

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 19th October, 1899.

Question: Railway Siding, Mullewa-Cue Line—Question: Railway Service, Northampton—Companies Act Further Amendment Bill, first reading—Fisheries Bill, first reading—Dentists Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Excess Bill (1898-9), third reading—Annual Estimates: Debate on Financial Policy, third day Paper presented—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7.30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SIDING,
MULLEWA-CUE LINE.

MR. WALLACE asked the Commissioner of Railways: 1, Whether it was true that the Railway Department had recently constructed a siding on the Mullewa-Cue railway line for one Robert Allen. 2, If so, what was the actual cost of said construction. 3, How the cost was computed. 4, What amount had actually been paid by Robert Allen.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied:—1, Yes; 2, About £182 15s. 1d.; 3, Surveying site, etc., £8 8s., rails and fastenings £79, points and crossings £56, labour £34 7s. 1d., stop blocks £5, total £182 15s. 1d.; 4, Amount actually paid by Mr. Allen, £353. When framing the estimate, provision was made for interlocking, which was subsequently abandoned; Mr. Allen performed some of the work, which was also included in the estimate, hence the difference between estimate and actual cost; £81 12s. has already been returned, and the balance of about £88 12s. 11d. will be returned when accounts are settled.

QUESTION—RAILWAY SERVICE,
NORTHAMPTON.

MR. MITCHELL asked the Commissioner of Railways: 1, Whether it was intended to re-establish the three trains a week system between Geraldton and Northampton. 2, If so, whether the train days would be Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. 3, When the new steps for the Bowes Landing would be placed there. 4, When the construction of the shelter shed at the Oakabella platform would be taken in hand.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS replied:—1 and 2, The question of the re-arrangement of this service is under consideration; 3, The steps were repaired, but being considered unsuitable, new ones are to be put in, and the work has been deferred pending a decision as to the correct railway boundary; 4, This work is waiting the arrival of the material, and immediately it is received it will be proceeded with.

COMPANIES ACT FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

FISHERIES BILL.

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

DENTISTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

EXCESS BILL (1898-9).

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES.

DEBATE ON FINANCIAL POLICY—
THIRD DAY.

The Financial Statement having been made on the 26th September, and the first item in the Estimates moved, the debate was now resumed.

MR. VOSPER (North-East Coolgardie): It is not necessary, or even desirable, for me to prolong the debate on the general question of the Estimates to any great length, because the finances have been already pretty fully dealt with on both sides of the House. We have the authority of the annual critic of the Ministry, the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), to the effect that the finances this year are in a very satisfactory condition; and this must be highly gratifying to the Government, no less so than to members of the Opposition. For my own part, I should be inclined to join with the member for Central Murchison in congratulating the Government on having reduced the finances of the country to something like a condition of prosperity, and having given a strong

guarantee of our future solvency. It is more with details that I am prepared to deal, because taking those generally there are many respects in which there might be great improvement, and grievances have been created in the civil service by the nature of estimates furnished to the House. I am not speaking as a financial authority or expert, but it does seem to me that though there has been a considerable reduction of expenditure so far as the Estimates are concerned, there is at the same time a big expenditure under the Excess Bill. When the Excess Bill was before the House last night, the member for the Murray (Mr. George) commented on defalcations which had taken place in the public service. There is no necessity for me to enlarge on that point, but many of the items of the Auditor General's report, and in the Estimates, appeared to me to be of a somewhat extraordinary character. On one occasion when I raised a discussion on these items, I was accused of doing "scavenging" work, and my retort then and now is that scavenging work is sometimes extremely necessary. When we know the Government have been obliged to retrench in various directions during the past year, that there have been defalcations of money in the departments, and that circulars have been issued stating that hard-earned and deserved increments cannot be given, it is desirable that members should criticise in no uncertain voice those items in which extravagance has occurred. In the Auditor General's report we find that £150 was spent in entertaining the Governors of Victoria and South Australia at Albany; and I do not suppose anyone could cavil at such an expenditure, because we must offer proper hospitality to distinguished visitors. But now we come to an item of £159 for the entertainment of a parliamentary party at Colliefields, and it is reasonable to inquire how that large sum could have been expended. I was one who did not accept an invitation to the trip, but a number of gentlemen did go to Colliefields on that occasion.

THE PREMIER: There was a big dinner in the evening.

MR. VOSPER: Apparently at the expense of the taxpayers of the colony. It will be remembered that the cost to the Commissioner of Railways for conveying

the visitors was simply the bill for "medical comforts" furnished on the way, and the sum I have mentioned is too much to spend on luxuries of that kind, especially when it is other people's money, and the occasion only afforded an opportunity to the Ministry of advertising their virtues to all the world, while conferring no public benefit on the colony at large. Most of the £159 was expended on whisky and cigars.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: There was a sit-down dinner in the evening.

MR. A. FORREST: Members of Parliament are not paid for their services.

MR. VOSPER: We might as well be square and honest in this matter. I believe in payment of members, but I do not see that members should pay themselves indirectly, by causing items of this sort to be placed in the Excess Bill. If we were a wealthy country and these items appeared in the ordinary manner in the Estimates, well and good; but when they have to come in by the back door of an Excess Bill, and salaries of public servants are being cut down, it is not the time to spend money on mere guzzling.

THE PREMIER: That is last year's expenditure.

MR. VOSPER: I am simply saying that these items are on the Estimates.

THE PREMIER: Not on these Estimates.

MR. VOSPER: Yes; if the Premier looks at the Estimates he will find the items I have mentioned.

THE PREMIER: You are talking of the Excess Bill.

MR. VOSPER: These items appear in the first and second columns of the Estimates, and that being so, I think I am perfectly in order. This is the time to ventilate grievances, and I consider it a very serious grievance that money should be spent in this wasteful manner when civil servants are having their salaries cut down. The next item that appears is £389 odd, as the value of a parcel of gold which was lost under police escort, and which has never been discovered, nor the thief taken.

THE PREMIER: The police were dismissed, I think.

MR. VOSPER: And a good thing too; but the fact remains that the colony has lost £389 through the carelessness or roguery of the police, and so far as legal

punishment is concerned, the country has had no satisfaction. Another of these guzzling items is the expenditure incurred at the opening of the Royal Mint. In order to open that building, which has already cost a large sum of money, expense was incurred to the amount of £119, and I cannot conceive why these large sums should be spent in this way, except as mere matter of ostentation, and as an appeal to a large circle of society who enjoy cheap meals and cheap drinks and cigars at the expense of the poorer section of the community. The poorer ranks of society very seldom appear at functions of this kind: all they have to do is to foot the bill, and I distinctly object to that, especially when the finances are in their present condition, and the Government are practising considerable parsimony in almost every department of the public service. Then there is an item of £213 in connection with the trip of the Governor through the Murchison goldfield. The history of that trip is perfectly well known.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member will ask for details I will supply them.

MR. VOSPER: I am not prepared to go into that, because I have sought information on the point as to whether it was food for His Excellency or food for the horses, and possibly the two items are confounded.

THE PREMIER: There are no personal expenses at all in that item, I can assure the hon. member.

MR. VOSPER: I am not asserting there are. We all know the history of the trip, and we know that it was not on the whole beneficial to the colony, whatever may have been the opinions expressed by the Governor. This trip has been the subject of adverse comment in the Press and in both Houses of Parliament; and it seems particularly hard that the colony should be called upon to pay the expenses of a trip which really damaged the reputation of the colony rather than benefited it. It does not seem right that work of this kind should be conducted at the public expense, when the result can only be private benefit, if there be any benefit at all. In connection with Government House there is a further sum of £712 for additions and alterations to the ball-room. The law costs are extremely heavy, and it seems to

me that there is something wrong in connection with the Common Law Department, to lead to all this expenditure. The Attorney General, I have no doubt, is a profoundly learned lawyer, and is a gentleman whom we all respect on account of his knowledge of law and his great forensic ability; yet such is his retiring modesty, that in the majority of cases tried, that gentleman has not appeared in Court to represent or defend the Government. I do not know why that is the case, and I put it down to his modesty and the unwillingness of the Government to overwork this capable officer.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Is there any other example in the colonies where the Attorney General does this work? There is not one.

MR. EWING: An Attorney General never appears for the Crown.

MR. VOSPER: I know that in one particular Crown prosecution which took place in the colony, the Attorney General did appear.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: That was by the order of the House.

MR. VOSPER: But I have always been under the impression, though I am open to correction, that it is usual for the Attorney General to defend the Government; but whether that be so or not, it was the practice during the time the member for the Ashburton (Mr. Burt) occupied the office.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL: Was it?

MR. VOSPER: I distinctly recollect that hon. member appearing in Court to defend the Government; and it seems to me that great economy would be effected if the Attorney General could attend to matters personally, more than he appears to do at the present time. I shall not at this time refer to the Police Department, although I have a number of notes prepared in connection with the items of expenditure. I have already given notice of a motion referring to that department generally, and no doubt the question can be discussed under that motion. I believe that some time ago a circular was issued by the Premier or some other Minister, addressed to servants of the various public departments, announcing that, except under certain conditions, they could look forward to no increase of salaries during this financial year, and I believe in the majority of cases this promise or

threat, whatever it may be called, has been kept pretty faithfully. Nevertheless, there has been a considerable amount of grumbling in the public Press as to the manner in which such increases as have been given have been distributed. A series of letters has been published in the newspapers, and it appears from these that the terms of the circular have not been kept.

THE PREMIER: I said the rule would be that there would be no increases in salaries over £200, except in special cases.

MR. VOSPER: And yet I think the right hon. gentleman will admit that the rule has been broken.

THE PREMIER: In certain cases, certainly: that is what I said, "except in special cases."

MR. VOSPER: I think we will examine some of them. On page 32 of the Estimates appears what is called the Premier's Department, and perhaps the Attorney General can inform me if such a thing as the Premier's Department exists in any other part of the British Empire. If so, I am not aware of it.

THE PREMIER: In Victoria and Queensland there are Premier's departments.

MR. VOSPER: They may exist for purposes of convenience; but, if that be so, I am not aware of the fact, and I say that constitutionally there is no such office as Premier known; and how there can be a Premier's Department on the Estimates it is difficult to understand. I observe that in this remarkable department—which consists mainly of the Premier himself, one or two officials, and an office boy—there is an official called the Under Secretary, and he is put down at a salary of £200. I believe that the occupant of the office is Mr. F. D. North. I gather this from the note at the bottom of the page, which shows that he receives £350 from the civil list, and acts as private secretary to the Premier. Some very harsh statements have been made concerning this matter. I do not wish to repeat them in the House, and have no desire to make myself in any degree offensive; but here we find a new position conferred upon that official, who, as far as we know, has no increased duties, but receives an increase of £200, the amount formerly received being £350, whereas now it will be £550.

MR. A. FORREST: Last year the amount was £400.

MR. VOSPER: Now it is £550, so he gets a rise of £150 a year at one bound. This is a favour which has not been conferred upon any other civil servant, as far I know. I have no desire to level any charges against the gentleman I refer to, whom I respect very much, but I want to know what special qualifications he has in the eyes of the Government, or in the eyes of the House, that a sudden increase of £150 should be conferred upon him, while other men older in the service, and far more deserving, are passed over without the increase they were led to believe they would have now, or should have had a year or two ago. I know that many civil servants were expecting an increase, but were deprived of it by the necessity which occurred. We believe that necessity still exists, and the Government are going to cut down expenses as far as possible in order to reduce the deficit; yet we find that a gentleman constantly in touch with the Premier is given an increase of this kind. I think that should be explained, and the explanation should be very full and satisfactory, in order to meet the objections which may be raised against the increase. Another officer in that office, formerly known as record clerk, is given the more dignified title of registrar. That is Mr. Vernon, a very worthy officer, who has been only a short time in the service. As far as I know, he has no peculiar genius or talent, and yet we find he has a rise in rank, and not only a rise in rank but also an increase in salary, the sum being increased from £160 to £200. While other men have to go without an increase of £20 to which they are entitled, this individual gets a rise of £40 by one stroke of the pen. While these increases have been given in the Premier's Department I find that salaries in other departments have been cut down. There are men in the Lands Department, the Public Works Department, and the Post Office deserving of increases, and who have deserved them for years past. They have been a long period in the service of the country and have been recommended for increases, but those increases have been denied.

THE PREMIER: Who are they? You may tell us some of them:

MR. VOSPER: I cannot tell you the names of the officials.

THE PREMIER: You seem to find out some people's names.

MR. VOSPER: I cannot give the names of all the senior officials in the Post Office Department, for example.

MR. GEORGE: That is £380 in your (the Premier's) department.

MR. MORGANS: It is a small amount for a big department.

MR. VOSPER: A big department?

MR. MORGANS: Yes.

MR. VOSPER: What does it consist of? A clerk, a junior clerk, and a stamp-licker. I do not want to increase the members of the department, what I complain of being the increase of their salaries in this preposterous way.

THE PREMIER: The department is too economical an arrangement to suit you, I suppose.

MR. VOSPER: No, sir, it is not. I am complaining of the expenditure. I say it is not fair that increases should be given in this small department while they are denied to other departments of the public service. I have had it on unimpeachable authority that heads of departments have recommended that officers in their departments should have increases. The Premier challenged me to give the names of persons so recommended. I have not at my fingers' ends the names of all officers occupying senior and responsible positions in the departments, but it is a matter of common notoriety. We have seen that in the Lands Department the Commissioner was waited upon by members of his staff, who complained bitterly, and the same thing occurred 12 months ago. The things I am complaining of and endeavouring to ventilate in the House are, I repeat, matters of public notoriety. The complaints are well known, and they have existed for two years. Taking the whole of the Premier's Department through, we find that for the year ending 30th June, 1899, the expenditure was £549 5s. 6d.; this year it is to be increased to £880.

