had to pay an immense amount of money to get loans, if we got them at all: it really could not be done. For instance,

in the last transaction which we had in Treasury bills, it was not a very successful one I admit, but we could not get a loan. It was in the middle of the Transvaal war, when the British arms were getting reverses, and for us to try and get a loan was out of the question. We could not have got it at all. Private business as well as Government business is carried on like that. The Government of England is carried on by short-dated Exchequer bills.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That was blood money, to save the Empire.

THE PREMIER: No; it was done because it was the most convenient way. When times were better and the difficulties had passed, the English Government could finance their loans better and cheaper than they could in times of difficulty. Therefore, I cannot agree with the member for Central Murchison that there is anything at all wrong, anything at all that we should not do, in raising money by Treasury bills. There is not a colony in Australia that has not done it. Some of the colonies of Australasia with several millions deficit—I do not know how much, but several millions deficit which is put aside as a permanent deficit almost, not dealt with in the ordinary financial statements—have converted floating indebtedness into inscribed stock, which we have never done. In fact it is a very convenient way and it is necessary—hon. members will find it out some day—absolutely necessary for any country to have the power of raising money by Treasury or Exchequer bills, in order to carry on public works, or in order to meet any emergency when it is not possible to raise money by loan. The hon. member for the Murray (Mr. George) referred to the Estimates, and he sought to show in regard to the estimate of interest on loans that the amount paid was greater than the amount that was voted. I may inform the hon. member that the interest on loans is not provided by this Committee annually, because it is a fixed charge under the loan appropriations, and therefore it often happens that the amount the Treasurer has to pay during the year is greater than the estimate.

MR. GEORGE: The details are shown.

THE PREMIER: It often happens that the amount is larger than that esti-

mated, owing to a larger amount being borrowed during the year than is estimated to be borrowed.

MR. MORAN: A deficiency might occur.

THE PREMIER: A deficiency might occur. It is not an authorised deficiency, but we have a right to incur it.

MR. GEORGE: My point is that it may occur during the present year.

THE PREMIER: If it does, then we shall have to do the best we can, and if we find we have to pay money under statute that we did not anticipate having to do, we must take care to have revenue and to arrange the expenditure in such a way that we shall not get into difficulties. I quite agree with the member for the Murray that it is undesirable for Ministers to spend money without authority. That is the a-b-c of financing and of responsible government. But I may inform the hon. member we are not able to do as we like, especially in this colony where the progressive movement is so great and so many new things arise in the year that we have not reckoned with. In a few years it may not be necessary to spend money without authority. Take for instance the grants for sanitation all over the country: how can anyone tell now what the demands will be? Take for instance the bubonic plague at Fremantle: it cost £11,000. What hon. member would object to the Government spending that amount without authority? Would the hon. member ask that Parliament be summoned to get a vote, or would he expect us to do our duty to the country and take the responsibility of receiving the support of the House on the action taken?

MR. GEORGE: There is a difference in that. What about the purchase of land?

THE PREMIER: All these things come up, and if the hon. member will search into the bottom of that arrangement he will find that perhaps it was some legacy left to the Government of some years standing, and had to be paid now. I remember the recreation ground at York; it is some years since the arrangement was made, and we could not get the people to send in their accounts, or they wanted more money, and there were arbitrations, one thing and another, and we were only able to pay the amount recently.

MR. GEORGE: What about the park: is that a legacy?

THE PREMIER: That is a matter I am willing to take the whole responsibility of. There was a piece of land which was available—£1,600 was asked for it—and which was required to enlarge the park. It was on the top of the Mount and was owned by Mr. Kent. Some time ago it came into the market, and it was required to get a better view of the river. I found that the land was in the market, and I bought it for £1,600. We only required the top portion of the land. The land runs right down to Mount Bay Road, and I believe half of it could be sold for half the money we paid. It was a splendid purchase and very much needed in the interest of the Perth Park. I am sure there is not a man in the colony, no one, at any rate, in Perth or Fremantle, who would say it was not a splendid purchase. We got the chance to acquire this piece of land and extend the park in that direction, and I am willing to take the responsibility of doing that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You paid £8,000 some time ago.

THE PREMIER: I think we paid £14,000 for one view, and the money was well spent. Had it not been for that purchase, the people of Western Australia would never have had a view of the river until they reached to the point. Now they have a view for a quarter of a mile; a most picturesque and beautiful view of the river. I can assure hon. members it is not the desire of Ministers to exceed the funds allotted to them by Parliament; we should be only too glad if we could keep within bounds; but there are so many demands which are pressed by everyone. I believe even the hon. member himself has been pretty persistent.

MR. GEORGE: I got £50 for the purpose of burying our dead.

THE PREMIER: That was illegal, you know. We all know the difficulties we have to contend with, and I feel sure that as the country gets more settled and as things get settled down, there will not be so many requests made during the recess; there will not be the necessity for exceeding the Estimates that has been so apparent during recent times.

MR. GEORGE: What did you cut down incidental expenses for?

THE PREMIER: We always hope to keep them down.

MR. GEORGE: But you always exceed them.

