

operate as a check, in the event of there happening to be a run upon the Savings Bank, as was the case upon other institutions during the late banking crisis. It was the same provision as had existed in South Australia for many years, and which he was advised had been found, during the late financial scare, of very great assistance to the Government in that colony, as it gave them power to withstand what might otherwise have been a run upon the Post Office Savings Bank. Of course, as a rule, in normal times, the Savings Bank would go on, in the ordinary way, paying withdrawals without this long notice, but, in the event of there being a run upon it, and every depositor demanding his money without notice, it was well that there should be this power in reserve—well, in the interests of the depositors themselves. Ten days' notice might not be sufficient if a panic occurred. The law required the Government to invest the Savings Bank funds in a certain manner, and they could not get them back again at a few days' notice. He thought we could not do better than follow the South Australian Act, which he understood had worked well. Of course, as he had said, under ordinary circumstances, the Post Office Savings Bank would go on paying, on demand, as at present; but, in the event of a crisis, it was able to have this power requiring a month's notice.

MR. MOLLOY thought this was a very necessary precaution, to prevent runs being made upon the Savings Bank. The money deposited in this Bank was invested by the Government, and if the depositors expected it to be invested wisely, there must be some power to check any sudden rush on the Bank's funds, otherwise it might end in serious complications. He thought it a very useful precaution, and that it was not asking too much that fair notice should be given, in the event of there being a necessity for it.

MR. SOLOMON said that further on, in the same clause, it was provided that the Postmaster General might pay at any time before the expiration of the month's notice if he thought fit; and this seemed to him to meet the difficulty.

MR. PIESSE said no doubt it might be necessary for the protection of the department that notice should be given; still a month's notice when a depositor

wanted to withdraw £1 or £2, appeared rather hard. He only intended the short notice to apply to sums under £50. Over that amount, he did not think that three months' notice, was too long, but, for small sums, he should have thought that ten days' notice would have been ample protection in the event of a run upon the Bank. However, as the Postmaster General was at liberty to exercise his judgment, and pay before the notice expired if he thought proper, and as it might possibly lead to complications if the notice were curtailed, he begged to withdraw his amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause agreed to.

Clauses 9 to 28 inclusive:

Put and passed.

Schedule, preamble, and title:

Agreed to.

Bill reported.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at nine minutes past 4 o'clock p.m.

## Legislative Assembly,

*Wednesday, 19th July, 1893.*

Petition of Majir Logue—Purchase of Saddlery by the Government without Tenders being called for—Delay in Construction of Printing Department, and Printing executed outside the Department—Appointment of Engineer-in-Charge of Lines in course of construction—Construction of Bridge over Avon River, and Railway Station for Newcastle—Recommendations of Fruitgrowers' Conference—Supply Bill: second reading; in committee—Constitution Act Amendment Bill: in committee—Post Office Savings Bank Consolidation Bill: third reading—Returns showing Appointments in Works and Railways Department, also Expenditure on Fremantle Harbour Works and Number of Men Employed—Limit of Charges levied by Mail Contractors for conveyance of Passengers and Parcels—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4:30 p.m.

#### PRAYERS.

#### PETITION OF MAJIR LOGUE.

MR. SIMPSON presented a petition from Majir Logue, praying that measures

should be taken to cause the Commissioner of Crown Lands to appoint a day for arbitration in connection with the purchase of block of land, within Lease No.  $\frac{6}{352}$ , by Midland Railway Company.

Petition received, and read.

THE PREMIER said the word "collusion" was used in the petition as read, and, if this word had reference to an hon. member of this House, the petition would hardly be in order.

THE SPEAKER said the petition was not respectful, at any rate, if it alleged collusion.

MR. SIMPSON said he had carefully read the petition before presenting it, and he did not think there was any intention to use the word disrespectfully. He moved that the petition be printed, and that it be taken into consideration on Wednesday, the 26th July.

Question put and passed.

#### PURCHASE OF SADDLERY BY THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT TENDERS BEING CALLED FOR.

MR. MOLLOY, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier whether large sums of money were expended in the purchase of saddlery for the Government, without tenders being called for?

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: In fitting out survey parties for the Murchison and Yilgarn goldfields, about £280 was expended in saddlery. This saddlery was supplied at a reasonable rate, and by a firm that had previously supplied the department very satisfactorily. Tenders were not called for, but probably price lists were obtained. If they were not, they should have been; and in future care will be taken either to call for tenders or obtain price lists.