THE PREMIER: It is the cheapest administrative department in the whole service, for the work it does.

MR. VOSPER: If that has been the case, and is the case now, it is not likely to be so in the future, for we see that in

one stroke there has been an increase of 50 per cent. in the expenses.

THE PREMIER: It is a small staff, and you know it has a good deal to do.

MR. VOSPER: I am willing to admit that, but I say that whatever there is to do, there is not enough to justify the large rises which have been given to those particular officers, and it has exposed the right hon. gentleman to criticism of a kind that I do not like to hear and do not like to repeat. Still, it has been repeated, and in those newspapers supposed to be the organs of the Government. Now I will refer briefly to the Railway Department, and I do not want to find any fault with the expenditure. As a matter of fact, I have not gone into the details of the figures, so I will leave that to other hon. members to attend to. While on this question I want to ask whether there is any possibility of the Commissioner seeing his way clear to remove the present rates of traffic to the goldfields.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The rates are lower than they are anywhere else.

MR. VOSPER: Lower?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes.

MR. VOSPER: It is a very peculiar fact that they are 50 per cent. higher than they were two years ago.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Nothing of the kind.

MR. VOSPER: They say so on the fields. Let the hon. gentleman go and try to convince the Chamber of Commerce or any other public body, and he will have great difficulty in satisfying such bodies that the rates are not higher than they were two years ago. They write articles about it, and send resolutions and complaints. The people on the goldfields are not all foolish, and some of them are in the habit of speaking the truth occasionally.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: I would like to give the hon. member comparisons, which I can do.

MR. VOSPER: I am giving the Minister an opportunity of doing so.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: If the hon. member will come to see me I will be glad to give the information to him.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : You will not give it to the country, then ?

MR. VOSPER : I have a letter here from a merchant in Boulder City, and merchants ought to know something about it, for they have to pay the money. The man who has to pay generally knows what he spends. The writer says :

The matter of railway tariffs is oppressing every branch of industry grievously, especially in the carriage of soft timbers for finishing camps and houses, corrugated iron, and in a lot of lines of food.

A MEMBER : " Soft timbers."

MR. VOSPER : I know what it is in regard to soft timbers. It is an attempt to benefit local industry.

MR. GEORGE : They do it more elsewhere than here.

MR. VOSPER : I think there are plenty of things on the goldfields for which jarrah could not be used, and people want soft timber for the purpose of finishing their houses, and making their domiciles comfortable. It is only fair that some consideration should be given to those who want to use soft timber, and I do not think soft timber will enter into competition with jarrah.

MR. A. FORREST : It would ruin it.

MR. VOSPER : Some arrangement could be made regarding timber of a certain size.

MR. GEORGE : Then there would be something else to grumble at.

MR. VOSPER : I was sent to the House for the express purpose of grumbling. The writer of the letter goes on to say :

In the early days of the railways, these were carried at almost half of what they are now. To give some definite light on this subject, and a basis to work on for reform, would you be good enough to ask for a prompt return showing the revenue derived, expenses and receipts, from the Perth-Kalgoorlie and the Boulder railways each year since the Government took the line over.

I did not ask for that return, because I do not represent the Boulder district, and I thought it more fit for the member representing it to do so. The writer continues :

The Boulder line is simply choked with timber and general goods, yet the department charge 1s. return from Kalgoorlie to Boulder, and drive mine-managers almost silly with delays in delivery, from want of proper methods. But what is wanted is a wholesale reduction of rates on stuff needed for settle-

ment and industry on the field. The railway at present is simply a grinding monopoly.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : I am sure it is all right.

MR. VOSPER : I want the Minister to give the information to the House. I wish he would put himself in my place. Hon. members representing the goldfields are receiving letters, deputations, and telegrams, and the talk on all hands is about the railways. We reply what the Minister has told us, namely that the rates are not higher than they are in other parts of the colony ; but our constituents are not satisfied with that statement, and say it is not so. We want an open and detailed statement from the Commissioner of Railways, showing the comparative rates. If there is no injustice, the people on the goldfields will be the very first to admit it, and they will not worry the House on matters of that kind. But as long as we are in a false position, and we are told so and so, and the statement is contradicted, what course is open to us ? It is our duty to move in the matter.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS : People will not be convinced.

MR. VOSPER : I ask the Commissioner to indulge in a little more missionary effort, and endeavour to convince these benighted heathen. I shall go on now to the Education Department, and I want to make a special appeal to members of the Committee in connection with the salaries which are at present paid to the teaching staff of that department. I think it is a matter that requires close investigation, and calls for very severe censure. According to the Estimates, the total education vote, including buildings to be erected by the Public Works Department, amounts to £104,975, which is admitted to be a very large bill for 160,000 persons to pay. In spite of this very large expenditure, we find the payments to the teaching staff are most wretched : that is the only word which will express it. Men who are required to have special educational attainments to teach the youth of the colony are paid worse than a mason, a carpenter, or a day labourer.

THE PREMIER : Teachers have residences, in many cases.

MR. VOSPER: Very likely. This does not conduce to contentment in the department, and if the teachers were paid better, it is likely that the colony would get a better class of teachers in the service. To show the way in which this large sum of money is expended, I may tell hon. members that in 1895 there were 139 schools in the colony managed by a clerical staff of 13 men at a cost to the country of £1,684 per annum. Now we have 186 schools, which is not a very large increase, and there are 25 clerks costing £4,540 per annum to the country. So hon. members will see that the large expenditure is made up in connection with administration, and is not spent on the educational work. If the department could manage 139 schools in 1895 with 13 clerks, there is no reason why 186 schools should require 25 clerks. A great deal of work must be created in the department to excuse an expenditure of this kind. If we compare the salaries paid to teachers in the Education Department with salaries paid in other departments of the public service, we get some startling and striking results. Take the police force: there are 24 probationers with an average salary of £109 per annum; there are 149 second-class constables with an average salary of £136 per annum, 169 first-class constables with an average of £156 each, 28 corporals with a salary of £173 each, and in the whole constabulary, exclusive of the Commissioner and the administrative officers, there are 469 men with an average per head of £155 per annum. In addition to this there are allowances for lodging and uniforms, and other privileges which have not been considered in these figures, but the lodging and ration allowances for the police officers *in toto* is £9,113. The cost per head of the white population for police is 18s., while for the Education Department, taking the white population, the cost per head is only 8s. It is accepted as a legal maxim that the more education in a country the less crime there is; and yet we spend one-third more on the police force than on the teaching staff of the Government, and the police do not catch the criminals. The Police Department has shown itself flagrantly inefficient during the last year or so. It is generally accepted that with more education in a country, crime becomes scarce; but here more money is

spent in the detection of crime than in the prevention of crime. When we come to the teachers' salaries we find there are 109 female assistants with an average per head of £88 per annum, 60 male teachers with an average of £123 per annum; 45 female head teachers with £115 each, and 139 male teachers with £150 each: altogether there are 353 head teachers and assistants with an average of £122 per annum each. While we pay 469 policemen an average per head of £155 per annum to run in "drunks" and neglect catching criminals, we pay the teachers on the other hand, for instructing the youth of the colony, an average of £122 per annum each. The average salary of a head master of a school in this colony is about the same as that paid to a carpenter or a mason, and £6 a year less than a first-class constable receives. There are 23 head teachers who receive less than a corporal in the police service gets. If we allow that a female assistant pays her board, and pays £1 a week for the food she eats, she will have 14s. less salary left than a good general servant. To go out and scrub floors or sweep out rooms pays better than to pass the necessary examination and obtain the necessary qualification to become a teacher and take charge of a school.

THE PREMIER: Residences are supplied to teachers.

MR. VOSPER: There are no residences for female teachers. Generally the female teachers live with their parents, and partly live on their parents: they have to do so. The clerical staff of the Education Department in 1898, exclusive of the Inspector-General and all the inspectors, numbered 22 clerks, and the cost was £3,340 per annum. The amount this year is increased from £3,340 to £4,540, so that the abuse, so far as the clerical staff is concerned, is made larger year by year. These 22 clerks, who consume £3,340 per annum, have an average salary of £152 per annum. That is to say, the man who directs envelopes, or runs messages for the Inspector General, or licks stamps in the Inspector General's Office, is paid £152 per annum, whereas a teacher who carries on the educational work of the department is less paid than a hod-carrier or a domestic servant. The average pay for clerks in the Accountant's branch of the

Treasury is £174 a year. There are 220 officers who are paid £3,850, so that a Treasury clerk is paid more than a clerk in the Education Department. In the Railway Department the average is £175, but I do not cavil at that very much, because that is in the Chief Accountant's branch. In the Chief Traffic Manager's branch of the Railway Department the average salary is £140 per annum; but I do not find fault with salaries paid to Treasury clerks, because their work may involve book-keeping of a kind which requires high qualifications; still the fact remains that the rudiments of book-keeping and everything else that is worth knowing have to be taught by school teachers, and I cannot understand why the education which is so highly prized in a clerk, and well paid for, should not be recognised in teachers. The average salary of the clerical staff in the Post Office is £168 per annum, whereas the average salary paid to head and assistant teachers in the Perth district, which is by far the most highly-paid in the service, is £138 a year. Surely in the face of the fact that increases to the amount of £150 a year have been made in the Premier's department, and that special payments have been made to special officers, some recognition should have been made of the services of officers in other departments while the Premier was in a benevolent mood. The teachers in the Education Department are wretchedly paid, and are sometimes ill-treated. The teachers complain that they have to submit to a species of discipline, if such it can be called. When an officer wants to make a complaint to the Inspector General, he is kept waiting about for hours at a stretch, when a person would not be kept waiting so long if he desired to see the Premier. The fact remains, and it has been stated in the Press, not only in one department of the Press but in all departments, that there is a vast amount of discontent amongst the teachers of the Education Department; and who can wonder at it, seeing the salaries paid to the teachers. To pay teachers in this way is a disgrace to the department; at the same time the expenditure on the clerical staff is to be increased. An absolute abuse has been created by the Inspector General in increasing the clerical staff from 13 clerks in 1895 to 25 clerks at

the present time, and yet this abuse is encouraged and allowed to go on while the salaries of the teachers are left where they were.

MR. GEORGE: How are we to get at how these teachers are paid?

MR. VOSPER: I have noticed that every small official in the different departments is set out on the Estimates in detail, which is a very useful piece of information: this is not done in connection with the teaching staff of the Education Department; and I think not only should we have the name of the office given on the Estimates, but the name of the officer also.

MR. GEORGE: I do not think it is Mr. Cyril Jackson's fault that the teachers have not got the increases.

MR. VOSPER: No; I have said that the heads of departments have recommended increases, but they have not been given.

THE PREMIER: I think the teachers have got some increases.

MR. GEORGE: They were recommended, but I do not know that they got the increases.

MR. VOSPER: There are very few increases, if any.

THE PREMIER: All the increases recommended by the Inspector General are on the Estimates, I believe.

MR. VOSPER: Of the Estimates, one single page is devoted to the Education Department. In every other department we find that every clerk is given in detail, but in the Education Department the whole of the teachers are put down in a lump sum. Why is that so?

THE PREMIER: The teachers are paid subject to regulations.

MR. VOSPER: But why should not the information be given to hon. members? I notice that there is a guard at Government House, and two gardeners are employed in the Governor's domain: these officers' salaries are put down on the Estimates separately.

THE PREMIER: Where salaries are governed by regulations, it is not customary to put the salaries individually on the Estimates.

MR. VOSPER: It would be better to do so. All the information which I have given to the Committee, I have been obliged to derive from private sources

and by investigation among the teachers themselves.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: You could call for a return.

MR. VOSPER: I do not want the return now, as I have got the information through another channel, and am satisfied with its accuracy; but when the salaries of other persons appear on the Estimates, there should be no exception in this case. Among the items which do appear on the Estimates is one for the training of teachers, £500. I do not know exactly what it means, but I take it to mean, if it means anything, that there must be some kind of school or college to which these teachers can be admitted, or in which they can pass their final examinations; and I want to point out to the Premier, and anyone who knows anything about the work of the department will confirm me in saying, there is no more necessity for £500 being spent on a training college than there is for the expenditure of that sum on military ballooning.

THE PREMIER: The officers of the department say that is one of the most important improvements required.

MR. VOSPER: In Victoria, where there is a population of over a million to draw from and to cater for, the Education Department did start a training college, and they found that they turned out more teachers in one year than the public service could absorb in five. The same thing will occur here.

THE PREMIER: No; the department here cannot get teachers.

MR. VOSPER: I am credibly informed there are teachers here, hundreds of men and women, fully qualified to teach, but who will not join the department because it does not pay them to join; and no wonder! When you will not give them a navy's wages, is it surprising that you cannot get teachers? The marvel is how you can manage to fill the positions you have at the present time. I cannot get employees if I choose to offer them sweating wages; and these teachers are sweated: there is no doubt about that. They have very hard and difficult tasks to perform: they have to live, many of them, in comparatively isolated neighbourhoods, and to put up with privations and hardships of a serious nature. Fancy a man or a woman hav-

ing to live on a far-off goldfield, in some remote back-blocks township, and being paid a pittance which the man could double if he went to work in a mine, or which the woman could double if she became a barmaid.

MR. CONNOR: The salaries of teachers in religious schools are no higher.

MR. VOSPER: But we must remember that condition is brought about by religious enthusiasm, a very powerful factor; and I do not suppose the training college is intended to produce by training an enthusiasm for low salaries in these teachers. If we are going to train up children in the way they should go, and expect to train them to disregard the principle of a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, I fear we shall find it a somewhat costly experiment. But as regards the training of teachers in the ordinary duties of their profession, there is not the slightest necessity and it is a sheer waste of money to put a sum like this on the Estimates for a training college. The Committee will be guilty of sheer waste of money if they pass that item; and I say that the gentleman who recommended it does not know his business, or else the item would not be there.