THE PREMIER: That is true, because there are so many demands made on Ministers for small grants, and that is the only fund from which Ministers can spend the money. The incidental expenses vote is the only vote to which items can be charged without there is a special vote, unless it is some important matter, in which case a special vote can be shown on the Estimates. Every other little matter comes under the incidental vote.

MR. GEORGE: Will you lay your original Estimates on the table for us to see?

THE PREMIER: I do not think they would be very edifying. I hope they are not in existence by this time. I can assure hon. members they were about half a million more than these Estimates.

MR. GEORGE: You said £228,000.

THE PREMIER: That was the final draft. Before that we had knocked off £300,000. Hon. members will see that it is a great trouble to frame the Estimates. It is the most unpleasant time of the year, the dealing with the Estimates and trying to frame them and bring the expenditure of this great colony within the revenue. I shall be very glad to give any information I can to hon. members as we go through the Estimates. As to the increases of salary referred to by the hon. member—

MR. GEORGE: I do not object to that.

THE PREMIER: The arrangement made by the Government was that any salaries up to £275 a year might be increased by the department to a moderate extent.

MR. GEORGE: Up to £275 a year?

THE PREMIER: But on salaries over £275 a year there was to be no increase whatever, unless by special application made; and there were some special applications made by Ministers, but not very many. That was the rule; but if recommendations were not made for increase of salaries under £275, of course we were only too glad to take the estimate as framed by the department, for it is not usual for the Treasurer to increase the

estimates of departments, but he generally wants to cut them down. If recommendations were made in regard to any salaries over £275, there must be a special recommendation with reasons in each case before we could agree to the increase, because we knew well that all increases over that amount, unless they were due, would cause great dissatisfaction in the service.

MR. GEORGE: Why did you increase the clerk in the new department?

THE PREMIER: There were special reasons, I expect. It is a very disagreeable duty framing the Estimates, because everyone in the service thinks he is entitled to an increase; and however desirous the Government may be to please them, it is impossible to give increases in all cases. In a colony like this, where we know nearly everyone, and often are personally acquainted with the individuals, it is a most difficult and unpleasant duty to have to frame estimates and deal with questions of increases, and it is a duty no one would desire. I may say it is the most unpleasant time of the year for myself, and I have no doubt it is so for all the Ministers; but especially is it so for me, because an idea goes about that Ministers and heads of departments are all willing to give increases to persons in the service, but that the Treasurer will not consent. As a matter of fact, it is very painful for me to have to reduce these estimates as they reach me from the departments, so as to get a balance; but it has to be done. If Ministers and heads of departments will not reduce the estimates of expenditure in their departments so as to bring the total within the revenue, the last pruning has to be done by the poor Treasurer. I have no more to say, except to thank my friend, the member for the Central Murchison, for his kindly expressions towards myself, and to thank all other members who have spoken on the Estimates. I can hardly realise that this is my last session in this House. It has become a second nature to be here and to be associated with my good friends around me; and, whatever happens, I am sure I will watch with the greatest interest everything that takes place in this colony. All I have in the world is here—I do not mean material belongings—but all my friends and persons I have been associ-

ated with all my life are in this colony ; and I may say at once that I have no desire to separate myself from the political life of the colony, and I have certainly no desire to live permanently in any other part of the world.

MR. HOLMES (East Fremantle) : I listened attentively to the Premier when he told his "round, unvarnished tale," and I am prepared to admit he made out the best possible case he could, as he always does under the circumstances. He did not, however, convince me, and I am inclined to think he did not convince the country, that the tale he told is altogether in accordance with facts. I have always recognised the ability of the right hon. gentleman, and I also recognise his natural cunningness, which enables him to lead his followers and the people in the country up to a certain stage and then, when the thing becomes dangerous, to leave others to fight the battle. It is a matter of regret, at this stage of the colony's history, that the Premier should have decided to sever his connection with local politics. I have looked forward to the time when some strong man would be leading the Government opposite, and the present Premier would be occupying the front Opposition bench. I have thought that then we would have what we all look forward to, and that is good healthy government. It would be necessary for the head of the Government to be a strong man, because I recognise that the present Premier and then leader of the Opposition, as I have expected him to become, would be a difficult gentleman to contend with, for having led the country for ten years, and having a knowledge of its affairs at his fingers' ends, he could place the new leader of the Government in his proper place and keep him there. However, it seems that is not to be ; and I am afraid the right hon. gentleman sees that for the first time the people of the colony in a general election will have an opportunity to speak, and speak emphatically, perhaps in a way that he is not prepared to accept. It may be that sooner than take a beating, he leaves his followers to fight the battle which I contend he should remain to fight to a finish. The least we might expect from him is that he should be pleased to accept the verdict of the people at the general election ; and if the people choose to place