#### DELAY IN CONSTRUCTION OF PRINTING DEPARTMENT BUILDINGS, AND PRINTING EXECUTED OUTSIDE THE DEPARTMENT.

MR. MOLLOY, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works,—1. (a.) Whether the new Government Printing Office had been delayed in construction for want of girders since April last. (b.) Whether such girders had been indented for from England; and if so, why they were not ordered in the colony. 2. Whether the Government were paying large sums of money away

for printing in connection with the Works Department, without calling tenders for same; and if so, to what amount?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied:—

1. (a.) The completion of the Government Printing Office has been delayed for want of girders, since the 2nd May. 1. (b.) The girders for the work were indented for from England on 4th November, 1892. Rolled iron girders of the section, lengths, and quantity required were not procurable in the colony, nor can they be manufactured in the colony; therefore they were not ordered in the colony. 2. A certain quantity of printing which, through pressure of work, could not be done at the Government Printing Office, has been given at various times to outside firms. The amount paid for the past six months was £199 2s. 8d. This includes the cost of the transferring and printing of litho plans, which in the future will be avoided by the establishment of the Survey Department's new printing press.

#### APPOINTMENT OF ENGINEER IN CHARGE OF LINES IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION.

MR. MOLLOY, in accordance with notice, asked the Commissioner of Railways whether it was a fact that a new appointment had been made of an Engineer in Charge of Lines in course of construction; and if so, at what salary?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied: No such appointment has been made.

#### CONSTRUCTION OF BRIDGE OVER AVON RIVER, AND RAILWAY STATION FOR NEWCASTLE.

MR. CLARKSON, in accordance with notice, asked the Director of Public Works,—1. When it was intended to construct the bridge over the Avon River, at Newcastle, for which the sum of £1,000 was voted last session. 2. When Newcastle was to be provided with a Railway Station.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. H. W. Venn) replied:—

1. It is intended, if possible, to place a sum on the Estimates for the construction of this bridge. 2. The Government hoped to have done something in this direction

before this, and hope to do so as soon as funds are available.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF FRUIT-GROWERS' CONFERENCE.

MR. HARPER, in accordance with notice, asked the Premier what steps, if any, the Government proposed to take with the object of carrying out the recommendations of a conference of fruit-growers, as brought under the notice of the Premier by a deputation on the 15th of April last.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) replied: The Government hope to be able to take steps to establish an Agricultural Bureau, and to provide on the Estimates, if possible, for the salary of a secretary to the Bureau.

#### SUPPLY BILL.

##### SECOND READING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in moving the second reading of the Bill, said: As hon. members are aware, the object of the Bill is to enable the Government to carry on the business of the country until the Appropriation Act can be passed; and I have had, on other occasions, to ask for a similar Supply Bill. The fact that we meet just after the close of the financial year makes it absolutely necessary that we should ask the House to approve of a Bill of this sort. This is one of the disadvantages—although there are advantages, of course—of our meeting at this period of the year, because as soon as the House meets after one financial year is closed, the Government are without funds for carrying on, and they are not then in a position to immediately place the annual Estimates for the next year on the table. The only course open is to ask the House to approve of a Bill for giving them temporary Supply, in order that the Government may carry on the business of the country until they become armed with the Appropriation Act. I do not think I need say anything more. It will be apparent to hon. members that, under the law, we cannot make appropriations of the revenue unless we have an Act of Parliament; and we desire to be armed with that power. Of course it is understood that all payments to be made under this Bill must be in accord-

ance, as far as possible, with the estimates approved for the previous half-year, and that the Government will not increase any salary or do anything that is not absolutely necessary, for carrying on the business of the country. The amount asked for in this Bill will suffice probably for two months.

Question put and passed, and the Bill read a second time.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

The Bill passed through committee, and was reported without amendment.

#### CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

##### IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 1 was postponed.

Clauses 2, 3, and 4 agreed to.

Clause 5.—“Constitution of Council:”

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the clause would increase the members of the Council to 21 in number, and this would be a very large proportion as compared with 33 proposed for the Assembly.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) asked why the increase should not be made, and what proportion there ought to be.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said the increase would be a large one, though he had not much objection to it.