MR. GEORGE: I want to see where this training college is to be located.

MR. VOSPER: I do not know that, or what process is going to be adopted for the spending of the £500. Then I notice that the incidental expenses, including travelling expenses and rents of schools, have gone up from £724 17s. last year, to £1,500 for this year.

THE PREMIER: We used to have a fee fund, before. The fee fund has been abolished. When speaking of these items, the hon. member should recollect the fact that there is now no fee fund.

MR. VOSPER: I understand that. We now have free education; and I will waive the objection to the extra expenditure in those items certainly, although I notice that every item here is just about double what it was last year, even such items as "minor repairs."

THE PREMIER: Those repairs used to be done out of the fee fund.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: Yes; that is so; and from that fund we received about £5,000 a year.

MR. VOSPER: But every farthing of that amount should have been under the control of Parliament.

THE PREMIER: The expenditure of the fee fund was administered by a board.

THE MINISTER OF MINES: The Minister used to control the expenditure.

MR. VOSPER: Quite so; Parliament had nothing to do with it. Then the sooner Parliament insists upon fees of that kind being paid into the consolidated revenue and accounted for and expended by Parliamentary authority, the better it will be for this country.

THE PREMIER: That has not been done.

MR. VOSPER: Why not?

THE PREMIER: I do not know.

MR. VOSPER: That is the usual Western Australian reply. If we ask for a reason for any preposterous anomaly, that is the reply, "I do not know." It is true they do not know. But that is not what we expect from Ministers: they should come down to this House with the express purpose of knowing, and of letting other people know as well. I think I have done with the Education Department, and with the Estimates generally. I had intended to have made a few observations of a kindly and good-natured character concerning the Police Department, but I will postpone them to a more convenient occasion. I will simply conclude by saying that an investigation of these Estimates will show that, although the Premier has done his level best to curtail expenditure as much as possible, there are still directions in which that expenditure may be curtailed; and it appears to me that he has to some extent been misled by some of those persons under him, or under his Ministers, who do mislead their superiors when opportunity offers; and I say also that while the House should clip the accounts in various directions, the Government should undoubtedly make provision on the Supplementary Estimates for higher salaries and better treatment to those unfortunate servants of the public who educate the youth of the colony, and who have power to do so much to mould the rising generation. I urge the cases of those teachers upon the attention of the Committee and of the Premier.

THE PREMIER: They are better paid than they were a year or two ago.

MR. VOSPER: That only shows that we are becoming civilised. For my own part, the only thing I complain of is that the process is too gradual; and I want to point out that there is nothing of more importance to a country than to have a thoroughly efficient system of education, administered by capable men, for the future history of this colony and of the whole of Australia largely depends upon its educational system. We know only too well that at the present moment in some of our large cities there is a grave amount of degeneration going on. Attention has been called to this by statisticians, by various writers on sociological problems, and in our police records. Larrikinism is on the increase in all our big towns; it is on the increase in Perth; and unless we have a thoroughly good system of education, we are laying up troubles of the most serious magnitude for ourselves and for our descendants; and the result may prove in the future of a very abnormal and disastrous character. I therefore earnestly urge upon the Government the necessity for a reorganisation of this department, or at least, if not for a reorganisation of the department, for a redistribution of the money expended on education, so that those who do a fair day's work at so important a task may receive a fair day's wage.

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I do not propose to detain the House long in my comments on these Estimates. I am going to reserve my forces for the purpose of fighting them item by item, where I think it necessary; and as I fancy that is rather a large task, it will not do for me to worry at this early stage by making too much comment on the Estimates in bulk. But I must congratulate the Government in that they seem to have been very careful to frame the amounts of estimated revenue on the basis of what they are likely to receive, with a result which is noticeable in connection with some of the items. Comparing those items with the amounts estimated for the same purposes last year, it seems that the very severe lesson we had last year has been taken to heart and has done good, and I hope it will continue to bear fruit upon the Treasury benches. With much of what the mem-

ber for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) has said, I agree; but some parts of his address are, I think, not quite so fair as I know that hon. member would like to be. In connection with the Education Department, only a few months ago I felt very much the same as the hon. member does, when in the course of my duty as member for the Murray I found it necessary to wait upon the Inspector General; and I then found that officer's ideas were far more in accord with the liberal views of the member for North-East Coolgardie than I should have imagined, and I believe the Inspector General of Schools would, if he had the power, not only adequately pay his teachers, but would take care that they had such privileges as would result in obtaining and preserving the best available talent for teaching purposes. I have had to run a tilt against that officer in previous years, and I think it is only fair that I should say what I have just said. In further reference to educational matters, I notice that for the first time in the Estimates we have some idea of what the fees and the receipts from other sources have been in respect of that department; and I cannot conceive how it is that the Premier has apparently never taken any notice of this matter in the "black year" we had in 1898-9. On page 10 of the Estimates I find that the Education receipts are given as, sale of books £400, school fees £1,500, and a proportion of that latter item is of course done away with since free education has been established. But there is a further item, "Other receipts, £3,300." I do not suppose any ordinary member of Parliament can be expected to know what "other receipts" mean; and while I congratulate the Government on the fact that these figures are brought under the purview of this House, I cannot understand why they have been kept from Parliament in the years gone by.

THE PREMIER: Those matters were for many years under the control of the Board of Education.

MR. GEORGE: I have no doubt the Premier can explain that there were departmental reasons why this information should have been withheld from Parliament; but that does not satisfy me as a member of the House whose duty it is, although a comparatively unimportant

member, to see like other members what the resources of the country are, and whether they are properly administered; and without wishing to say anything unkind—I want to be as kind and as gentle to the Premier, as far as he will allow me, as I possibly can—I should like to know in what other departments are there unknown or undisclosed sources of revenue, of which Parliament has a right to know? If this thing has occurred in the Education Department—of course it has been perfectly honest, I know—are there any other departments the resources of which Parliament does not know and does not control?

THE PREMIER: No; none.

MR. GEORGE: Well, I am pleased indeed to know that. One of the principal duties of the "faithful Commons" of Her Majesty, whether in the colonies or in the old country, has always been to keep the purse-strings within their control; and when there have been little matters of this sort going on without the control of Parliament, we certainly have not been carrying out the duties for which we were elected. If the Premier will refer to *Hansard* some three years ago, he will find the member for the Murray then, in his usual manner, asked for a lot of information with regard to this department, and was met with pretty nearly the same kind of answer that the member for North-East Coolgardie got to-night. I should like to advise the Premier, if he will take a bit of kindly advice, that instead of being "cock-sure" on matters of which he knows nothing, he should take a note of those items of which some hon. members who mention them know a little, and should make his inquiries and give answers to the House such as the House could accept; because I can assure the right hon. gentleman that those of us who have watched him for a few years can "read between the lines" when he tells us that this and that are all right. We know he believes that all is right; but what we want him to do, what most of the members of this House desire, is that he should realise that he is practically occupying the position of cashier of the important firm of Western Australia. As cashier, it is the Premier's duty to know thoroughly well what money

is coming in, and to disclose to the House all the sources of income.

THE PREMIER: That has been done for a considerable time.

MR. GEORGE: Of course the Premier says that everything is all right, but some members do not seem to think so. I quite agree with the member for North-East Coolgardie, that salaries in the Education Department should be shown in the Estimates, in the same way as in connection with the Postal and Telegraph Department. Why should there be any difficulty in supplying this information?

THE PREMIER: There is no difficulty.

MR. GEORGE: Then I presume we have the Premier's promise that next year we shall have this information in full.

THE PREMIER: I will put a copy of the Regulations on the table of the House.

MR. GEORGE: Never mind the Regulations. Will the Premier give a promise that next year this information will be laid before hon. members?

THE PREMIER: The hon. member might as well make the same request in connection with the Railway Department.

MR. GEORGE: The two departments are different altogether. The Railway Department has a large floating body of employees, who can be dispensed with at any moment, whereas the Education Department has not.

THE PREMIER: I will lay a copy of the Regulations on the table to-morrow, and hon. members can see exactly what teachers are paid.

MR. GEORGE: In laying the Regulations on the table the Premier will not give us the information we are entitled to. We have a right to know where the schools are, and if that be so, we have a right to know what the teachers are paid.

MR. MORGANS: Where is the money to come from to pay increased salaries?

MR. GEORGE: I do not know where the money will come from, because I am not paid to know that, or even to know where it goes to; but I presume the Treasurer will find the money.

MR. MORGANS: I do not think he can.

MR. GEORGE: And we will try and instruct him where he can spend it.

MR. MORGANS: The Premier cannot find it.

MR. GEORGE: Oh, yes, he can. If the Premier tells me that he is not disposed to give this information before the

session closes, I shall feel it my duty to ask the House to agree with me in a motion that a return be laid before Parliament.

THE PREMIER: I will see what can be done.

MR. GEORGE: A few sessions ago the Premier gave some useful information in regard to salaries, which information had a tendency to shorten the debate on the Estimates, and a return in regard to salaries in the Education Department will no doubt have a similar tendency.

THE PREMIER: I think I can promise to give the information.

MR. MORGANS: The information will be down to-morrow.

MR. GEORGE: Seeing that the "seventh Minister" has told me the information will be down to-morrow, I can possess my soul in peace. I see that £5,000 is put down to pay the expenses of looking after the welfare of the aborigines, and I should like to know what has been done, and whether the expenditure under this head is now under the control of the Government.

THE PREMIER: Yes; absolutely.

MR. GEORGE: One item which I certainly will not grumble at is that which gives a grant to literary, scientific, and agricultural institutions. I am pleased to see that a grant is given to the Deaf and Dumb Institution, and I would be better pleased if a couple of hundred pounds or so had been spared for the Blind Asylum.

THE PREMIER: Is there not an amount put down for the Blind Asylum?

MR. GEORGE: I do not see any amount, but I fancy the matter has only to be mentioned to earn the practical sympathy of the Premier.

THE PREMIER: If the hon. member refers to page 23, he will see that £500 is down for the Home Teaching Society for the Blind.

MR. GEORGE: That is another thing altogether. I am speaking of the Blind Asylum, though I know the Home Teaching Society is a most useful institution.

THE PREMIER: I think this society means the Blind Asylum.

MR. GEORGE: No; this society provides teachers to go to persons' homes and teach blind children, but I am speaking of the Blind Asylum, which has only lately been started.

THE PREMIER: I think the same institution is meant. At any rate, last year the Government gave £800 towards the building of a blind asylum.

MR. GEORGE: In any case, perhaps the Premier would see his way to place £200 down for the benefit of the Blind Asylum.

THE PREMIER: The £800 was towards the building, and the £500 I have just mentioned is to continue the work.

MR. GEORGE: There is an item of £5,000 as a bonus towards the erection of smelting works at Fremantle, and I would like to know whether the Premier is going to give bonuses to other industries, a great many of which have been started without any assistance from the Government at all.

THE PREMIER: The bonus to the smelting works is not paid yet, and we only promised to submit the matter to the House. We did not undertake that the House would agree to the payment of the bonus, but I hope the House will.

MR. GEORGE: In my opinion, the smaller industries are more deserving of bonuses than large industries which are started with huge capital drawn from other countries.

THE PREMIER: This company was established in anticipation of this bonus, and of the grant of land for the works.

MR. GEORGE: The company was established on the strength of a bonus and the grant of the land?

MR. VOSPER: And Mr. Wittenoom, a Minister of the Crown, was a director of the company.

THE PREMIER: I approved of the offer being made by the company, and the matter was considered by the Cabinet in the ordinary way.

MR. GEORGE: Am I to understand that the public were "done" in the ordinary way?

THE PREMIER: The agreement was on the table of the House two years ago.

MR. GEORGE: Poor Western Australia! When we reach that item I shall have a few words to say on behalf of smaller industries, because I believe that the people deserving encouragement are the small men, and not the big men who can command any amount of capital.

THE PREMIER: The Government thought it a very important matter at the time, I can assure you.

MR. GEORGE: It seems to be a very good idea to have a friend in the Cabinet, and I understand from the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) that one of the members of the Government was actually a director.

MR. VOSPER: That was so.

MR. GEORGE: When this bonus was passed?

MR. VOSPER: I would not say that.

MR. GEORGE: I think the matter requires considerable explanation.

MR. HUBBLE: The bonus was after Mr. Wittenoom had left.

MR. VOSPER: Mr. Wittenoom was one of the original directors of the company, and formed part of the inducement in the flotation.

THE PREMIER: Mr. Wittenoom had nothing to do with the granting of the bonus.

MR. GEORGE: We find a Minister acting as director, and also as the advocate for a grant of land, and this is the same Minister who permitted a Government employee to become a mining expert and reporter, and who after having set this bad example, got the highest office it is possible to give in the colony. It seems to me that the Premier, as the censor of public morals, ought to be more careful in the colleagues he selects. I should like to say a lot about the railways, but I am tongue-tied just now, and will only ask the Premier for a little explanation in regard to the Estimates. I notice that there is a column in which appear unexpended balances which require to be revoted. Are we to understand that these items in that column are included in the amount of the Estimates for the coming 12 months?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. GEORGE: And that we have not to vote the ordinary items, and revoice those items as well?

THE PREMIER: Certainly not.

MR. GEORGE: And then we find something about unexpended liabilities on 30th June, 1899. That is a new idea?

THE PREMIER: There is the same explanation in regard to that.

MR. GEORGE: What is the idea of putting these matters in a different way?

THE PREMIER: I do not know: it may be a mistake.

MR. GEORGE: I do not think that there has been exercised the care there

should have been in these matters. On page 43 I notice "amount to cover salaries of officers whose services will terminate during the financial year, £697 2s. 3d.," and "unexpended balance, £38 9s. 6d."