him where he has been for the last ten years, it is his duty to go on ; but if the people choose to place him as leader of the Opposition, then, having had so much victory, he should be prepared to accept a little reverse. The Premier has expressed surprise that the population of the colony has not increased as he thought it should have done ; but he overlooked the fact that people elsewhere have a general knowledge of the affairs of this colony, and they know the difficulties we have before us, what we have to contend with now and what we shall have to contend with in the near future : it may be that this knowledge of our position prevents people from coming here, and prevents our population increasing at the rate the right hon. gentleman argues it should. There is this to be borne in mind, that doubtless those who watch the affairs of this colony, looking at them from distant parts, must realise that we are a very heavily-taxed community ; and if we are going on as we have done during the last few years, and our population increases at the rate of about 10,000 per annum, and if we are to get a loan expenditure of about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million per annum, then it must follow that we are increasing our national debt about £5 per head per annum. We are already an overtaxed population, far greater than any Australian colony ; and if we spend only the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions which it is proposed to expend in the next two or three years, it must follow that with an increase in population of only 10,000 per annum, and I do not think we are likely to get more, the national debt will increase at about £5 per head per annum. I fail to see that this is satisfactory, or how we can complete the works we have in hand with an expenditure of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions per annum. We want two millions to complete the Coolgardie Water Scheme, and as we are told it is to be completed at any rate in the next two years, it will take a million a year to complete that one work ; then we have to construct a railway to Leonora, a railway to Nannine, to complete the Fremantle Harbour Works, and some other works on which loan money has to be spent ; therefore I do not think that to complete these works we can keep our loan expenditure down to  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions per annum.



MR. GEORGE: But if you cannot get the money?

MR. HOLMES: I have already had something to say about the credit balance of £12,000 shown in the Treasurer's balance-sheet made up to the 30th June last. I have discussed this matter previously, and am prepared to prove now that my contention is right. I stated that the balance-sheet was a fictitious one, and I am going to try to prove it is so. The Premier severely criticised me for having spoken my mind on this matter, and he seized the opportunity to criticise me during my absence, and dealt with me severely—more severely perhaps than he was justified in doing. I claim that it is my duty to speak my mind here on matters affecting the people I claim to represent; and the Premier was not justified in referring to me as either a rogue or a fool.

MR. GEORGE: You do not look it, either.

MR. HOLMES: I am neither a rogue nor a fool, nor am I prepared to allow others to call me so.

THE PREMIER: I did not call you so.

MR. HOLMES: You said:

Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

THE PREMIER: That is a quotation.

MR. HOLMES: And you applied the quotation to me. I say I am neither a rogue nor a fool, nor am I prepared to allow these statements to go unchallenged. It may be that some of my critics could not take the stand I do on this matter; but I defy either the Premier or any other member to lay these charges at my door. I am here to say what I believe to be true, and as long as I occupy a position in this House it will be my duty to do so, and I will do it under every circumstance. I was bold enough to criticise the rottenness of the finances, and I tried to expose the bluff and the manipulations of the Treasurer in dealing with the finances of the colony, and I was perfectly justified in so doing. If I possess no other qualification, I possess that of persistency; and I will persist in this matter until I have proved that what I have said in the past is correct, and I propose to-night to advance things one step farther in that direction. I have said that, as far as I can gather, the June salaries are a first charge on the July

revenue, and if that is so, it is not as it should be. For instance, if a new Minister came into office on the 1st July, the first thing he would have to contend with under the existing system would be to provide money for the June salaries, which certainly should have been a charge on the June revenue, and not on that of July. I have tried to get information on this matter from various sources. The Premier has asked why I did not move for a return and ask questions in this House. I did move for a return, and I did ask questions. I received a letter from the Under Treasurer, asking me to call at his office, and he would assist me in arriving at the information I desired. Subsequently I called, and explained to him what I wanted; that I wanted to know the amount of salaries due to public servants on the 30th June, and also the amount due to "sundry persons" on the 30th June. Subsequently the return came down; and if I were to send to this Parliament a return such as that which came to me, any hon. member would be perfectly justified in referring to me as a fool. I asked for a return showing the total amount of salaries and wages due to public servants and wages payable out of Loan and Revenue respectively for the month ended 30th June, 1900; also the total amount due to "sundry persons," payable out of Loan and Revenue respectively. The reply I received is this:—Amount due in salaries, £68,147 4s. 11d.; in wages, £56,027 0s. 11d. Total, £124,174 5s. 10d. Neither of these items appears in the Treasurer's balance.

MR. MORAN: They did not understand the question, surely.

MR. HOLMES: But I explained the question. The next return I obtained was this:—Amount due to sundry persons, payable out of Loan, £1,012,762 13s. 3d.; and amount due and payable out of Consolidated Revenue, £2,615,674 14s. 11d. Yet I am told to ask for information; and when I do so, and go to the Under Treasurer at his request and explain exactly what I want, this is what is sent to me in reply. The return is wrong. Both the Premier and the officer attached to the Treasury invited me to explain what I wanted, and they knew exactly what I do want; yet for some unexplained reason they refused to give