MR. SIMPSON said the increase was objectionable, because the Government had not been able to satisfactorily fill the present Council of 15, when vacancies occurred. They had not been able to nominate representative men in the different districts, although he knew there had been applications from candidates for the vacancies. If the proportion of the two Chambers were exact, in the original Constitution Act, they became unequal under this Bill, for the representation in the Council was to be increased 40 per cent. by this Bill, and that of the Assembly only 10 per cent. Why was this large difference made? The Upper House represented property, and it was to be increased 40 per cent., while there was nothing to show why this difference of 30 per cent. increase should be made in favour of the property Chamber.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the reason why the Government had proposed to increase the members of the

Upper House was because, in a small number, the influence of one or two men might prevail to a larger extent than was desirable, and a larger number of members would be more likely to act wisely. Last session the Government proposed to make the number 17, but on reconsideration for this session they increased the number to 21, which enabled the Government to get over a difficulty seriously felt, and to make the period of retirement uniform, instead of a three years' tenure for some members, and two years' for others. Then there was the division of the colony into seven electoral districts, and the 21 members would sub-divide evenly into three for each district. They would also fairly represent the varied interests of the whole colony, having regard to the geographical position. If only six divisions were made, the total number of members might be 18; but there being seven divisions, and these having been arranged by a select committee, and approved by the House in the last session, they could have equal representation by being allotted three members to each division. To make them even, the total number must be 14 or 21, and the Government thought that a Council of 14 would be too small. If suitable representative gentlemen could be obtained for a Council of 21, no harm would be done, but good would result by increasing the Council to that number. Theoretically, there was no reason why the two Houses should not be equal in numbers; but practically it was not desirable in this colony to make the Upper House larger than was necessary. From his experience of the present Upper House, he had come to the conclusion that it was too small, his principal reason for this conclusion being that one or two persons could exercise such a great influence in a small House, and if these one or two were very active, they might do very much as they liked. In the Assembly, also, if it were only half the present size, one or two individuals might exercise much greater influence than they could do with the present number of 30. The Bill proposed to increase the number of the Assembly to 33, and he thought that number would be sufficient.

MR. RICHARDSON said the essence of clause 5 was not so much the total number of members as the manner in

which the representation was to be allotted to the several districts of the colony. Looking at other parts of the Bill, he thought there would be a strong objection to the proposed distribution of the representation. He suggested that Clause 5 be postponed until after the consideration of Clause 6, dealing with the electoral divisions.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said the Bill could be re-committed, if further amendments became necessary, after dealing with the electoral divisions.

MR. RICHARDSON said the boundaries might have to be referred to a select committee, and if the Government would not give way, he would move to report progress.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said he had no objection to report progress, but there would be the same difficulty to deal with on the next day. The boundaries of electoral districts, in this Bill, were the same as those approved last session, and the only difference was in the allotting of four more members for the Council, and the re-arrangement of the numbers representing certain divisions. Hon. members should make up their minds as to what they wanted, so that the House might go on with business.

MR. R. F. SHOLL said this was an important Bill, and it should not be hurriedly carried through. A number of amendments had been placed on the Notice Paper, and members should have time to consider Clauses 5 and 6. He moved that progress be reported, and said the Bill should be postponed until the following Monday.

Motion put and passed, and progress reported accordingly.

#### POST OFFICE SAVINGS BANK CONSOLIDATION BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and passed.

#### RETURNS SHOWING APPOINTMENTS IN WORKS AND RAILWAYS DEPART- MENT, ALSO EXPENDITURE ON FRE- MANTLE HARBOUR WORKS AND NUMBER OF MEN EMPLOYED.

MR. MOLLOY, in accordance with notice, moved, That there be laid on the Table of the House (1) A return showing the new appointments made last year in the Works and Railways Department;

(2) A return showing the amount expended upon the Harbour Works at Fremantle up to date, together with the number of men employed, including the various superintendents and engineers. He said: The Hon. the Premier remarked the other evening that it was a popular thing to criticise the Civil Service. I have approached the consideration of this subject, and have to bring it before the notice of hon. members, not with the view of seeking popularity, nor because it is a popular thing to criticise any of the heads of Government departments. I have had this matter under my consideration some time, and it has seemed to me there was a necessity for criticism. There is an opinion abroad that a great deal of extravagance is going on in the department to which my motion refers. It is notorious that there are numerous appointments made in carrying out the works of that department, and also some appointments made in the Railways Department, which do not do justice to the various officers who are engaged in it. This has become so notorious that I have thought it necessary to bring the matter before the notice of this House, with a view to a remedy. It is complained, especially in the Works Department, that there is most reckless extravagance; that the supervision in regard to the Loan works is too costly; that there are too many officers employed for the purpose. It is also complained, in this department, that the Engineer-in-Chief seems to have complete control; that he seems to have the management of the affair as though it was his own concern, and as though he was not a public servant; that he seems to be omnipotent, to have entire control, and to employ whom he thinks fit. In many instances it is thought, by people who have given this subject their earnest consideration, that he does so in a reckless way, and with an extravagance in the carrying out of his duties which will, if persisted in, tend to the great disadvantage of the country and its progress. It is noticed by many persons outside, competent to form an opinion, that this department is not managed as any commercial enterprise would be managed; that there is a total disregard of any system of economy. It will be in the recollection of hon. members that in the last session of Parliament some estimates were put before us in respect to the