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: That should have all been struck out.

MR. GEORGE: To have £300 originally voted, spend £700, and then have £38 unexpended balance, shows the Government to be better financiers than any I have come across.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: We understand the figures.

MR. GEORGE: I am pleased to see that in some departments there have been advances of salaries amounting to £10, £20, and £25 a year; and in the Postal Department there are, I notice, a considerable number of such advances to officers who are very well deserving of them. I also notice in other departments, to which I shall draw attention at the proper time, comparatively large increases in the higher salaries. I do not suppose these officers are not worth the money, but it is usually understood in private life, and I take it the same rule should govern public life, that if the sovereigns coming in weekly are few, the house-keeping must be kept within bounds; and if we apply the same principle to public matters, we have no right, while denying legitimately expected increases to the lower-paid officers, to raise the salaries of the higher officers in the same department. I am aware it is too much to expect the Premier to know everything about the Estimates, but the reason he gets so much criticism is that he wishes us to understand that he does know everything about them. When he gets "cornered," however, he says he does not know, and that ends the matter.

MR. GREGORY (North Coolgardie): I regret the Premier has not seen fit to introduce his Loan proposals yet. I can assure him that the people in the north-east districts are waiting with great interest to hear his statement, and to know how it is intended to construct the various railways proposed in the Governor's Speech. The developments which have lately occurred in the north-east district, on the Malcolm and Mount Margaret goldfields, have been something enormous; and the people of that district are exceed-

ingly anxious to know what action is going to be taken by the Government on this question. I know many instances where owners of properties have declined to order plant at the present moment, owing to the idea that they may be able to take it up by rail, and save the great expense of having it carted along the road from Menzies. Moreover, the cost of working mines in that district is so great that the prosperity and development of the district are being greatly retarded owing to the very heavy cost of cartage throughout the district. I think something definite should have been laid before us when the Premier was delivering his Budget speech, because it is a matter of very great consideration to the people in that district especially. And we should also like to have known what action the Government purpose taking with regard to other railways. As to the proposed railway from Menzies to Mount Malcolm and Leonora, I hope we will very shortly know exactly what the Government intend to do. The summer season is coming on, and there is no provision made for water supply north of Kalgoorlie. It will be necessary for the railway to be extended beyond Menzies, because further north there is really a good supply of water. I repeat I very much regret that the Premier has not seen fit to place the Loan Estimates before us, or to give us some promise that there will be a pipe line to connect the Niagara reservoir with Menzies. There is no mining district in the whole of Western Australia so badly off, and there are very few districts which pay so fine a revenue to the country as Menzies. When the large vote for the Niagara dam was passed by this House, there was a tacit understanding, anyhow, that the water scheme would be connected with the Menzies district.

THE PREMIER: I do not think I said so.

MR. GREGORY: The right hon. gentleman gave me to understand so, anyhow. I hope that when he is introducing the loan proposals he will see fit to place an amount on the Estimates to carry the water up there. The charge is from 12s. 6d. to 15s. a hundred gallons, and it is very hard to induce people to come to a district such as that, when the cost of living is so great. The cost of water for crushing in the Menzies district

is from 17s. 6d. to 20s. per thousand gallons, for salt water containing from 8 to 15 per cent. of solid matter. Considering that Menzies comes second in gold yield and second in dividends in Western Australia, and that the sale of town lots there has brought the Government a very large sum of money, I think it is the duty of the Government to try to do something to induce further settlement in the district. It is a go-ahead district, and I hope the Premier will see fit to expend a sum of money there. In regard to the Mines Department, I am pleased to find that the Minister of Mines has seen fit to appoint another inspector for the Mount Malcolm district. That has been very necessary for some time. The member for South Murchison (Mr. Rason) will be able to tell the Minister there are cases in which no mining inspector has visited Lawlers field—not even where deaths have occurred through mining accidents—for over 12 months. I am pleased the Minister has seen fit to appoint new inspectors, and that greater precautions will be taken in those districts for the safety of the men. I want to draw attention to a couple of items on the Estimates. I am pleased indeed to see that the wardens' salaries have been increased. The wardens are gentlemen who have very arduous duties, and to meet the expenses the increase was certainly wanted. I want to draw attention to the difference in the amount given to the registrar at Menzies and that paid to the registrars on other goldfields. The registrar at Menzies has to take charge of the principal office on that goldfield, and has to keep two complete sets of books, for Ullaring district and Menzies district. He receives less than the registrars of Malcolm, Lawlers, and Norseman. I drew attention to this fact last year, and the Premier himself made a slight note of it. This year I find that the registrar at Menzies has received an increase of £25, he having the principal office in that goldfield, and being the principal registrar.

THE PREMIER: The Minister of Mines looks after that.

MR. GREGORY: The Minister of Mines was absent when I was discussing the question last year and a note was taken of the matter. I also want to draw attention to the clerk of courts there,

who acts also as treasury cashier. He has to work up to 9 or 10 o'clock, and even up to midnight, to get through the work. The clerk of courts has, I say, taken over the work of treasury cashier, to whom the Government originally paid £250 a year. He does that in addition to other duties, and his salary is £225, and £25 for doing the work of cashier. So only £250 is paid to that officer, whereas the Government paid £250 before to the treasury cashier.

THE PREMIER: I think the revenue fell off a good deal.

MR. GREGORY: For nine months the revenue has been over £8,000, that on the account of the registrar alone, without reckoning other things. I know that the officer has a great deal of work to do. Another reason why I would have liked some reference made to the Loan proposals is on account of the great question of the public batteries.

THE PREMIER: You will have them now very soon; in a few days, I hope.

MR. GREGORY: Thank you. I do not know whether members recognise the great importance of the public batteries. In July there were 2,316 tons of ore crushed, yielding 1,696oz.; August, 2,481 tons, yielding 2,061oz.; September, 2,097 tons, yielding 2,375oz.; the total number of ounces for the three months being 6,132, which, estimated at £3 16s. an ounce, gave a value of £23,301.

MR. VOSPER: Is that North Coolgardie?

MR. GREGORY: No. Money is being distributed amongst people on the goldfields, tending to make the fields richer, and assisting in the progress of those outlying districts. In every case in my district these batteries have been placed in outlying places. I know I have been making very severe speeches with regard to some of the batteries, and I am pleased to see the batteries are becoming a very great success, especially in my district. I am sorry the Premier, when making his Budget speech, referred specially to my district, and I am sure he did it out of pique to myself. He stated that the Yerilla district was not producing enough stone; but he should have gone through the list and found out whether the Yerilla district compared favourably with other districts.

THE PREMIER: My assertion was based on information I had received.

MR. GREGORY: The information came from me. I found they were not running three shifts, and not bringing in the stone they should do, and I had an article written in the public Press in the district, urging the people to assist the department all they could, for it was extremely possible that if they did not keep the battery going they might lose it. The first battery I recommended was the Mulline battery, and I am sure the Minister of Mines will agree that the recommendation was a good one. The cost incurred by the Government will make that district really prosperous. In the Mulline district 278 tons were crushed in July. An accident occurred in the early portion of the month through a breakage or something. In August, 410 tons were crushed, and in September, 570 tons. At Ida there was a very good result, 179 tons being crushed in July, 443 in August, and 352 in September. At Yerilla, 362 tons were crushed in July, 315 in August, and 176 in September. In the Tuckanarra district only 193 tons were crushed in August and 135 in September. The figures in regard to Lennouville were 147, 170, 174. Therefore, the Yerilla district, although complaints were made by me against that district, and it was especially picked out by the Premier as being a district from which the battery would have to be removed, has furnished a good return. My object was to compel the people to bring in an abundance of stone in the district, and assist in every way to make the battery pay, and if possible get lower charges in the future. I know it is the intention of the Minister of Mines to shortly erect some cyanide plants. I do not think there is any district in which a cyanide plant could be better erected than in the Mulline district. I believe the cost would be only about £1,000, and it is my intention to urge the people in the district to make up the value from tailings, which would probably recoup the first cost of the work. If the Government will do this, it will mean there will be very little of the trouble which has occurred in the past; there will be less complaints, and prospectors will feel assured that they are getting every ounce of gold from their stone. In the

Budget speech this year, the Premier said there would be some alterations in the method of distributing the medical vote. In the North Coolgardie and Mount Margaret district, miners have subscribed to assist the hospitals, and I believe it is the only district where the public subscribe a reasonable amount to carry on these institutions. I notice that there is a sum of £81,000 on the Estimates this year as the cost to the country. Last year the sum was £88,000, whilst in the excess vote a sum of £38,000 appears, making a total of £126,000 paid for our hospitals. I think some scheme must be adopted, otherwise the Government will have to take over the whole of these institutions. People on the fields are not going to allow the Government to pay all the expenses of the hospitals in Perth and in the country districts, and even in some districts on the goldfields—Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie for instance—and not to pay them in other places. I know it is very difficult to decide how this money shall be used, and I think the Government might carry out a system of subsidising the whole of these institutions according to the amount that is raised by the public. The whole of the hospital estimate must be reorganised, and I can assure the Premier that the people in the districts I have mentioned will not continue to subscribe unless they are treated in the same manner as people in more favoured districts are treated. I also wish to indorse the remarks made by the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) in regard to the State school teachers' salaries. A teacher has been appointed for Malcolm and Leonora, to give half his time to each place; and that man has been offered the munificent salary of £160 a year—£3 a week for a man who has to travel 12 miles, and live for half a week in one town and half a week in another! It will be impossible for that teacher to live in a tent, because it will not be safe for him to leave his belongings in Malcolm while he is away in Leonora; therefore, he will have to board somewhere, and he will have to pay a higher price for his board because he can live only half a week in each town. It is not fair to ask a man to live in these two towns on £3 a week. I am glad that the motion which I moved in this House has taken effect, and that one new

teacher has been appointed in my district, and that another teacher is to be appointed. I also think where it is possible, both in connection with the railway and the education Estimates, that a full list of the civil servants should be placed on the Estimates. We should be in a position to know in what way every penny is expended, so that when the votes come before the Committee, some strong opposition can be shown unless we get an assurance that the fullest information will be given to hon. members.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie) : I am glad indeed to have an opportunity of indorsing a great deal of what the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory) has said in regard to the north-east district. There is no doubt that it is one of the most important districts in the colony, if not at present the most important, leaving Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie out of consideration. I would like to point out to the hon. members that, as I understand the position, the reason we do not see any amount on the Estimates for the railways he has mentioned is because the money will be provided on the Loan Estimates.

MR. GREGORY : I thought you discussed that question before.

MR. VOSPER : It is rather an innovation to speak twice in a debate.

MR. MORGANS : I do not think so : we are in Committee. I did not know that I was out of order, as we are in Committee, and I understand that it is the privilege of a member to speak in Committee as often as he likes.

MR. VOSPER : Do not make it a precedent, that is all.

MR. MORGANS : I do not want to create a precedent. I only want to refer to the question of the railways, which has been brought up by the member for North Coolgardie.

MR. GREGORY : This matter was brought up by the member for Coolgardie himself, when he spoke in regard to the railway extensions for fully half-an-hour ; and I thought that, as liberty had been given to the member for Coolgardie, I might also trespass on the time of the Committee.

MR. MORGANS : I do not see why my hon. friend should object to my speaking. I am trying to support him in what he said, therefore I cannot see

where his objection comes in ; and I only want to say that I quite indorse what the hon. member said. I was going to say, in regard to the battery at Yerilla, that it would be a great mistake if the Government stopped that battery : it should be kept going. If the battery does not pay for a year or two, it should be kept going, as it is in an important district. With regard to the construction of new railways, my only object in referring to them was to support the member for North Coolgardie in what he said ; and, notwithstanding the fact that I appeared to be out of order, with permission I would like to indorse his remarks and emphasise them.

MR. GREGORY : I thought you were drawing attention to my being out of order.

MR. MORGANS : I thought the hon. member was very much in order, and I wish to indorse what he said. My only object was to support the hon. member, and to impress on the Government the important facts with regard to that great district which the hon. member has so ably and eloquently brought before the Committee. I sincerely hope that when the time comes the Government will not forget the just demands of this very important district.

MR. LEAKE (Albany) : I notice that one or two hon. members have, in a spirit of misplaced generosity, congratulated the member for Central Murchison for having congratulated the Government on having put before the House what they seem to term a very intelligible and intelligent Financial Statement. But, as I understand the member for Central Murchison, he did not congratulate the Government at all : he condemned them, and he condemned their financing ; but he congratulated the country on its financial vitality, and if it had not been for the country's financial vitality, I should like to know where the Ministry would be at the present time. It is not the Ministry who have kept the country going, but the country has kept the Ministry going : there is not the slightest doubt about that, and anyone who takes the trouble to analyse the right hon. gentleman's figures will see that. The right hon. gentleman cast a sort of film over the true state of affairs by a retrospect of the last 10 years, and a reference to what he

used to do in politics. We do not want that sort of thing. We believe in the present and the future, particularly when the finances of the country are concerned. There is nothing I assure hon. members to congratulate ourselves upon with regard to the financial condition. In my opinion it is deplorable, and this position of affairs has been brought about by the administration of the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues. After 9 or 10 years of unexampled prosperity, as I pointed out last year, how the Government have landed the country in the position we are in to-day is inexplicable. The fact has to be faced, and I suppose this Parliament will have to try to get the country out of the position it is in, and endeavour to reclaim the credit of the country. We are accustomed to hear anticipations of the most airy kind, as well as of the most improbable kind. [Interjection by a MINISTER.] As the Minister of Mines says, it is the same old story: it is the same old story no doubt on both sides of the House—recklessness on one side, and the wanting of caution on the other hand. The great financier from West Kimberley can laugh, but I will give him some figures directly which, if he thinks he can do so, he will be able to criticise. I do not profess to be a financier; I understand figures only to a limited extent; consequently I am not going to indulge in any wild fancies. I am not going to follow the lead of the Premier in his fancies and prophecies, or I may be landed in the very same trouble as he has landed himself in to-day. Let us only go back 12 months, when a warning was given to the Premier and he was beginning to take notice of it, because it had been echoed for two or three years, and the desire was then evinced on the part of the Premier to draw in his horns and check the recklessness and extravagance which he and his colleagues had gone in for during the previous years. The Premier told the Committee that the estimated credit on the 30th June this year would be £5,112—a small amount, but it was an estimated credit. He said, in dealing with the estimate of expenditure and the deficit:

I have arranged it in such a way that if we get the revenue we hope to obtain, and do not spend more than the estimated expenditure,

we will be able to pay off the deficit of £186,803.