me the information I asked for. Another point I raised in discussing the Treasurer's balance-sheet on the previous occasion was that there was an item appearing in the balance-sheet as a credit which I contended should be a debit; the item of £16,400, shown as a credit in the hands of the Railway Paymaster on the 30th June. This, on the Premier's own admission, was £16,400 in the hands of the Railway Paymaster on 30th June, to pay the June salaries with; and yet the amount appears in the Treasurer's balance-sheet as an asset on the 30th June. If some other Premier came into office on the 1st July, and seeing the Railway Department had to hand over £16,400, he would ask for the money, and would be met with the reply that this £16,400 was to be paid away that day or had been paid away the day before, to liquidate the salaries for the previous month. The Premier has said that I challenged, in the same balance-sheet, an item of £12,877, "Purchase of the gold exhibit for the Paris Exhibition." I never did anything of the kind, and if the pages of *Hansard* are turned up it will be found that is so. I realise that this £12,877, the cost of the gold exhibit, is an asset; and I dare say that amount can be realised for the exhibit at any time. Secondly, the Premier was wrong in saying that I do not know assets from liabilities. I contend that I do, and I am inclined to think, if this is the way the Premier prepares his balance-sheets, it is he who does not know the difference between the terms. I have tried to deal with the Premier's balance-sheet as I should deal with any other balance-sheet which came before me; and I will not allow exceptions to be taken, and statements of mine misquoted in that manner. The Premier said also, that he had been in the habit of paying for years past 52 weeks' salaries per year, and until he had a better revenue than he had in the past, he would not be willing to pay 54 weeks' salaries. No one ever asked him, or any other officer, to pay more than 52 weeks' salaries in one year; but if the Premier has a month's salary short at the end of the tenth financial year, someone must have misappropriated or stolen the money. If the Premier came into office with a clean sheet ten years ago, and he has had 52 weeks'

salary voted to him every year, I cannot understand how, at the end of the tenth year, he comes to be one month's salary short. Someone has misappropriated or stolen the money. The Premier also undertook to defend the Railway Department. I do not wish it to be thought for one moment that I have any grievance against the Railway Department; but I have had constantly before me that this is the great earning and spending department, the department which requires watching; and so long as I am here, I am going to do my best to keep this department within the control of Parliament. The Premier says I make *ex parte* statements, and charge officers with fleecing the country. Well, I shall make no *ex parte* statements to-night, nor shall I repeat statements made by dismissed railway officials, or received from "the man in the street"; but I shall convict the department, or try to do so, out of their own mouths. I am about to deal with a return for which I moved, and which the Railway Department sent to this House; and I think, when I come to analyse that return, if hon. members have not already analysed it, it must be said that the information contained therein is most startling. I moved for a return in connection with the Jobson Firewood Railway, of which we have heard so much, and of which I contend we should hear a little more. The first information I asked for was from the Commissioner of Crown Lands regarding the lease obtained by this company of a water-tank situated somewhere between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, about twenty miles distant from the main line of railway. The reply was that the Government had leased this tank, which contained about 6,000,000 gallons of water, for £15 a month; so I took it that if, at the end of the first month, the company had removed the 6,000,000 gallons of water, they would have paid for the water £15, and left the empty tank with the Government. They would have paid £15 for 6,000,000 gallons of water in a tank situated between Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, 20 miles from the main railway line. I then moved for a return showing the quantity of rails and fastenings and sleepers, sold to this company by the Government. The reply was: "Rails and fastenings, 2,878 tons at

£4 12s. a ton, value, £13,242 10s.; sleepers sold, 7,000 at 10d. each, value, £290; or a total of about £13,500 for rails and sleepers sold by the Government to this company. This is the department's own return. And what I, or any other reasonable man, must ask is: Seeing the Government had 6,000,000 gallons of water in a tank 20 miles from the main line of railway, and their own rails and sleepers, and they wanted the water; the least they could have done was to lay down the rails and sleepers themselves, and bring in their 6,000,000 gallons of water. I should like to say, at this stage, that I do not thank the department for having on this occasion supplied the correct information. They supplied it because I think they were pretty well satisfied that if they did not give me the truth, to which I was entitled, I should have descended to some other means of arriving at it. They saw I was determined to find out everything; consequently they gave this information in a straightforward manner. The next return I asked for was the date when this material, £13,500 worth, was sold, the value and quantity of each parcel sold, and the date on which payment was made. Hon. members know that if they approach the Railway Department as purchasers, or ask them to put in a siding, the first thing they do is to demand a deposit, representing the amount of the expenditure; and one would naturally think that when the department came to sell to this company £13,500 worth of material, they should have had, at all events, a deposit on account of the purchase-money. But instead of getting the deposit, the return shows that the sale of this material was effected in December, 1899, and that payments were made in May, June, July, and August, 1900, the payments representing about £12,000; but a subsequent return shows that this £12,000, which went to pay for the material and sleepers, was the produce of the Government's own water, which was bought back at £3 per thousand gallons, and which had been bought by the company for about £15, because the company had the right to remove 6,000,000 gallons in one month, and had to pay only £15 for it during that month. The return shows, too, that the price paid per thousand gallons, on

the main Eastern railway line, was £3 per thousand gallons for 2,463,918 gallons of water, representing £7,391 15s. 2d. The return further shows that 3,163,600 gallons of water was purchased from the same company at the same place at £1 5s. per thousand gallons, representing £3,954 10s., and that the quantity of water bought altogether was 5,627,518 gallons. When I moved for a further return showing the charge made for the hire of trucks used by the company to carry the water over their line, I expected a different reply from that furnished; because the Railway Department sold the material and sleepers, and the company laid down the line. The company had no rolling-stock, no tanks, no trucks to bring the water in, and had to obtain the use of the Government rolling-stock. That being so, one would have thought this company would have paid for using the rolling-stock, as I or any other person would have had to pay. The Government, in treating with their customers generally, will not deliver a single truck unless a deposit be paid. They will not deliver the contents of a truck at their destination unless the freight be paid; and yet, when I moved for a return showing the amount of hire paid by the company for the use of the rolling-stock which ran over this private line—and hon. members can realise that a line badly laid, like this one, has a worse effect on rolling-stock than a properly constructed line would have—the return showed that no charge was made for the use of the rolling-stock by the company.