Loan works. It was complained then that the supervision in regard to those works was extremely costly, and it was only because hon. members did not have sufficient opportunity for checking the amounts that were placed before us, so as to have a full grasp of the details, that the Estimates were allowed to pass this House. We had the assurance, at that time, that this department necessitated such an expenditure only for a particular period; but now, it seems, as far as I can learn—and I have endeavoured to get authentic information in regard to it—this is likely to be continued, and that the temporary appointments have grown into permanent ones, and that the same extravagance which has been noted in the initiation of the various works is likely to be continued during their progress. At any rate, this motion will elicit the information whether this is to be so or not. It will be the means of informing the public whether the period has arrived when some of those so-called temporary officers, after their work has been finished on particular undertakings, have been dispensed with or not. My motion will enable hon. members to be informed as to whether those officers have been employed only for the purposes for which they were engaged, or whether they are still continued in employment because they have been engaged in the Public Service. It is indisputable, particularly in the Works Department, that new appointments are being made continually, and that the only person who seems to have any control of them is the Engineer-in-Chief. We have had complaints also that he has thought fit to send out of the colony the work which is provided by the Loan moneys, that he has imported things into the colony which should have given employment to persons here who were in a position to make them, and has done this to the detriment of the colony's progress. He has particularly favoured one colony, the colony from which he has come; and it is said that the material which he has obtained from that colony has been not of such a character as would tend to the good of the Service. Notably, there were a number of trucks imported from New Zealand, in response to a cry that there was not sufficient rolling stock to perform the railway work required at the time. These trucks

were imported at a time when, I maintain, they could have been manufactured here new, and of better material than the imported trucks, and this work would have given employment in the colony, besides giving us a better article. And since that time there have been other instances of a similar nature, in which the Engineer-in-Chief seems to be all-powerful, and seems to expend the money of this colony with a recklessness which is so pronounced that persons having a great stake in the country are looking to their representatives, on this occasion, to see that some check is placed on him. I do not wish to say this officer is not competent, but I do say he has proved himself, since he has been here, to have a thorough disregard of economy, and that he has particularly favoured, to the detriment of this colony, the persons from New Zealand coming here for employment. This conduct is deserving of a check, and I take it that the means of effecting this purpose is to complain about it in this House, so that an expression of opinion may come from hon. members, and the colony may have the advantage of having all the work it produces confined to these shores. I am not saying this officer is responsible for the control of this department, or the effective working of it; that if there is not the material to hand for performing the work entrusted to him, he should not go outside to seek the material; but I do say that undue preference has been given to persons hailing from New Zealand, and I do not think it is fair that persons residing in this colony and contributing to the taxes, and having grown up with all the colony's difficulties and having submitted to the ordeal of bad times in the past, when good times come should be precluded from obtaining their share of that which they are taxed to provide. It is also complained that in the harbour works at Fremantle a lot of money is being wasted, and that the number of engineers and supervisors is altogether unnecessary in proportion to the number of men employed. It is complained that a person hailing from New Zealand, who was imported here for the purpose of filling an office which I have asked a question about, earlier this evening, since this matter was commented upon has been employed on the harbour works

at Fremantle, and not on the work which he was imported here to do. I am not aware whether that is a fact. It came to me only to-day, and I had not then time to alter the form of the question of which I had given notice, in order to elicit the information I wanted. But I take it that when the return which my motion asks for is presented, we will then have the information as to whether this arrangement has been made. It is true I have been answered, this evening, that the appointment which I indicated, that of Engineer in Charge of Lines in course of construction, has not been made, but I have had information that this gentleman, who I am informed is Mr. Bell, has been appointed on the Fremantle harbour works, so as to deceive the persons who were moving in this direction, and in order that an answer might be given in reply to my question that Mr. Bell had not been appointed to this office. But if he is appointed to an office at Fremantle, it is an unnecessary appointment.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) : Who says it is an unnecessary appointment?