That is very clever financing! It is extremely clever! If we get the revenue we hope, and do not spend more than the estimated expenditure, we shall be able to pay our debts. Really, I think it is elementary, to say the least of it; but unfortunately even in the elements of the science, the right hon. gentleman is hopelessly adrift.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member laughs.

MR. LEAKE: I laugh sometimes at other people's ignorance, but perhaps that is not fair. I am excessively angry at this moment, as hon. members can see, and even in my anger I desire to point out to the right hon. gentleman opposite, who takes credit for financing this great country and getting the finances into a muddle, that he said last year he anticipated a credit balance of £5,112, and yet he had to admit the other evening there was a deficit of nearly a quarter of a million—£247,000 odd. Well, that is excellent financing, is it not? For three years past, unfortunately, the revenue has been falling.

THE PREMIER: Three years past, did you say?

MR. LEAKE: Yes. The actual revenue for the year ending June, 1897, was £2,842,000 odd; for 1898 it was £2,754,000; and for 1899, £2,478,000.

THE PREMIER: That is two years, not three.

MR. LEAKE: That is three years, from 1897.

THE PREMIER: No. In 1897 the revenue was at its highest.

MR. LEAKE: The estimated expenditure for this year, ending June, 1900, is £2,616,000 odd.

THE PREMIER: You said three years, but you have only mentioned two.

MR. LEAKE: Well, make the most of the point.

THE PREMIER: And it is a point.

MR. LEAKE: There has been a falling off, we will say for the last two years, if you like. I said three, and I have not withdrawn the expression.

THE PREMIER: You made a mistake; and it is a very important error, too.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

MR. LEAKE: Let him have his way. The only manner in which the Premier

can show the possibility of an increase of the revenue for this year is by increased taxation, an increased taxation by the introduction of the Dividend Duties Bill and an increase of the railway rates.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Hear, hear.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: The rates have been reduced by about £25,000.

MR. LEAKE: I am not discussing the question of railways just now, because we shall have an opportunity, in the course of a day or so, of giving the Commissioner of Railways quite as much as he can reply to.

THE PREMIER: You mean, when your lieutenant (Mr. Holmes) starts.

MR. LEAKE: When my lieutenant starts; and you will find he is a very able lieutenant, too.

MR. MORGANS: Who is that?

MR. CONNOR: The lieutenant will jump your billet, if you do not look out.

MR. LEAKE: The Premier has told the House that he has a great deal to be thankful for in respect of the remarkable energy which his colleague, the Commissioner of Railways, has exhibited in the reduction of expenditure in that department. No doubt there has been a saving; but it is a curious fact that this saving was not thought of last year, when on their own showing the department endeavoured to cut down the expenditure to starvation point; and they did introduce the starvation element, because we know there ensued a wholesale dismissal of public servants, and a consequent starvation of the department. There is no doubt about that. It can be proved sufficiently, if there be proper inquiry. Take, for instance, the Railway Department itself: there has been a cutting down in the traffic staff of something like £5,500, in salaries about £24,000; in materials and stores, £43,000; in the loco. engineer's department, £2,300; and in incidental and miscellaneous expenses, particulars of which we as a Parliament are of course not favoured with, £11,000. There is no doubt at all that this means the starving of the department; and when we go about among the railway employees in the country, they tell us that in order that one subdivision of this Railway Department may have its accounts squared, and

may show, if not an apparent profit, at all events an apparent economy, one sub-department plays off its expenditure against another, and the result is that the rolling-stock and other plant suffers. I cannot better illustrate the position than by repeating what a railway man said to me not many weeks ago. In talking about the way in which engines and rolling-stock were allowed to get into disrepair, he said: "Engine number (say 324AB) is a good engine: it does not require any whistle; you can hear it rattle a mile off." That is the way. All this rolling-stock is kept out of the repairing sheds so that these sub-departments may show what is really a fictitious balance.

MR. GEORGE: That is not correct.

MR. LEAKE: What does the hon. member know about it?

MR. GEORGE: I know all about it.

MR. JAMES: He does: he knows all about everything. I do not think there is any subject which the hon. member does not know everything about.

MR. HUBBLE: But he is on your own side.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, you can have him. I simply mention these matters as texts from which the Commissioner of Railways can make a speech in the course of a few days. Then we find there has been a saving as regards additions and repairs to public buildings. That looks a good deal like spoiling the ship for the want of a halfpenny worth of tar. These public buildings must be maintained, and it is false economy to allow them to get into disrepair. The Mines Department saved something like £26,000; and under the following heads we find about £16,000—of course I am not giving all the details: Surveys on goldfields, £2,000 saved; surveys of leases, £8,000 saved; batteries, labour, £6,000 saved. Of course we have not had the explanation yet, but all these items appear to me to spell "false economy" rather than anything else; and I hope we shall have an opportunity of considering them later on. The Premier has apparently built up his reputation upon certain public works. I have now been in Parliament five years, and the same old Budget speech has done duty on every occasion: we have always had these public works and railways dragged into the debate, and are always told, "Look at the Fremantle harbour

works; look at the Coolgardie water scheme; look at the Bunbury harbour works, and all these undertakings." Well, as to the Fremantle harbour scheme, although it is a creature of the right hon. gentleman, the present scheme, curiously enough, is not the one he wanted: he was in favour of the Owen's Anchorage scheme. But now we know the way in which the Premier talks about his scheme, the Fremantle harbour, and all the rest of it; and he never shows us the other side of the picture. I am reminded by the hon. member on my right (Mr. James) that the gentleman who most strongly advocated the present Fremantle harbour scheme was the leader of the Opposition of the day, the late Mr. De Hamel.

THE PREMIER: I never heard that. He was member for Albany, I suppose?

MR. LEAKE: Yes; he was the member for Albany.

THE PREMIER: That is very probable!

MR. LEAKE: Whilst we hear so much of the railways and works policy of the Government, we do not hear much of what we know to be absolute failures. The Premier never tells us about the tanks and dams on the goldfields: we do not hear much about that wonderfully successful work, the Niagara dam, which was built on stilts at an outlay, first of all, of £20,000, and which ultimately cost about £60,000; and a number of other dams and works of that sort. We do not hear much either this year about that glorious success, the Greenhills railway, and little things of that kind.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The train runs once a year or so.

MR. LEAKE: We do not hear much about the money wasted on public buildings throughout the country.

THE PREMIER: Where was that?

MR. LEAKE: Let me instance Geraldton, where there was a hopeless waste of money; and I may instance Coolgardie also. The public buildings at Geraldton, which would have been a credit to Perth and might have been useful here, are actually not used in Geraldton at the present time.

THE PREMIER: Oh, yes; they are used.

MR. LEAKE: But I was up there myself, and I know I was told by the officials that the whole thing is useless.

Take the hospital too at Geraldton: that hospital has not been furnished.

MR. ROBSON: It is getting rather late at night to debate that subject.

MR. LEAKE: I am sure the hon. member will bear with me. Of course the hon. member has got his buildings, and he is not going to make a fuss about them. I am not saying a word against Geraldton: I only wish to point out that, when the Premier plumes himself upon his foresight and his glorious public works policy, I may remind hon. members there is another side, there is a dark as well as a bright side to the picture; but unfortunately we never hear of the dark side, unless it be mentioned from this side of the House.

MR. VOSPER: We never hear of the useless railway stations.

MR. LEAKE: I believe there are stations along those northern railways that are practically useless. But the great objection I have to this so-called Budget speech is the fact that we were not told the true financial position of the country. When our last loans were failures, we of course expected we should have heard something about ultimate or future successes; and I had hoped we should have had some prediction as to what was going to happen in the course of a few months. I know it was anticipated in the early part of the year that a loan would be brought out in July; but that has not been done, because we know that the Premier had certain Treasury bills and other liabilities current; and it was due to this House that we should have been told about the loans, about the proposed method of raising money. That has been done on every occasion when a previous Financial Statement has been made, and some considerable reference was made last year in the Budget to the loan moneys and to the proposals. We were told last year that unfortunately their two recent attempts had been failures. Those were the last attempts made to float loans.

THE PREMIER: Which two were they that were failures?

MR. LEAKE: It will take a rather long time to give the details: shall I read them?

THE PREMIER: Were there two failures? The first one, at all events, was subscribed.

MR. LEAKE (reading):

On the 26th of last month we were again unfortunate, for we then offered a one million loan on the market, and had every reason to believe it would be well taken up. But hon. members know the result, that only £550,000 was tendered for. That was the second unexpected blow.

Then the Premier goes on to say:

I do not want to enter into a comparison, and I only say this last blow to our credit was unexpected, and it serves to show how difficult it is to gauge the London market, even on the part of those who are best qualified to do so.

Those are the last attempts.

THE PREMIER: What was the first failure?

MR. LEAKE: Oh, you can see the whole thing on page 1089 of *Hansard*, 18th August, 1898.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Why did the Premier say it was the second failure?

THE PREMIER: The loan was not a great success, but it was not a failure, because it was subscribed. There was only one loan that was not subscribed, and the bank subscribed the balance.

MR. LEAKE: This loan was considered by the Premier a failure last year, and Parliament also thought it was a failure.

THE PREMIER: We got it all about a month afterwards.

MR. LEAKE: It was a failure, and there has been no attempt to float a loan since.

THE PREMIER: You seem to want to publish that all over the world.

MR. LEAKE: I want to publish something worse than that, and I do so for the reason that I do not think the country is any the worse for knowing the truth; and since we cannot get the truth from the Premier in regard to the exact financial state of the country, we must try and show the truth from the Opposition side of the House. The Opposition labour under the greatest possible difficulty, because they have not the command of the Treasury books, and cannot consult the civil servants, in addition to which the Premier will not give us the information he possesses himself.

THE PREMIER: We give you everything you ask for.

MR. LEAKE: Have we not been asking for information in regard to the present financial position, and as to how you propose to float the next loan? We

want that information, but the Premier is silent.

THE PREMIER: How are we going to do it? Do you know?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is for the Premier to say how it shall be done.

THE PREMIER: There is only one way to do it.

MR. LEAKE: It is for the Premier to tell us how it is to be done: Why does he not tell us?

THE PREMIER: We will raise loans when we want them.

MR. LEAKE: Why does the Premier not tell us when we want them?

THE PREMIER: And publish it all over the world? That is good finance!

MR. LEAKE: We are committed to very nearly £6,000,000, and that means an indebtedness of about £38 per head of the population. When that is the position of the country, we are entitled to have something more than a groan or a murmur from the right hon. gentleman: we want a solid statement of hard fact.

THE PREMIER: The leader of the Opposition is making both incorrect and random statements.

MR. LEAKE: If an independent commission were appointed to inquire into the financial condition of the colony at the present date, the Premier would be afraid to publish the report. At any rate, the Premier does not think fit to take the Opposition into his confidence, and tell us exactly how we stand. I notice that whilst the Premier published his Financial Statement at the public expense, he was careful not to tack on to that the criticism of the first speaker who followed, namely the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), a step which would have given the general public an opportunity of reading both sides of the question.

THE PREMIER: The Financial Statement was published before the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) spoke.

MR. LEAKE: Of course it was.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Financial Statement is published every year.

THE PREMIER: Hon. members asked to have it.

MR. LEAKE: Who asked for it?

THE PREMIER: Members on the Opposition side of the House, and it is only a transcript of *Hansard*, after all.

MR. LEAKE: I know that; but it is a transcript of only one side of the story.

THE PREMIER: It is the custom to publish the Premier's financial statement in every British colony, and the hon. member knows that.

MR. LEAKE: The Premier based his wild calculations on an impossible estimate, namely that the population of the colony was going to be 290,000. That was the excuse he made last year for the reduction of expenditure, when he said the population ought to be 290,000, but was only 170,000. That is the basis on which the administration of this country is worked—not on what is, but what ought to be, and what ought to be is what the Government wish for, and what they think they deserve. If the Premier took actual figures and was correct in what he says, namely that he is guided on the basis of population, he should have reduced his expenditure to a considerable extent. It would have been much more in the interests of the country if the Premier had based his estimate of expenditure on a possible revenue of between £2,000,000 and £2,500,000, rather than on an impossible revenue of £3,000,000. However, as the Premier declares to this House and the public he is the only financier in the country, perhaps it is wild and reckless for me to suggest that he may make any possible mistake.

THE PREMIER: When did I say that I was the only financier in the colony? I think you have him on your (Opposition) side of the House.

MR. LEAKE: Judging from his utterances, the Premier evidently thinks he is the only financier in the country, but I may say at once that I do not think he is.

THE PREMIER: We have always thought you had the only financier, amongst the Opposition.