MR. MORAN: Was that for hauling water only, or for timber?

MR. HOLMES: I did not ask for that information. I had plenty to go on with. A further return shows that the company owed the Government on the 31st July, 1900, £2,571 5s. 5d. for freight on material from the junction, I take it, into Kalgoorlie, over the main line; and they owed for rails and fastenings, £1,455 7s. 6d.; making a total of over £4,000 which the company owed the department on the 31st July last. Next I moved for a return to show the extent of the credit allowed the company. Hon. members must know, if they have any dealings with the Railway Department, that if they want a month's credit they must

deposit a sum covering the amount required to the credit of the general manager in some bank. But I find that in the case of this company, no credit bond was demanded or entered into, and that the company had £4,000 credit on the 31st July last, and I do not know what credit they were given at various other periods. The Government had water at one time which they valued at £15 a month, and for that water they subsequently paid the company £13,000. If the Government had conducted the transaction properly, they would have had the line to-day connecting the main line of railway with the tank, and every time the tank became full, the Railway Department could have brought the water in. Now every time the tank fills, the company, paying £15 for a month's use of the water, sell it to the Government, who have already paid £13,000 for the contents of the tank.

MR. KINGSMILL: That is the way to make railways out of water.

MR. HOLMES: In the face of statements like that—statements made, not by men in the street, but taken from returns laid upon the Table by the Railway Department—I think the least this House can do, if they have the welfare of the country at heart, is to demand that the thieves and plunderers be dragged to justice; because I contend that no honest servant of the Railway Department would be guilty of allowing such transactions unless he obtained some concession for so doing. We have this in addition to the Ice Company frauds. We have the report of the Select Committee on the Ice Company coming down at half-past four in the afternoon, recommending the dismissal of some of the lower grade officers of the Department, and an inquiry into the conduct of some of the higher officers; and two hours later we have the Premier bringing down the Estimates, recommending increases in the salaries of those very high-grade officers whom the Select Committee recommend should have their conduct inquired into. The Premier says I have no right to damage the reputation of honourable public servants. I have no right, and no desire, to do anything of the kind, so long as they act honourably and straightforwardly in the interests of the country. But I contend that a public servant who makes such a contract with

a company as I have just described is not honest; and as long as I occupy a seat in this House I shall demand that those who act dishonestly shall be severely dealt with; and those who act straightforwardly and honestly shall always have my support. The Railway Department, who make so much money for the Colonial Treasurer, or who lead him to believe that they do so, are championed by the Premier for no other reason, to my mind, than that he obtains revenue from that source. I contend that if the railways were conducted as they should be, instead of having this profit on paper which we get—because it is only a profit on paper—the railways would and must show a real profit. The General Manager of the Railway Department now controls loan expenditure; and that is not as it should be. When the General Manager took office, the loan expenditure of the Railway Department was in the hands of the Engineer-in-Chief; and the expenditure of loan moneys should still be in that officer's hands, and not in the hands of the General Manager. The management of the railways should carry the traffic and control the rolling-stock and the existing lines; but the General Manager should have nothing to do with the expenditure of loan moneys in the construction and improvement of railways; because, so long as this is allowed, accounts can be manipulated to make the railways appear to pay, and thus to deceive Parliament. There is another matter the control of which the Railway Department have got into their hands, which should not be allowed, and should be stopped, and that is the auditing of their own accounts. [A MEMBER: Hear, hear!] What I cannot understand is, where is the necessity of keeping two audit offices when one would do. Why not, instead of giving the General Manager of railways an audit staff, give the same staff to the Auditor General, and let him audit the railway accounts? If that were done, the accounts could be properly audited, because the auditor would be responsible to the Auditor General. But as it is now, the officer who audits the Railway accounts is an officer of the General Manager; and unless he audits the accounts as he is told, the result is he is retrenched, or the department have no further use for his services. And now I find in connection

with these Estimates that it is proposed to open a store in connection with the Railway Department, and to remove the stores necessary for the department from the control of the Government Store-keeper and place them under the control of the General Manager. This, instead of bringing back the General Manager to where he ought to be, is getting him further away from the mark; and I, for one, shall enter my protest at the right time. In order to bring about this balance which the Premier tells us is being paid by the Railway Department to revenue—a balance of £50,000—I find that there has been expended on rolling stock during the year £100,000; on additions and improvements to opened railways, £50,000; and on rails and fastenings another £50,000. These three items represent £200,000, and that I contend should, if anything, have been paid out of revenue.

MR. MORAN: It is replacing the old stock.