MR. MOLLOY : I say it is an unnecessary appointment, and to establish the fact I say that if the works have progressed up to the present without such an officer, that fact must prove either that the Engineer-in-Chief was not competent, in the first instance, to deal with the matter, or that he has given to a favourite an opportunity of employment; because if it were necessary to have an engineer at £600 a year employed for this purpose, it was necessary some six months ago that he should be appointed, and if the engineer comes at this late hour, it proves that this is another instance in which the Engineer-in-Chief has provided employment, at the expense of the country, for one of his favourites from New Zealand. I do not criticise this gentleman from any personal feeling. I am not acquainted with him, except that I know he is an official in the employment of the Government, and is called the Engineer-in-Chief. I do not say he is not competent for the position he holds, but I do say there are sufficient indications that this gentleman is too extravagant in the management of the department, and if this be persisted in it will end probably

in considerable ruin to the country. I will content myself now with complaining also in respect to the other branch of the Service over which this gentleman presides, namely, the Railway Department. There are instances of recent appointments in that department, and, singularly enough, in every instance they happen to be persons hailing from New Zealand. There is a new station master at Claremont; he is a New Zealander. There was a gentleman there who had been in the employment of the railway service some considerable time, and he was looked upon to succeed the station master by rising to the position; but this man, although he had done considerable service, and was duly qualified for the post, was overlooked, and a person coming from New Zealand, who had not been in the service of this Government before, was appointed to the position. I am not aware whether he had any railway experience previous to his being appointed at Claremont. Again, there was a station master appointed at York; he also is a New Zealander, lately arrived here, and other men in the railway service were stepped over for this man's benefit. There was another appointment made at Cannington, and this gentleman also happens to come from New Zealand. These are singular instances, and go to prove that undue preference is given to people coming from New Zealand; and it is singular that these appointments, being made against the interests of other officers in the Service, have not been brought before the notice of this House previously. I will content myself by moving the motion standing in my name.

**THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS** (Hon. H. W. Venn): I did not think I should be called on, at this stage, to say anything whatever. I should have thought it would be better for the hon. member to have waited for the return he has asked for, and that he should also have examined the return placed on the table this evening, as asked for by the hon. member for the Gascoyne, and which contains all the information asked for in the present motion, except the appointments in the Railway and Traffic Departments, which it does not contain. I would ask the House whether it is the desire of hon. members that we should re-furnish, at a considerable expense, a duplicate of

the information that has been already laid on the table in another return, which embraces all the appointments on the Fremantle Harbour Works, except the ordinary workmen, and I can furnish that information also, if it is required. If the hon. member wishes for the appointments in the Railway Department, I can give him that information. However, as the hon. member has chosen to make an unwarrantable attack on an officer of the Government—

**MR. MOLLOY:** I rise to ask if the hon. gentleman is in order in saying I have made an unwarrantable attack.

**THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS** (Hon. H. W. Venn): I say unwarranted because the facts do not justify the strictures made upon that officer and upon his administration, by the hon. member. I regret that he should have taken exception to my using any terms, as being unparliamentary or improper. I have been a member of this House a number of years, and I do not think any member, or the Speaker himself, can recollect that I ever made use of expressions which any hon. member could take exception to. The expression was perfectly parliamentary and justifiable, under the circumstances. However, the hon. member states that the Engineer-in-Chief's administration is extravagant. But the hon. member is accusing the wrong man, for, instead of accusing the Engineer-in-Chief, he should direct his strictures against the Government, who are responsible for all the appointments made. I regretted to hear the hon. member say there is an undoubted preference shown by the Engineer-in-Chief for New Zealanders. I have heard that said all over the colony, and yet I say there is not the slightest foundation for it. There are only one or two appointments in reference to which the Engineer-in-Chief made recommendations of men that he absolutely knew; and it is only reasonable to suppose he would recommend men in whom he had most confidence. If he had come from Victoria, he would have recommended the appointment of Victorians as being men whom he knew and could trust; but as he came from New Zealand, it is only reasonable and right to suppose he would recommend men whom he had known in New Zealand. If, on the other hand, the

Government had known of men of equal ability whom they could appoint to these positions, they would have appointed them. But the Government did not know, at the time, of anyone in this colony or elsewhere, suitable for these positions, from a professional point of view. Hon. members may have an opinion on the point, as to the fitness of this or that person within their knowledge; but the Government did not know of any such qualified individuals, and I venture to say there have been no superior appointments made in which the known merits of any local man have been overlooked. Now, with regard to the appointment of New Zealanders, some time ago a noise was made about the preference alleged to be given to New Zealanders in the harbour works at Fremantle, and when I heard of it I sent down there at once to have a return prepared showing every individual employed and what places they came from. The Engineer-in-Chief knew nothing about the inquiry I was making. That information, when obtained, was published in the newspapers, and it showed, what was a notorious fact, that the New Zealanders, who were said to be so numerous, because of the preference shown to them, were really in a minority to an enormous extent. The return showed that the clamour which had been raised was altogether unfounded, that there were many more men from Victoria and the other colonies than from New Zealand, and that the latter were comparatively few. Now, with regard to the railways, I say the Engineer-in-Chief has nothing whatever to do with the railways, and has never shown any interest in any of the appointments made by the Government on the railways of the colony. The Engineer-in-Chief does not even know the names of many railway officers, and has to ask who they are when allusion is made to them in ordinary course; he does not at present know who is the stationmaster at Claremont or York; and if a man appointed at York or elsewhere happens to be a New Zealander, it is not because the Engineer-in-Chief has had anything to do with that appointment. When a place is to be filled, I do not ask a man where he comes from, so long as I am satisfied that we have not a man in the department capable of filling the position, and that the other man is