MR. LEAKE: I have said our financial position is unfortunately not good and not wholesome, and some "big pull" ought to be taken on the Administration. I know that members on the Opposition side cannot do much, but I appeal to hon. members on the Government side of the House, who have more influence with the Premier; and if they show their teeth and say "We will not allow this," there is no doubt the Premier would see the

error of his ways, and would come down, as is usual with him. I ask hon. members on the Government side of the House, if they have any regard for the financial credit of the country, to take the matter in hand, and read some of the returns and the Premier's Financial Statement if they will, and compare the latter with the actual figures put before the House. The Premier has been living in a sort of fairyland of finance, for the last two or three years, and he has resorted to all sorts of questionable means of getting the money required to meet the immediate expenditure on the public works of great magnitude at present in hand. Repeated warnings and cautions have come from the Opposition side of the House, and also from members on the Government side, to do them justice. Hon. members have nearly all united in deprecating the system of finance which is known as "reappropriation of loan money," owing to which policy we are at the present time committed, and are practically indebted, to the amount of very nearly £2,000,000. I mentioned this last year, but I mention it again. In 1897 there was reappropriated £395,000, and in 1898 £560,000. At that time we were told by the Premier that this money would be repaid out of revenue, and I ask hon. members to make no mistake in regard to that statement.

THE PREMIER: I never said anything of the sort.

MR. LEAKE: At the time the Premier told us he would have no more loan authorisations until the existing loan authorisations had been exhausted; and how can he dare to say in this Assembly that this money was not to be repaid out of revenue.

THE PREMIER: Give me my words: they are in *Hansard*.

MR. LEAKE: I cannot run through every page of *Hansard* to suit the Premier.

THE PREMIER: I absolutely challenge the accuracy of the statement.

MR. LEAKE: Then I will get some other hon. member to look the matter up. The Commissioner of Railways, when I asked him when we would repay this money, said in his off-hand style, "We will repay it some day, and somehow," and that was all the answer we got from him. There were £395,000 and £500,000 reappropriated, and to-day we have a

deficit of very nearly £250,000 : that means in round figures £1,400,000 ; and to that must be added £500,000 worth of stores, which it is the custom of this very able financier to treat as cash, and it is a marvellous system of finance, to treat railway iron and stores as cash. That brings the actual deficit up to £1,905,000, for the repayment of which our revenue is committed. How can we possibly hope to repay that, when our revenue does not even come up to the estimate, and when we are actually indebted on the cash account £250,000 ? Then there is, according to the Premier's statement the other evening, £1,450,000 of authorised loans not yet raised, and a further sum outstanding of Treasury bills of £1,550,000, which of course we cannot pay out of revenue, and these bring the total to £4,905,000. According to the Governor's Speech and the announcement the other evening, there is a new railway policy, which in the absence of any statement to the contrary we may assume for the sake of argument will mean very nearly £1,000,000, and this brings the figures up to £5,900,000, or in round figures £6,000,000. That is the amount the Premier has committed Parliament to authorise by way of loan. Both our last loans were failures, and yet the Premier tells us that it is not our duty to the country, nay, that it is not our privilege, to ask him how he is going to raise this money ; and he flouts this House.

THE PREMIER : That is good !

MR. LEAKE : It is not good ; it is bad. It is atrocious that the country should be treated in this manner.

THE PREMIER : You are absolutely wrong.

MR. LEAKE : The Opposition have had sufficient of this cavalier, off-hand financing and treatment by the Premier, and I hope hon. members generally have had enough of it ; and we are justified in asking the Premier how he is going to pay off the liability of £6,000,000, to which the country has been committed. When does the Premier propose to borrow this money in the English market ? I understand that the actual amount already raised by loan is something like £12,000,000.

THE PREMIER : No : do not go on like that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : It is £10,000,000, and also a sinking fund.

THE PREMIER : It is £10,000,000.

MR. LEAKE : If to that £10,000,000 we add reappropriation, deficit, and stores account, and the fresh authorisation of £1,000,000, we find that the figures come to at least £13,000,000.

THE PREMIER : When it is borrowed.

MR. LEAKE : But we are committed to that amount, and if the money is not actually borrowed, it is spent. That is the trouble : the money is not borrowed, but it is spent, and how are we going to recoup ourselves ? That is what I want the great financier to tell us.

THE PREMIER : How are we able to spend it, if we have not got it ?

MR. LEAKE : There you are again ! How is it done ? The Premier will not tell us, and that is the extraordinary part of it. We do not know anything about the finances of this colony, and we want to know. What I say is that the Premier has led this country into debt, over and above the present authorisations, to the extent of £6,000,000.

THE PREMIER : The borrowed money has made the country what it is.

MR. LEAKE : I suppose the right hon. gentleman put the gold in the country, or he found it ! He did neither the one nor the other. It is the country that has made the right hon. gentleman, and not the right hon. gentleman who has made the country ; and the same argument applies not only to himself, but to nearly everybody in the colony. The idea of this man and that man making the country is absurd. It invariably happens that it is the country that makes the man.

MR. GEORGE : That is a new manufacture.

MR. HUBBLE : The explorers.

MR. LEAKE : The hon. member says the explorers have done so ; but this country was found years ago, and they did not find the gold : they passed over the gold without discovering it. I shall not say much more on this question. I think I have said enough to convince even intelligent men like the member for the Gascoyne (Mr. Hubble). I hope he will sufficiently lay these words to heart, and I ask him to use his influence with hon. gentlemen on the Government side, and other hon. members who obey the

commands and follow the lead of the right hon. gentleman, because it is in their power to check the expenditure of the Government. They will not vote with us. They disregard the interests of the country, and simply do what they are told. When figures are placed before those members, and they are shown what is the true state of affairs, we can get nothing out of them but a grin or a guffaw. I challenge the right hon. gentleman to disprove my figures. I will be ready to admit I am wrong if the Premier can show it; but I am supported in these figures. I can only take the figures from the published returns. If the right hon. gentleman tells me that his returns are not correct, and in fact that the published returns are "cooked," of course I must fall into an error. But I take these returns from the right hon. gentleman's figures and from *Hansard*, and I defy him to say I am not correct. Yet we are told that the country is in a good and flourishing condition, and that our prospects were never so bright.

THE PREMIER: The member for Central Murchison said that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I said the country, not the Government.

MR. LEAKE: That does not justify the Premier in running the country into debt in the way he has done. It is only because the country has shown this marvellous vitality that we are kept out of the Bankruptcy Court. It is through no effort of the right hon. gentleman. I have said before, and I say again, that we are entitled to know how it is proposed to meet this liability of £6,000,000. That is the position. The right hon. gentleman has promised to tell us when the Loan Estimates come up, and I have given him these figures to-night in order that he may answer them and criticise them, and let us know something about the true state of affairs.

THE PREMIER: Put it on the Notice Paper, if you want to know anything.

MR. LEAKE: Put it on the Notice Paper! Are we talking to a statesman or to a school-boy? Is not this the proper place to make a request as to the condition of the country?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Budget is, anyhow.

THE PREMIER: The information was not denied.

MR. LEAKE: In the Budget speech there was a studied disregard of the interests of the country as to the loan and the loan policy of the Government. This is the first time in the history of the right hon. gentleman's Administration that he has not told us what he proposes in regard to loan. I am only asking what we should know. This does not come upon him by way of a surprise, because it was pointed out last year that the revenue was charged with a liability of upwards of £2,000,000; so it is, practically, to-day; and judging from the Financial Statement which he has made, there is no chance of a single penny of the reappropriation being reduced during the coming year, and very little chance of all the deficit being wiped off. In fact, the right hon. gentleman says he will not be able to wipe off the deficit altogether. Consequently the revenue is liable for this nine hundred and fifty odd thousand pounds that has been reappropriated. We know perfectly well that we have to finance the Fremantle harbour works and the Coolgardie water scheme. How is that to be done?

THE PREMIER: There is about enough already for the Fremantle harbour works for the remainder of the year.

MR. LEAKE: How much for the Coolgardie water scheme?

THE PREMIER: A long way more than we want.

MR. LEAKE: How much is "more than we want"?

THE PREMIER: You know very well. Look at the accounts which have been published, and see.

MR. LEAKE: Perhaps it is not reasonable for me to expect to get answers of that kind during the progress of the debate, and I must not blame the right hon. gentleman and his colleagues for not being able to tell me straight off how much there is available. But I hope that when he speaks again, or allows his Commissioner of Railways to speak, some information will be given to the House. There are a great many subjects which one might refer to in this debate, but I have only thought fit to touch upon what appeared to me to be those of the greatest interest. No doubt when the Estimates are going through Committee, many questions will be put, and particularly with regard to the Railways Department. I

cannot help indorsing what was said by the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) with regard to the new departure which seems to have been taken in the creation of fresh departments and so forth; and it is a pity, too, that the order which was issued from the Treasury, that officers who receive more than £200 a year should not receive increases, was not more strictly adhered to. It is a great pity that one department should benefit at the expense of others. Even in the public service you should not make fish of one and fowl of another, but Ministers should try to be fair. We know perfectly well that in the Lands Department the Minister had his instructions not to increase salaries, and, just as was the case a few years ago, he did not increase the salaries; but when the Estimates come up we find that other gentlemen, particularly in the Treasury Department, are advanced. That is a matter we can refer to in Committee, and I sincerely trust the right hon. gentleman will take the House into his confidence and tell us exactly the true position of affairs. As I said before, we are none the worse off for knowing the exact truth. Let us know it; and I think that if the necessity arises there is sufficient loyalty to the country on the part of hon. members on this (Opposition) side of the House to assist Parliament to get the Ministry out of their financial difficulties, if the Ministry will only permit it.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest, in reply): I have listened to the speech of the hon. member (Mr. Leake), and must confess I have had some difficulty in sitting here and listening. Usually a person with a large responsibility such as that entrusted to the leader of an Opposition should be careful, at any rate in reviewing the finances of the country, not to say anything that may unduly injure the colony, unless absolutely certain of his facts; and even if he were absolutely certain of his facts, I should expect him to deal with the matter in a way that would give an indication of his trying to assist the colony, rather than an indication of a desire to injure it. There is no one in the House or in the country so foolish as to think the hon. member has any desire to injure

the colony—we acquit him of that altogether; it would be too absurd to think he could have any such idea, or that any one living in the colony could really have that idea; but the fact remains that if the speech of the hon. member is published, read, and believed in other countries, it will have the effect, or some effect, of damaging Western Australia. That is the fault the hon. member commits. He is desirous of saying something disagreeable to me personally, and to the Ministry, and to members who support us: his shafts are directed against us; but instead of hurting us, they do not hurt us at all personally, but they may hurt the colony. The hon. member has said there has been some desire on my part to keep back information. I should be sorry for any idea to go forth that I possess information I am not anxious to give to hon. members; and seeing that we have been several months in session, and that members avail themselves of their privileges of asking questions on all kinds of subjects, how easy it would have been for the hon. member, if he really desired information on any of these matters, and if such information was not set forth in the way he thought it should be, to give notice of questions asking for information. Those questions would have been replied to at once, and the hon. member would have been in this position, that before he made his speech he would have had my reply, as Treasurer of the colony, on those points. As a matter of fact, the reason I did not introduce into the Budget speech the question of the new loan appropriation was that I was not prepared at that time with the necessary information, for various reasons which I might explain, but into which I do not think it necessary to go into. I have not followed a different plan this year from that which I have followed on previous occasions, except when we had made up our minds in regard to appropriations. If there were not to be any appropriations this year, it would not have been necessary to introduce the loan question into the Budget speech at all, except to explain the loan expenditure during the year, and to indicate the course which it was proposed to follow, and a few matters of that sort. These questions are dealt with when the Loan Estimates are brought forward, wherein provision is made for the loan

expenditure for the year from sources and items which have been already approved by Parliament; and the only matter hon. members could have any particular interest in would be in regard to what was to be done as to any new loan authorisations, and I do not think it is at all necessary for the Treasurer to mix up the ordinary financial operations of the past year and the financial operations which he expects during the present year with the loan authorisations. It makes the speech too long, to start with, and does not give the Treasurer an opportunity of speaking at that length which he desires with regard to the projects he wishes to bring before hon. members. I may tell hon. members that in a few days, as soon as I can in fact, all matters connected with the Loan Estimates and the new authorisations will be before them. Any difficulties which may have been in the way have been removed, and there is nothing now but to arrange matters, which ought not to take many days. A point was made by the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) as to my not mentioning the fact that within a day or two from the time I was speaking, £300,000 worth of Treasury bills were falling due. I did not remember the fact, because it was a matter of no importance and had already been arranged. This £300,000 worth of Treasury bills we borrowed some time ago from the Savings Bank, and when the bills became due—as the hon. member says, two days after I spoke—they were renewed. A new bill was given for the £300,000, the old bill cancelled, and the whole thing was completed. There was no running about the world for the money: we had the money all ready, and all we had to do was to give statutory security in the shape of a Treasury bill to the Under Treasurer. We are in exactly the same position in regard to the money as we were a month ago.

MR. GEORGE: And it became a permanent loan.

THE PREMIER and TREASURER: Not a permanent loan, because when it is convenient to pay the money off we can do so. In the meantime we are doing good to the Savings Bank and ourselves. We are paying the interest on the amount, which interest goes into the pockets of the investors, and hon. mem-

bers must recollect that we cannot pay 3 per cent. to the depositors in the Savings Bank unless we invest the money, and we have to invest the money at more than 3 per cent., or else we should soon be losing money over the transaction, which is not desirable.

MR. VOSPER: As trustees, you invest the money by borrowing it.

THE PREMIER and TREASURER: Certainly; the law gives the Government power to borrow the money, and the consolidated revenue is the best security.

MR. VOSPER: It would not do for a private trustee to do that.

THE PREMIER and TREASURER: The Government have power to do it, and I hope that all the investments of the Savings Bank will be in the same position as this one, having the security of the consolidated revenue. If so, they will be all right: the security is far better than any other in this country. In regard to the Treasury bills that are going to fall due, as the hon. member for Central Murchison told us, and I know he is right, on the first of December next, I did not think it was necessary for me, in my Financial Statement, to tell hon. members what the Government are going to do to get that money. Surely hon. members can give the Government credit for a desire to make the best arrangement for paying moneys that may become due. There are only two ways in which that money can be paid: by borrowing the money by the sale of inscribed stock, or borrowing the money by the sale of Treasury bills. Hon. members know that very well.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is a pernicious system.