MR. HOLMES: No new railways have been built and handed over during the year, yet there has been an expenditure of £200,000 on the old railways which should have been a charge to revenue and not to loan. If the figures were analysed and the proposals gone into, it would be seen that there is an absolute loss on the working of the railways, and not the profit which the Premier led the Committee to believe. Yet he says these figures justify the construction of further railways, and on the strength of these figures the Premier asked the House to make further expenditure in this direction. When I analyse the figures of last year's expenditure and surplus, I find that last year there was a suggested surplus of £360,000 to pay 4 per cent. interest and 1 per cent. sinking fund and to carry a balance to the general revenue of about £50,000. It is suggested for next year there will be a surplus of £370,000 for the same purpose. When we come to analyse the figures we find this surplus is only £10,000 more than last year, and the proposed expenditure will, if figured out on the basis of last year, give an expenditure of about £70,000 more last year than this year. So that on the figures presented to the House we are asked to construct further railways and we are assured that the

result will be £60,000 less than last year. The sooner this great spending and earning department is taken in hand and placed under the control of an independent board of commissioners or someone who only has the revenue of the railways to spend and has nothing whatever to do with the control of loan moneys, the better for the country and all parties concerned. As long as the present state of things exist, this House and the country will never know exactly where we are. I do not think it is a fair thing that this should be allowed to go on any longer. The Premier says it is a great satisfaction to him to leave everything in a satisfactory state, that he hands over a solvent and flourishing colony after ten years of office. On the figures as presented to the Committee by the Premier I admit that is so, but when we analyse the figures, one cannot help coming to the conclusion that although the colony is flourishing, the finances are in anything but a flourishing condition. The balance referred to and published in the *Government Gazette* of the 30th June shows we had in the colony at that time about £900,000 cash, and if we look at one item on the debit balance we find there was due to the depositors of the Savings Bank £1,300,000. At that stage the Premier was boasting at Coolgardie, and throughout the country, that he had over a million of money at his command that he did not know exactly what to do with. If the depositors of the Savings Bank had made a demand for their money the Premier would only have had £900,000 in the country to meet the £1,300,000 with. I regret having to detain the Committee so long, but it is a matter of duty to speak what I believe to be the truth, and to explain to hon. members and the country the finances as I read them. We owe at the present time, according to my figures, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  millions; we must raise to complete the works in hand outside the present authorisations another two millions of money, making  $14\frac{1}{2}$  millions in all. The population when the works are completed, if we take two years to complete them, and the population increases by 10,000 a year, will be 200,000 persons. We would then be taxed at the rate of £70 per head. Yet we are told that the finances of the country are in a flourishing condition. These figures are similar to those given by the member

for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) and others, and the general public at the next election will be able to decide whose figures are correct. I blame the Premier for deserting his followers at the present time. The Western Australian Kruger is something like the South African Kruger, he proposes to desert his followers at the very time he is needed. The least he could have done was to have stood by to help his followers out of the difficulty. The South African Kruger has gone away on a yachting trip across the ocean, and the Western Australian Kruger proposes to take a trip across the Australian Bight and bask in the sunshine of the federal city. I merely point out my figures and leave it to the public generally to say who is right and who is wrong. There are many matters I should like to deal with at the present time, and I shall have more to say on the railways by and by—goodness knows I have said enough to convince any man who is capable of being convinced that the railways are in anything but a satisfactory state. When the railway report comes down—it ought to have been one of the first reports laid on the Table—we shall get the particulars of the working of the railways, and I shall raise sundry other points then which there is no necessity to go into at the present time. I will criticise the details at every stage. We find one capable railway officer is paid off with six months' salary and receives £1,000 to leave the service because the Government cannot dismiss him. When such items appear on the Estimates it is time for some of us to put our shoulders to the wheel and challenge expenditure of this kind and decline to allow the public money to be squandered in this fashion. I shall demand from the new Commissioner of Railways that the department under his control be reorganised forthwith. The returns laid on the table of the House justify that. The Estimates, strange to say, for some unaccountable reason, that were controlled by the officer referred to are to be increased, and one officer's salary is to be raised from £1,250 to £1,500 a year. I say these facts alone justify a reorganisation and an inquiry into the Railway Department. The Premier said the other day: "Why did not the hon. member move for a com-

mittee?" I contend it is not my duty to do so. If I received a thousand a year to do the work I would take it in hand, but it is the duty of the Commissioner of Railways to see that these things are probed to the hilt. It is not for me to waste the time of hon. members: it is the duty of Ministers who receive salaries to inquire into such matters. It is not my duty to say more at the present time, but when we come to details I shall challenge every item I object to.