competent. When I first came into office I formulated a set of rules and regulations for the organisation of the railway service, and they have been strictly adhered to by me in dealing with all officers and servants. The pay is attached to the position and not to the individual who fills it, in all cases; and if that system were to be adopted throughout the Civil Service, there would not be the complaints that have been made at different times. In no case is a man in the Railway Service overlooked if he is suitable for any appointment which has to be made. Persons may have an idea that some particular friend or acquaintance is a wonderfully clever man, but it is for the department, which has had some experience of him, to judge whether he is suitable for a particular appointment. I know of no instance of a single man having been overlooked in the Railway Department since I have been Commissioner. It is improper to speak in this House of preference being shown to New Zealanders, and that persons living in the colony are overlooked in favour of persons coming from elsewhere. I say the statement is not borne out by facts, and when the hon member mentions the Engineer-in-Chief by name, in this connection, he does him the greatest possible injustice, because the railway appointments never come before him. The recommendations come from the General Traffic Manager directly to me as Commissioner, and Mr. O'Connor knows nothing about them. If he were asked he would give his opinion, but he is not asked. With reference to the question asked by the hon. member (Mr. Molloy), earlier in the evening, he says that in my reply I did not convey the information he wished to obtain. I understood his question about the appointment of an Engineer for Lines under Construction to mean the existing lines of railway; but there was no such appointment, even in the strict wording of the question. I can now see that the appointment he meant to refer to was that of Inspecting Engineer, for which officer a vote was passed in this House last session, and the Premier at that time explained what the salary was wanted for and what was intended to be done. The Inspecting Engineer was appointed to relieve Mr. O'Connor of



some of the immense amount of work which he has to do. Hon. members will know that every railway under construction has its resident engineer, and that there are supervisors for different works going on throughout the colony, whether a railway, or a bridge, or a building. The greatest possible strain is put on Mr. O'Connor, in having at all times to answer and deal with various important questions put before him by resident engineers in different parts of the colony, who would not undertake the responsibility of deciding what should be done in a particular case or circumstance which had to be dealt with by someone in authority. It is impossible for Mr. O'Connor to attend to the important duties in his office, and at the same time go travelling all over the colony to inspect works in progress and give directions in particular cases. He has appealed to the Government in the most emphatic manner for the assistance of a gentleman to act as Inspecting Engineer. He had the assistance previously of Mr. Griffin, who came from Victoria for a time, and returned to that colony; and in order to replace him a sum was placed on the Estimates last session, and voted by this House, for an Inspecting Engineer. That gentleman came to this colony lately, and his time has been fully occupied. During the last month he has been doing some work in connection with the harbour works at Fremantle, but his business will be to inspect the whole of the works under construction in all parts of the colony, and to deal with them as the Engineer-in-Chief would do if he could be spared from his duties in Perth. We cannot expect Mr. O'Connor, situated as he is, to be all over the colony; and the appointment of Mr. Bell as Inspecting Engineer will be of the greatest advantage to the colony. It is a matter for regret that, on account of the recent financial troubles, the Government were not able to undertake fresh works, and so be able to make greater use of Mr. Bell's services; but I am satisfied that his services will be utilised very well under present conditions, and it is an economy to the colony to have such an officer inspecting the works in progress. It is nonsense to say this officer was sent to Fremantle and employed there as a blind. That is not so. Previous to his

going to the harbour works at Fremantle, he was doing work in connection with the harbour works at Albany, looking after the dredging there. You may hear of him in a week or two, possibly at Yilgarn, and after that perhaps at Geraldton or Cossack, or wherever inspecting has to be done. I rose to say that an officer of the integrity and high standing of Mr. O'Connor should not be attacked in this way, but that any complaints should be made against the Government, who are responsible to this House and the country. In Mr. O'Connor we have not only a clever engineer, but a good and economical manager.