THE PREMIER and TREASURER: The hon. member says a "pernicious" system. The hon. member knows so much about finance, that he makes me almost angry about it. I do not know where the hon. member got his experience in finance from. Perhaps some day he will tell us. What large financial operations has the hon. member conducted?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Where did you get your experience from?

THE PREMIER and TREASURER: Where did the hon. member get his experience? Was he born with it, or what large transactions has he conducted that makes him able to say that the sale

of Treasury bills is a pernicious system? It is the system which is in force all over the world. Temporary advances, whether in private life or for the Government, are made by what are called bills.

MR. LEAKE: What do you call them?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Temporary, you know.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: One would think that all our transactions here were done in cash. Any of us who conduct transactions with the bank have to give joint and several guarantees, or no guarantee at all when the depositor leaves some security with the bank. That is how the business of the country is carried on; but the hon. member must be a born financier, for I never knew that he ever carried out any successful operation in finance. Perhaps the hon. member will tell us whether he has managed any large financial matters in his lifetime with success. If he can tell us that, then we will listen to him; but, until he does so, I do not know how he can call the raising of money by Treasury bills a pernicious system. It is the only system by which Governments carry on the business of a country, unless they raise money by loan. I would like to know the position we would be in if we were not able to raise money by Treasury bills. Supposing the market was unfavourable, as it is now: if we went to the market we should have to pay 4 per cent., or even more, on inscribed stock. If we wanted the money on the 1st of December, perhaps the hon. member would tell us how he would go about obtaining it. The hon. member who says this is a pernicious system shows that he has not had anything to do with transactions of this sort. My opinion is that the hon. member wants putting to the right-about, when he talks about the "pernicious system" in his criticism of finance, because the hon. member knows very little about the matter. He has never had an opportunity of carrying out large financial operations successfully.

MR. GEORGE: I do not see how you can know that.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: That is my opinion, at any rate. In regard to this money, we shall use the powers we have under the statute to provide it, and I have no doubt if we cannot raise a loan between this and the

1st of December on satisfactory terms. well, I shall sell £500,000 worth of Treasury bills, and pay the outstanding bills when they fall due on the 1st of December with them. No one ought to be required to be told that. It is the a.b.c. of finance: it is the only thing we can do. Notwithstanding what has been said about the muddle the finances are in, and the state of the colony, I can smile and say that I have no fear whatever that I shall be able to get the money on the 1st of December. It is only a matter of having to pay for it.

MR. GEORGE: Will you sell a few of mine, at the same time?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: There will be no question about getting the money, and if the market is not favourable, we shall have to pay more for it. As for the country not being able to get the money, I shall not disturb my rest on that matter. I know enough of our financial position in the world to know that the money can be obtained easily, if we like to give the price.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You have Parliamentary authority to sell at 3 per cent.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: I do not think the hon. member is right there. I think it is 4 per cent. for Treasury bills.

MR. GEORGE: Do you not know?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: I know, but the hon. member thinks he knows better.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Treasury bills have been condemned by every State in the world.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: They all give Treasury bills: every colony in Australia does it, and has done it for years.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: They have done it when they have been hard up.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: How are they not to do it?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: By not getting hard up.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: No treasurer would borrow all the money he wants at one time: if he does so he may have to pay 4 or 5 per cent. for the money, and lend it in the meantime at 1 or 1½ per cent. That would be a nice financial operation! That is all I have to say about our immediate obligations. The transaction in regard to the £300,000

worth of Treasury bills is past, and the transaction in reference to the £500,000 worth of Treasury bills is coming. Suppose, for the sake of argument, we sell a new lot of £500,000 worth of bills, we shall not be in a different position from what we are in now, and in two more years we shall pay them off; so that there is nothing to fear in regard to the Treasury bills which are in existence. The hon. member for Albany referred to the last loan as a dismal failure, or a great failure, and he seemed to be glad of it. I know he could not really be glad, but he repeated it. After all, the last loan was not so bad; it gave us trouble at the time, but a month after the loan was put on the market the balance was subscribed at the same price as the loan was placed on the market at; so that the transaction was completed in the way it was intended, although it was not completed in such a satisfactory way as we anticipated. At that time we gave an undertaking not to go to the loan market for another year, and we kept to that undertaking. In any case it was not desirable for the colony to go to the market too often. It is a very bad thing to continually go to the London market for loans. The longer the intervals between one loan and another, so much the better for the colony, and so much the better chance we have of getting our new loan subscribed, because the people who buy the loans are not the general public: they are companies.

MR. MORGANS: Underwriters.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: All sorts of persons in business are the underwriters, and they sell the loans to the general public. When they buy the loans, they must have a certain time given them in order to get rid of the stock, and as soon as they get rid of the stock to the general public they are ready to buy more. Until they get rid of that stock, if you put a loan on the market they will not support you, but try to block you. After July, as hon. members are aware, there has been no opportunity, even if we had desired it, of placing a loan satisfactorily upon the market; and the condition of affairs is as bad now; in fact, it is worse now than it was in July.

MR. MORGANS: The bank rate is now 5 per cent.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: The bank rate in England is, I believe,

about 5 per cent.; so it would be altogether out of the question for us to think of going on the London market for loans in the present troubled condition of affairs, owing to the war in the Transvaal.

MR. MORGANS: Hear, hear. It is impossible.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: The House may rest assured that I am anxious to look after these matters, which perhaps give me even more anxiety than they give to hon. members opposite; but at the same time, I am glad to say that we are able to do very well in the colony. We certainly owe some money in London. We owe the London and Westminster Bank a considerable sum, which will appear in the public accounts. We have a large overdraft, sanctioned by Parliament, with that institution.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Can you tell us at what rate of interest?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: At the current rate of interest in London: it varies.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Current from day to day?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: It varies from day to day; but it is never less than 3 per cent.

MR. MORGANS: Probably 3½ per cent. now.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: Yes; but it is never less than 3 per cent.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It may be 5 per cent. just now.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: Yes; the bank rate is 5 per cent. at the present moment, but I do not think it will remain long at five. As far as the money in the colony is concerned, I am glad to say we have abundance. I believe at the present time we have about £500,000 on current account and pretty nearly £300,000 on Savings Bank account in the banks in Perth, so that we have about £800,000; and if it were necessary we could supply some money to London, but we do not wish to do that unless it be necessary.

MR. GREGORY: How is it that all the loans lately have been decreasing in value during the last couple of years—the last five loans?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: Because money has not been so cheap.

MR. GREGORY: But the 3 per cent. loans are down from £100 to £94.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : I suppose it is the same all through the colonies—the same in most of the colonies, at any rate.

MR. CONNOR : There are too many agitators here.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : Our credit, for some reason or other, is not so good as it was two or three years ago, judging by the price of our stock : the real reason I do not know.

MR. MORGANS : Money is dearer.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : Money must be dearer ; but all I can say is that our condition is far better now than it was at that time, as far as we are able to judge of it. I do not wish anyone to think for a moment that our finances give the Government no anxiety whatever : they have always been a source of anxiety from the day I took the Treasurership up to the present time ; and I suppose they will always continue to be, so long as we have large works in hand, and so long as, before we begin a work, we have not in hand sufficient money to complete it. As long as we begin works on borrowed money, which are to cost an amount larger than what we have in hand at the time, so long must the obtaining of the money as we require it be a source of anxiety to the Treasurer of the colony ; but I am glad to say that I have not one-tenth of the anxiety to-day that I had a year ago ; in fact, I may say that matters are very easy with me in regard to finances—very easy indeed. When I have a credit of over three-quarters of a million at my hand in the banks in Perth, with a considerable revenue—for last month nearly a quarter of a million—hon. members can see that I am not quite so anxious in regard to financial matters as if I had only a few pounds in the bank.

MR. MORGANS : And the expenditure is less.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : Therefore I say if there be any information in regard to the finances concerning which hon. members desire a straight-out answer from me, I shall only be too glad to supply that answer ; and if I did not supply it on recent occasions it was not because I did not desire to do so, but because I thought it was not necessary. At all events, I at once say to hon. members, ask the question, and unless it be a question which I think it would injure

the colony to answer, I shall certainly answer it forthwith. I am not prepared to say when we are going on the London market, or at what rate, or exactly in what manner we are going to raise this money, or where we are going to raise it, or from whom. Those are questions which it only does mischief to ask.

MR. MORGANS : Hear, hear. They are very dangerous.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : And in fact, inquisitiveness in regard to these financial operations does a great deal of harm, too. If a man in a large way of business can borrow £10,000 from the National Bank here, or from any other bank, to carry on his affairs, all well and good ; but if he has to publish in the newspapers that he intends to borrow that money, or that he has got it yesterday, if he has to let all the world know about it, I do not think that would improve his condition—especially if he published far and wide the fact that he was about to borrow money in a few weeks' time, thus letting everyone know his business.

MR. GREGORY : But all the members of the firm should know.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : Yes ; but in our case the whole of the inhabitants of the colony are members of the firm ; and the whole world are members of the firm when we make speeches in Parliament.

MR. MORGANS : There are too many partners.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : If it were known in London that we had large obligations to meet on such a date, and that we had not the money here to meet them, I think perhaps those who had money to lend would want a little more for it. They would say, "These people must have money, and therefore we will make them pay a little more for it." I think the less we publish to the world as to what we are going to do in regard to financial matters, the better. Hon. members know our position very well from the quarterly financial statements. I think the statement for September will be published to-morrow. Hon. members have all the information which is published to the world, and why should they want all these details to be stated in this House? I say at once that going into the details in Parliament with regard to the finances

of this colony is not conducive to good finance, nor will it strengthen the financial position of the colony to do so. It is not done anywhere in the world; and members of Parliament in other colonies would not ask for such information, nor would they get it if they did ask; because such questions put the Treasurer in the position of being less able to do the business of the country to advantage than he would be if financial affairs were conducted as they ought to be for the purposes of good finance, that is secretly, and not in the sight of the whole world.

MR. LEAKE: What we want to know is, when you are already in debt, why you want to go deeper?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: Well, the hon. member's idea of being in debt, and mine, are not the same. The hon. member's speech to-night is not a new statement: as the Minister of Mines says, it is the old, old story. In trying to make out a bad case against the colony, and really against the Government, the hon. member rakes up all the materials he can, not only from the past, but even as it were from the future: he does all he can to make out a great big liability to which he says we are committed, and which the hon. member would have us believe we must provide for to-morrow, or very shortly. As a matter of fact, the Fremantle harbour works have cost three-quarters of a million, and have been under construction for five or six years. We borrowed £150,000 first, next £250,000, and so on as we required it. If we had been told, when we commenced to borrow that money, that we owed £750,000 before we borrowed a penny of it, before we had put a stone into the mole, any pessimist could have formed a ghastly picture of the terrible position of the colony, owing all this money, with a small revenue and a small population, with everything made to look as small as possible on the one side of the account and as large as possible on the other. The Coolgardie water scheme has been authorised for several years, and we have been borrowing money for it, and we will continue to borrow as the years roll on, until the work is finished; and we will borrow this money gradually, as we want it. And the same with all other works in hand, and there are a great many

works on the schedule—I forget how much they amount to, but it must be an immense sum yet: there must be, I suppose, a couple of millions of loan moneys which have not yet been spent.

MR. VOSPER: If your original proposals had been carried out, the Coolgardie water scheme would have been finished now.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: Yes; it would, if we could have got the money a little quicker. And as to the re-appropriations, if we do require that money for those works, we shall have to borrow it; but we do not want it at the present time. As to that £395,000 we took in the first instance, well, that will be a new transaction: when we come to borrow those amounts again, if we want them, that will be a new transaction altogether. That £900,000 or £1,000,000 will be wiped out altogether, and we shall be in exactly the same position as if those allocations that we deducted, those sums, or at any rate the original items of the Loan Act, had not been inserted, and as if we had to borrow the money as we wanted it. We have to borrow as we want it, and will have to bring in a new Appropriation Bill before we can spend any of it.

MR. MORGANS: The Opposition are setting up bogeys.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We must pass the appropriation, anyhow.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: In regard to the £1,500,000 of Treasury bills, all I can say is that the operation by which we convert these Treasury bills into inscribed stock will not give us any money, because we have had the money. The financing has been done, and all we have to do is, on a suitable occasion, to convert these bills into inscribed stock, and we know that conversion on the London market is looked on as a much easier process than to place a new loan. We have already had the money, as I say, and it may not be perhaps agreeable to hon. members to know that we have floated a loan for £1,500,000 and shall get nothing out of it. But that is the operation; and, having had the money, we must convert it into inscribed stock as circumstances will permit.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It will be much more satisfactory.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
It will be much more satisfactory, as I can assure hon. members. I do not like a large floating debt, but this operation of conversion is not "pernicious": it is the only thing we can do. It is much better to have money and be liable to repay it in 40 years, than be liable to repay in two or three years; and this is all the difference between Treasury bills and inscribed stock, only the latter is cheaper.

MR. VOSPER : Is it easy to convert a short-date loan at 4 per cent. into inscribed stock at 3 per cent., at long date?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
Yes; it is easier than floating a loan for a new work, because perhaps the work for which the money was originally borrowed may be paying its way. Even if it does take some time to convert these bills into inscribed stock, that is not such a terrible operation, after all.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : But perhaps the operation might prevent the flotation of a loan.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
I do not think Treasury bills will in any way affect a loan, because people like these short dates in business.

MR. VOSPER : I cannot see how, if you have a debt at short date with high interest, you can easily convert it into a debt at long date with low interest.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
The lower the rate the better, and different classes of people deal with these two different kinds of securities.