MR. KINGSMILL (Pilbarra): It may be a relief, after the somewhat gloomy aspect the member for East Fremantle has put on affairs, if an hon. member rises in this debate to congratulate somebody on something. The right hon. gentleman (the Premier) is the happy individual I have selected to congratulate; and I congratulate him most heartily—not that he needs it, because, as a rule, he congratulates himself—but I would add my congratulation on the increasing confidence with which he places his Budget before the country. He said the delivery of the Budget speech had been a matter of considerable difficulty and trouble on some previous occasions, but that on this occasion it was the easiest task on record. During the four Budget speeches I have heard him deliver in this House, he has always said the same, that on other occasions there might have been difficulties, but on the particular occasion there was none, and everything was splendid. If this easiness goes on increasing, I fear the Budget speech will be of little moment, that it will in future be omitted altogether. I have found, in common with the member who has just sat down, that on consideration there are certain statements which appear to be somewhat inconsistent with various things the Premier has told this House at other times. For instance, he told us in his Budget speech that he thought he would be satisfied with the spending, approximately, of one million of loan money per annum. I fail to see how that works out, if we are promised the completion of the Coolgardie Water Scheme within two years; and, indeed, at a banquet given at Coolgardie some time ago, a statement was made by a member of this House (Mr. Morgans) that the water would be flowing into Coolgardie in the next September. That statement went

uncontradicted by the Premier; and, if true, it means the completion of the scheme within the next twelve months. Well, the estimate for this "noble work" has been put down at  $2\frac{1}{2}$  millions, of which less than £500,000 has been spent, leaving 2 millions to be expended, according to the uncontradicted statement of the member for Coolgardie, within the next 12 months; and taking the Premier's statement that the work is to be completed within the next two years, this at any rate disposes of his million per annum; therefore in the face of this I cannot understand why the right hon. gentleman brought down the other day the Coolgardie-Norseman Railway Bill. Where is he going to find the money to complete it, and also to build the Leonora railway, the Nannine railway, and to keep on improving and finishing the Fremantle Harbour Works, out of this one million per annum? That is one feature of inconsistency which the Premier, if he were now present to hear me, might make light of. It has been a matter of surprise, and indeed of envy, for me to observe the facility with which the right hon. gentleman finds explanations for everything under heaven. There is one little matter, the expenditure on the Paris Exhibition, in regard to which I must say that on reading the detailed account of the expenditure —

MR. MORAN: A "noble" expenditure.

MR. KINGSMILL: I am not going to make a quotation, on this occasion. Some people said it was splendid, but not noble. In the details of that expenditure, as laid on the table of this House, there are several items which might with advantage—I say it advisedly—be subjected to an examination. For instance, I saw an item for a dinner-wagon at £97; an article of furniture, and possibly it was for use at the luncheon which cost £37 odd at the Exchange Club in Perth. I wish to touch on what I feel hon. members must be almost tired of hearing from me. I have mentioned on several occasions, as a question on which I feel strongly, and have asked the Premier on several occasions, if he could not make some more suitable provision in the way of granting funds to the Acclimatisation Society. I would like to congratulate that society on the work they are doing with the little money they

get, and to express my surprise as to how they manage to do the work which they are doing out of a grant of only £250 per annum, which one would think would barely be enough to pay the wages of one officer; and yet they do a certain amount of work, and do it well. I hope the Premier will consider, in preparing the Supplementary Estimates, whether he can allow these people a larger amount to enable them to prosecute a most important branch of science in this country, and to have a little more money to work on. A sum of £250 is absolutely ridiculous for this purpose. Another omission, touched on in this debate, is that some provision should be made on the Estimates for additional accommodation in connection with this building in which we do our business. The present facilities for Committee-rooms are absolutely inadequate; and I think hon. members will agree with me that the Library is a standing reproach to Western Australia. Where we should expect to find one of the best if not the best libraries in Western Australia, we simply have a nucleus of a library, and we are told that any further increase in books is prohibited, because we have not the space to put them in. Two or three years ago the Premier told us that he was about to make provision on the Estimates for additions to this building; but since then the subject has been dropped; and in view of the fact that Western Australia has entered into federation, I do not think it will ever come about that those new Parliament Houses, about which we had some talk in the first session of this Parliament, will be an accomplished fact. I think the improvement of the buildings connected with this House is an object on which the Government might well spend a few thousand pounds. One thing I have noticed with surprise, and that is that this is the only Budget speech in which the Premier did not indulge in an attack on the Opposition. I thought it could not last very long, and I noticed a few days later in a newspaper that the Opposition were to "get it," and that the Premier was at work. He did not lose the opportunity of "slating" the unhappy gentlemen who have seats on this (Opposition) side of the House. It cannot be personally agreeable for members to

belong to the Opposition, and I may say for my part I hope I am of too happy a disposition to be continually finding fault. It is not a pleasure to me to find fault.

**THE PREMIER:** Somewhat convenient, though.

**MR. KINGSMILL:** I would point out that politically it does not tend to the popularity of members to sit in Opposition; and, indeed, some four hon. gentlemen of this House have lately suffered political martyrdom, by proxy, at the hands of a furious number of people at Norseman. Those four members have in fact been incinerated; so that there are already four political martyrs in the House. This is not a thing a man runs into from mere liking to be in Opposition; and the right hon. gentleman, in acting as he did in regard to the Norseman railway project, I think did it more as an under-study to the absent member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly), than as a wise and judicious Treasurer of Western Australia. There has been one subject mentioned by hon. members on which much sentiment has been expended, and that is the retirement of the right hon. gentleman. I would like to say, amongst others, that I too realise that it will be a serious loss to this House; but on the other hand, I really do not think the colony will lose by it. I think it is in the best interests of the colony that the Premier will go, as I understand he intends going, to the Federal Parliament. Signs and tokens of late tend to show that the line of policy the right hon. gentleman has taken up—that courageous and spirited public works policy in which he excels—that his line of policy (to use a vulgarism) is becoming “played out,” and I think it has reached its limit. Again we must remember that, although the right hon. gentleman, as he has often proved in this House, is extremely mercurial, still after nearly ten years of this courageous and progressive public-works policy, he would find it very hard to change his line of action and go in more for social legislation than for using the pruning-knife. From the point of view of the right hon. gentleman, from his high level when he attains that easy position of a place in the Ministry of federated Australia, it may be that he will view the affairs of this colony, and will