MR. A. FORREST: I think the hon. member did not intend to cast reflections upon Mr. O'Connor; far from it. What he intended to convey was that the Works and Railways Department is carried on at an extravagant rate that will ruin the country. It is the general belief outside, amongst financial men and men of business, that the public works and railways are carried on at such an extravagant rate that the end will soon come. We have only to travel up and down the railways, especially the new lines, to find stations and post offices and other buildings of the most extravagant description. You will find at the Serpentine a new public building put up, and it is already tumbling down, because it was built of timber not suitable, the timber being brought a long distance from the South to Perth, and then carted to the Serpentine, where jarrah, a better timber, is growing alongside. Firewood has also been brought a distance of 40 miles for the use of the station master at Jarrahdale. I am a supporter of the Government in their general policy, but when I see the way in which the works are carried on, it makes one say there must be a shingle short somewhere. We know that in Mr. O'Connor we have an able man, but we know also that the rate of expenditure now going on is astonishing. As to the appointments made, it is notorious that men from New Zealand have been put into all the good billets in the colony. The recent appointment of Mr. Dillon Bell, though sanctioned by this House last session, could very well have been stopped, the same as other expenditure was stopped, when the Government found that money was getting short;

yet the same staff are kept going, and new men being appointed. As I told the head of the Department, he must look at things himself, and not trust to his subordinates; that he should look at every shilling going out. If you go along the South-Western Railway you will see at Pinjarrah a station and station yards built on a scale for a large population; and at other places along that line stations are built where there are no houses near the line. You go to the Canning and will see a beautiful house built for the station master, large sheds for engines, and a big goods shed, although there are no people there, and not likely to be for many a year. When the annual Estimates come on I intend to speak further on the subject. I support the hon. member's motion.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I wish that when the Estimates were before the House last session the hon. member for West Kimberley had expressed the same views as he has expressed to-night, for had he been of his present mind on that occasion he would have voted with me against the appointment of an Inspecting Engineer, and the item might have been rejected. I do not think it is fair to blame the head of the Works Department or even the Minister for the extravagance exercised, and no doubt there has been a great deal of extravagance in expending public funds on unnecessary works brought forward and sanctioned by members in this House. Had hon. members put their foot down when the Loan Estimates were on last session, this extravagance might have been checked; but I had to fight item by item, almost alone. Now that depression has come, I think it is unfair to accuse the Government of extravagance, which members of this House encouraged by voting extraordinary amounts for different works asked for by members or their constituents. All we have to do is to look round the public buildings in Perth, some in course of construction, others at a standstill. The Government Printing Office is at a standstill for want of girders, which ought to have been in the colony almost as soon as the contract was let. That building has cost a large sum, and may cost much more in compensation to the contractor for the Government not supplying the material required. Then look

at the new addition to the Government Offices, which must have cost thousands of pounds in ornamentation. Extending along the different railways of the colony, works and magnificent buildings are put up where small buildings would suffice. This is where the money has been squandered—by whom? By the Government, with the consent of members of this House. The members are to blame. This House sanctioned the expenditure on public buildings on town-sites along the Great Southern Railway, and buildings all over the place. There are no facts before us, and I am not prepared to accuse Mr. O'Connor of partiality, or any other person. There is to be a Commission for inquiring into the working of the Civil Service, and when we get the report we may be able to form an opinion whether partiality has been shown or not. I have been informed that Mr. O'Connor is not a man of very great extravagance; that he endeavours to economise to the best of his ability; but this, again, is only hearsay. I think that the best course for us, before attacking any individual, is to await the report of this Commission. The hon. member, in asking for this return, will do good to the country, for by it we shall be able to form an opinion as to whether extravagance is exercised by the Government or not.

MR. SIMPSON: I have always adopted the attitude in this House of endeavouring to support any member who seeks information as to the administration of the affairs of this colony, and I am glad to have the opportunity of assisting the member for Central Perth to obtain the return he seeks. But I do think that if we are to be manly and go to the root of the business it is not Mr. O'Connor, the professional adviser of the Government, we should attack, but the Director of Public Works. The Engineer-in-Chief says to the political head of his department, "Such a work will cost so much;" and if the political head agrees to that, the man we should go for is the political head. So far as I know the services Mr. O'Connor has rendered to this country, we have found him capable and accomplished; and there is no single fact before the public of this colony to-day to show that he is extravagant. I have different ideas about the