MR. GEORGE : Where does the control of Parliament come in?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
Government are authorised by an Act to issue Treasury bills. Surely the hon. member does not think I am doing this "off my own bat," without any authority.

MR. GEORGE : I would not be surprised.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
The leader of the Opposition spoke of £1,000,000 of new reappropriations, and he added that amount to the public debt before even the proposals for the new works have been submitted to this House; but taking the hon. member's own figures, the money might not be raised all at once. I do not suppose we would go in for small amounts; but my point is that

you cannot call an authorisation a debt, until you have incurred some liability in regard to it.

MR. LEAKE : Do you give your pledge you are not going to raise the money?

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
I will not give the hon. member a pledge. What right has he to ask me for a pledge? Is he the dictator of the House, that he should dictate to me as to what pledge I shall give him? I will not pledge anything to him at the present moment. When it suits the Government to bring down the loan authorisation, they will do so, and that will be very soon.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Parliament had better resign, and give the control over to the Government altogether.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
That is what the hon. member wants. If we resigned, and he could come into power, it would be all right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I spoke of Parliament resigning.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
The hon. member seems to be weary of waiting all these years in order to get on to the Treasury bench.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I spoke of Parliament resigning. Do not misrepresent me. I said Parliament should resign, and give the whole business over to the Government.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
I beg the hon. member's pardon; but Parliament will not resign, because there are 25 or 26 sturdy representatives here, willing to support the Government in all that is good. But no doubt the hon. member is weary with waiting.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I do not want your seat on the Treasury bench.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
However, the hon. member will have to wait a little longer, because it seems to me the Opposition are losing their members, instead of gaining.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I do not want the Premier's seat, and he need not think I do.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
Then what is all this hubbub about?

MR. ILLINGWORTH : Justice to the country.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER :
I do not see how justice is going to be given to the country by misrepresenta-

tion. I can only say I am not afraid, and I never have been afraid, of the future of the colony. Everything points to a bright future, but those who were bold, and had confidence in themselves and in the colony years ago, seem to have no confidence now, when things are ten times brighter, when we have railways all over the country, and our resources are flourishing. Some people seem to be afraid of new loan authorisations; but we were able to get £6,000,000 or £7,000,000 of authorisations some years ago, and we have got through and are not bankrupt yet.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We are not through yet.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: I think so; at any rate, I am satisfied. Why should we be afraid now? Since that time, we have borrowed £4,000,000, I think, out of the £7,000,000 on inscribed stock, and £1,500,000 on Treasury bills, and still no disaster seems to have come on us. But some members seem to be afraid to do anything: in fact, they want the Government, after having put our shoulders to the wheel and given the people opportunities they never had before in the way of developing resources, to sit down now and do no more until the Coolgardie water scheme and the Fremantle harbour works are completed. I am not going to submit to that doctrine. We will go on with those works which are necessary and will pay. At one time we were not afraid of the future, and why should we be afraid now? We hear the "fear song" very often from the Opposition, but I am glad to say the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) had a different tune for us to-night. I do not wish to say anything which may hurt him, but he is really very irritating sometimes. The hon. member has some generous impulses, but the leader of the Opposition has no generous impulses at all when dealing with the Government. I am obliged to the member for Central Murchison, for the way he referred to the condition of the colony.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am not obliged to you for having referred to me.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: If you hit, you must expect to be hit back, you know. I do not intend to deal with the other matters referred to by various speakers, with regard to the

various departments, as these will be dealt with when we get into Committee, and I can only say I shall be glad to give every information I can with regard to these matters. Why the hon. member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper) should have singled out this little ewe lamb of mine for attack, I do not know. Surely there are other things in the Estimates to which he might have devoted his attention. Why should he single out a department costing less than a thousand a year? The hon. member knows there are great advantages in having a department of that sort, and those who succeed me will recognise it. The system hitherto adopted has been a bad one.

MR. VOSPER: The new system will be the most awful inconvenience an incoming Premier may have to put up with.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: I do not think so. I may be in the Treasurer's or Colonial Secretary's department, or all over the place in different departments as Premier, and the Premier's records get hidden away in all departments of the State. If a paper is wanted, one asks, "Who was the Premier?" Suppose the member for East Coolgardie to have been Premier, and a question is asked, "What was he?" the reply being "Down at the Works." If he was Colonial Secretary, the person is told to go to the Colonial Secretary's office, or if Commissioner of Lands, then go to the Lands office. Papers are all over the place; and to show you how inconvenient it is, I may mention that in New South Wales, when my friend Mr. Reid, the late Premier, was Treasurer, if he desired to send a letter to the Premier of another colony, he had to write it at the Treasury, send it over to the Chief Secretary's office, and have it registered and sent from there: that was in order to try to collect the records in one place. In Victoria the Premier has had a department for years, and it has been a great success. In Queensland they have the same, the first Minister being called the "Chief Secretary" there, and having no other duties, as a rule, except those of Premier. It seems to me that the arrangement I have made, after many years of office, is a good one. Besides the object I have named, there was another, this being the desire of relieving myself as far as possible of departmental matters. When I

was Colonial Secretary and had 20 or 30 or more departments, I was surrounded by what they call "jackets," and unable to attend to the duties more fitting for one having a controlling influence in the Government. It seemed to me that an arrangement following out what has been done elsewhere is a good one; and hon. members know what a small department the Premier's department is, and how many things go through that department. I do not know why, but people seem to think the Premier is the Minister to address for everything. Notwithstanding the immense amount of correspondence that passes through that department, there are only two or three engaged in it; there being one correspondent, one registrar (and I think also a junior) and a secretary, the whole of these costing less than a thousand a year. If I desired to be not economical, what would I have done? I would have appointed a secretary, and I do not think I could have given a salary of less than £350 or £400 a year for a person to be secretary or under-secretary, and to be an executive man under the Premier. Instead of that, I took an officer already in the service and added £200 a year to his salary, after he had done the work for, I think, 18 months for nothing. I could not allow that to go on. Members know better than I do the immense amount of work that goes through that little office, and the responsibility that is cast upon it, small as it is. Even in the matter of people calling to see me, deputations, and the bother of keeping people from getting an interview as far as one can, it is necessary to have the services of someone. I thank the hon. member for many things he has done in the House, but I really think that, in reviewing the financial position of this great country, he need not have made such a strong attack upon a little department I have taken a good deal of interest in building up, and in regard to which I desire to act most economically. If anyone were to tell the people in other colonies that the Premier's department is carried on in this country at a cost of less than a thousand a year, they would think that at any rate there were no extravagant people here, and that there were not more officers than necessary. That is by the way. I would not have mentioned the

matter, only I thought some little explanation was due from me. Then we come to the Education Department, referred to by the same hon. member. I suppose that nearly all—I would not say all, but nearly all—the recommendations of the department were carried out in regard to salaries. As to other matters, of course it may not be so. We have to trim a little, here and there, all through the Estimates, and I think the Education Department clipped a little bit too much on some of the items. If I have done so, I shall do my best to make it good either by Supplementary Estimates or by providing the amount. If what they think will happen does happen, I shall do all I can to assist the Education Department, which I believe is trying to do a good work. I believe the officer controlling it is most enthusiastic, and he deserves all the encouragement we can give him. From the day he came in until the present time I have desired to give him all the encouragement possible, because if an officer, placed as he is here, is not supported by the Government, we cannot expect him to do as he otherwise would.

MR. GEORGE : Give more schools.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER : Every school asked for by the Education Department has been granted. I have never struck one out.

MR. VOSPER : Forty thousand pounds odd this year is spent on schools.

THE PREMIER : On schools?

MR. VOSPER : Yes.

THE PREMIER : That is for all the expenses of the schools.

MR. VOSPER : That is spent on buildings.

THE PREMIER : Not buildings.

MR. VOSPER : Yes; it is shown in the Public Works estimates.

THE PREMIER : All I can say is I desire to assist the Education Department, and to help my friend the member for the Murray (Mr. George), because I know he has taken a great interest in the colony, and also in his district, and I am sure he has never been able to say he does not receive sympathy from myself and other members of the Government in his praiseworthy endeavours.

MR. GEORGE : I got a vote of want of confidence, the other day, on account of one school.

THE PREMIER: We must try to get you a vote of confidence for two. I do not desire to say anything more, except to assure hon. members that I have no desire to keep anything back from them, and that I shall be only too glad to answer any question they desire to put to me. I feel sure that when members look through the Estimates they will not discover so much to find fault with as they are apt at first to think. We must remember that even to give increases of salaries up to £200 a year means a large amount on these Estimates. There is scarcely an officer all through these Estimates receiving a salary of £200 a year and under who has not had his £10 increase. At any rate if he has not got it, it was the department's fault: there was some reason for it, and the department did not recommend it. The other instructions of the Treasury were that no increases of salaries above £200 were to be made except in special cases, which would be specially dealt with. Many of the departments responded to that, and sent in special cases with special reasons, and they were considered towards the end. Perhaps some which otherwise would not have been allowed to pass were permitted to do so, because things were improving, the revenue increasing, and we were able to be a little more liberal than we at first thought we could be. I can assure hon. members we have to be very careful in regard to salaries, and I desire to do my best for Government officials, having been one myself, and I have a friendly feeling towards them, and will help them when I can. At the same time if one listens to all the demands from the departments, one will soon get into the Bankruptcy Court. I think Mr. Reid made a statement to the same effect, that if a Treasurer takes notice of all the demands made on him by the departments, he will soon have no revenue at all but for salaries. When we look at our population, I am sure everyone will admit that the civil service is very large. I admit that it is so, but it is due to extraordinary conditions—our scattered country with officers all over our immense area; and hon. members must be almost appalled at times, when looking through the Estimates and seeing the number of people employed, after retrenchment has been going on for 12 months. While the Ministry are

glad to give increases of salaries, they are compelled to say "no." It seems to me this desire—and I am bound to say it though I do not wish to give offence to anyone in the civil service—this continual desire for increase cannot go on.

MR. LEAKE: Except in the Treasury Department.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: I am glad the hon. member has reminded me of that. There are three officers in the Treasury, who have the receipt and payment of all the revenue, £3,000,000 a year. One officer was receiving £400 a year, but he was promoted to the position of accountant, rendered vacant by the resignation of the accountant through old age; and the other two officers were receiving £325 a year. I really think they were the worst-paid officers in the whole civil service of the colony. They are the two principal Treasury clerks, and have the disbursing of all the money, and to say that £325 a year is sufficient salary for them is not right. These officers have to make out all the accounts for the Auditor General; they have to make out the interest on the debentures, and everything connected with the loans. I said to the Under Treasurer, "This cannot go on: these two officers hold responsible positions, and they must be increased to £350." I think these are the only two cases in which increases have been granted, and they are special ones. I can assure hon. members I do not want to increase salaries, if it can be avoided. I am certain of this: it is one of the most unpleasant duties any Minister has to carry out, the annual regulation of the salaries of officials; therefore I hail with pleasure, although I am afraid it will not be in the interests of the civil servant or satisfactory in many ways, the passing of the Civil Service Bill, for the reason that the responsibility, the worry and annoyance in connection with salaries will be removed to a large extent from the shoulders of the Ministry, and placed on the shoulders of a board. I am sure that will be a "consummation devoutly to be wished," and we shall be able to get on better. At the present time the whole blame comes on me. Ministers even send forward recommendations, and it rests with me perhaps not to agree to them. That is a very awkward position, and the

word goes round through the civil service that, if it had not been for this terrible Premier, the officers would have got the increases for which they had been recommended. I am glad of one thing, that a change has "come o'er the spirit of the dream" in this House. My experience in the past has been that salaries have all been too high; and there have been complaints from hon. members as to the salaries being excessive, the Government being blamed for making them so. Now, however, hon. members wish to be even more liberal than the Government.

MR. GEORGE: Get good men: that is what you want.

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: I quite agree with the hon. member, and what I want is good men at the top, too. It is all very well to say that we want the rank and file to be good; but we can manage to get on even if the rank and file be indifferent, provided we have the chiefs good. A Minister requires good men near him, men who will do what they are told, and who can also give him information.

MR. GEORGE: And men, too, who have a bit of "backbone."

THE PREMIER AND TREASURER: Yes, certainly. We want good men at the head of the civil service, that is as heads of departments. If we have them, it will be easy work for Ministers, especially for new Ministers. We Ministers are all working now with the object of assisting those who will come after us. I know all about the working of the departments from my long experience, but new Ministers will find it invaluable to have men of known integrity and ability at the head of affairs, who will be able to assist them in the arduous duties they will have to carry out. I do not think I need say anything more in regard to the speech of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake): I think it will do a great deal more harm than good; but we have had to put up with similar speeches from the hon. member before, and we have not yet been brought to ruin; and, I have no doubt, notwithstanding the fact that the hon. member's speech will perhaps be telegraphed all over Australia, and perhaps to London to-morrow morning, to the effect that we are in a terrible fix, and that, if it were not for the buoyancy of the colony, we should be in the

Insolvency Court; still, notwithstanding all that, we shall have to do what we have done before—to survive it. I am quite sure the colony is all right, and notwithstanding all the mismanagement which has been attributed to the Government, that we shall be able to steer the ship of State safely through any breakers which may confront her; that we shall be able to carry the ship on her course; that she will continue to sail on prosperously, and will ultimately reach the safe harbour of prosperity, notwithstanding the slightly troubled waters with which she is now contending.

MR. LEAKE: But she will arrive with the cargo broached.

MR. WALLACE moved that progress be reported.

Motion put and passed.

Progress reported, and leave given to sit again.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Report of Aborigines Department, year ended June, 1899.

Ordered to lie on the table.

ADJOURNMENT

The House adjourned at 11.9 p.m. until the next Tuesday.