watch with an amused and I fancy it may be a pitying interest the struggles of his unfortunate successor—that successor who will be all his time endeavouring to make both ends meet. We are told, on one hand, that our revenue will decrease—and whether that be so or not I do not think it will increase in correspondence with its requirements. The future Premier will, therefore, have to face constituencies which have been, I may say, pampered by the action of the right hon. gentleman for the last ten years; constituencies which are in the habit of being maintained by public works; whereas the Premier who has to follow the right hon. gentleman will have practically no public works to offer. I have, however, heard it said in the street, “Where will you find as good a man to take the place of the Premier?” That will be a difficulty, I admit, because the man who will have to take his place will have to be a better man, inasmuch as he will have a more difficult task than the right hon. gentleman ever had. No doubt the present Premier has had the cream of the politics of Western Australia; and never again will it fall to the lot of a Premier of Western Australia to have the same easy times. I do not think we will ever have in our midst another gentleman who has the faculty of holding the House as the right hon. gentleman has done.

**MR. MORAN:** “What, never?”

**MR. KINGSMILL:** No; I must repeat the word “never.” Never will we get a gentleman with that facile arithmetical faculty of making the 2-and-2 of an ever-increasing national debt total up to nothing. He has proved to this House the other day, or to the satisfaction of a majority of the House, that our national debt amounts practically to nothing. I do not think we shall ever get anybody with that arithmetical faculty; or if we get him, I do not think we shall get a House as credulous as this or former Houses have been. But there is one thing which serves to console me when taking what might be called a somewhat gloomy view of the situation. Personally, in common probably with every member of this House, I have an idea that we have a colony in Western Australia which will survive, not a little mis-government but a good deal; and that upon the resources of this colony we can in future depend at all events, if not for our



political prosperity, for our commercial prosperity.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. B. C. Wood): I move that progress be reported.

Motion put and and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10-31 o'clock, until the next day.

### Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 17th October, 1900.

Question: Agricultural Land, Northampton District—Question: Teaching Trade Routes in Schools—Question: Albany Harbour, Dredging—Question: Karalee Station Refreshment Rooms—Question: Sparks from Railway Engines—Return: Pastoral Leases, Northampton District, motion; Return presented—Constitution Act Amendment Bill (Reduction of Electors' Probationary Period), first reading—Electoral Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Trustees Bill, second reading—Land Act Amendment Bill, first reading—Circuit Courts Judge Bill, first reading—Municipal Institutions Bill, in Committee to Clause 299, progress—Adjournment.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4-30 o'clock, p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL LAND, NORTHAMPTON DISTRICT.

HON. J. M. DREW asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Is the Government aware that a very keen demand exists for agricultural land in the Northampton district? 2, Is there any land suitable for settlement held in the district as pastoral leases? 3, Is it true that a large area of land suitable for agriculture is held on pastoral lease? 4, Do the Government recognise that agricultural settlement is of greater value to the State than if such land is held for pastoral purposes? 5, What reasons are assigned for the non-

progress of land settlement in the district? 6, Has a State railway been built to this district, and for how many years has it been in existence? 7, Is it recognised that, in order to recoup the colony for its expenditure on the railway, it is desirable that agricultural land shall be made available for the people? 8, Is it the intention of the Government to resume all lands suitable for settlement, and when? 9, Has the land in other districts of the colony held by pastoralists been resumed for settlement? 10, If so, why has not a similar course been long since adopted in the Northampton district? 11, At what date (approximately) is it expected the lands of the district will be made available for selection? 12, Is the Government aware that in its neglect in not resuming pastoral leases the progress of the district has been practically prevented? 13, Is it a fact that the greatly increased demand for land in the district is owing, in a great measure, to the voluntary efforts of Contract Surveyor Dreyer.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied:—1, Yes, the Government is aware that a demand exists, and on account of this demand the Surveyor General was sent to the district in September last year to report on and make recommendations for dealing with these lands. 2 and 3, Yes, a fair proportion of land held under pastoral lease is suitable for agriculture. 4, Yes. 5, the demand for land in this district has not, in the past, been great, and doubtless has been checked by its being a mining district, applications often having been refused on account of land containing indications of minerals. 6, Yes, 21 years. 7, The railway was built more for the mining than for the agricultural industry, but the Government recognises the desirability of any agricultural land being made available for selection. 8, The lands in the Appertarra and Nonga Agricultural Areas, near Northampton, have been resumed from pastoral leases. The Government is awaiting the report of an officer now engaged in classifying the lands and improvements on pastoral leases in this district before deciding on any further resummptions. 9, a small proportion of land, formerly held under pastoral lease, has been resumed for agricultural areas in other districts of the colony. 10, The