Director of Public Works. I believe he is extravagant. I believe the Works Department has grown beyond the control of the Director, and I believe the Engineer-in-Chief imagines our revenue is five or six millions a year, instead of £600,000. The responsibility for that rests on the political head of the department. I do not think that the capable gentleman at the head of our professional staff in the department has ever sought his personal advantage or the advantage of his friends, in any appointment he has made. I have seen works going on throughout this colony, and I say the gravest extravagance I have seen in the Works Department was the result of the ideas of officers who were here long before the Engineer-in-Chief came to this colony. I speak with information and exact knowledge. I do think our Works Department has grown beyond the requirements of the colony. There is no doubt we are building the cheapest railways in the world—I think that goes without question, and I am speaking as to their construction, though as to whether they will pay to work, the responsibility for that will depend on the results. With regard to the professional staff of this colony, I believe they have saved money to the country. Looking at it in another light, and speaking with reference to the influences which surround the Director of Public Works, I do think he has allowed undue pressure to be brought to bear on him in making professional appointments. I do think pounds have been spent that will not return to us working expenses, nor the interest we have to pay to the British money-lender. I think that if we want to get valuable public works constructed, we should support our professional staff, and recognise the principle that the members of the staff should be entirely disassociated from the political head.

MR. RICHARDSON: We seem to have drifted from the question of granting the return moved for, and gone into an attack on the professional head of the Works Department. It does not show a manly sentiment for the hon. member, under what may be called privilege, to attack a professional man whose mouth is closed. When we attack the political head of the Works Department, he is here to answer and we may be called on

to prove our words; but to attack the Engineer-in-Chief and his administration, and make him answerable for all the extravagance of the Works Department, is neither manly nor fair, nor does it show that consideration which one man should extend to another. If the Engineer-in-Chief is called to the bar of this House, to answer for his deeds, it may be found he is quite able to defend himself, and some of us might come off only second best. I do not think it is a fair way of approaching this subject, to move for a return, and then make an attack on the professional head of the department. If you have anything to say against the extravagance of the Works Department—and possibly there is truth in much of the complaint, and a good deal that is not true, and which can be well defended—if, as is commonly assumed, there is extravagance in much of the expenditure, then it is for the political head of the department to defend it, and I trust he will be able to do it. But, as the Commissioner has said, I do not think the Engineer-in-Chief is the right man to attack, in this instance.

MR. CANNING: I think the return asked for will furnish material for discussion, later on. As to whether the hon. member is justified in the course he has taken, on this motion, I think it is right that he should express his opinion with regard to a question affecting the public generally, and that no great exception can be taken to the remarks which the hon. member has made. It is for members of this House to exercise a close supervision over matters of public concern, and I think considerable latitude is allowed to members generally in dealing with such questions. After these papers have been laid on the table, I shall have an opportunity of speaking distinctly on this question of extravagance, if it should appear there has been extravagance in dealing with public moneys in connection with public works.

MR. QUINLAN: My attention has been called to the same subject; but in view of the fact that the appointment of a commission to investigate the Civil Service has been agreed to, I do not think any good purpose can be served by furnishing the return asked for. The return already obtained by the hon. member for the Gascoyne will furnish the main infor-

mation required by the hon. member who is now moving for this further return. I have been asked to move in this direction myself, but knowing this commission was agreed upon by the Government, I think it should suffice. I think it my duty to say there have been charges made against one gentleman in the Works Department, but seeing that a commission is to inquire into the whole service, and that the Commissioner of Railways has accepted the responsibility for what has been done, I think the hon. member would do well to withdraw the motion. I admit there has been some lavishness of expenditure on some of the Loan works, in the instances to which the hon. member for Kimberley has referred; in fact the first station one sees on the South-Western Railway seems too elaborate for the number of population in that locality. I go so far as to say that, notwithstanding all the professional knowledge of the Engineer-in-Chief, he has placed that station on the wrong side of the line, and it is awkwardly situated for those who reside in the locality at present. The appointment of persons imported into the colony has not given satisfaction, and if professional men are not obtainable here in plenty, there have been other appointments in respect to which there was a choice of qualified persons here. The one point I find fault with, in the administration of the Government, is that in making appointments they have not sufficiently considered the claims and capabilities of persons who have been many years in the colony. That is the only fault I find.

MR. CLARKSON: I regret to hear such serious charges brought against the Engineer-in-Chief by the hon. member for Perth. I think the Government are particularly fortunate in having obtained the services of such an able professional man. I am not prepared to say he is not a little extravagant in some of his ideas, but I still think we are fortunate in having him. The Railway Department, in particular, has grown beyond the Commissioner's ability to manage economically. I was told the other day, by a gentleman who is in a position to know, that the cost of working the Government railways is more than double the cost of working the Great Southern Railway. Why should this be so? I frequently hear complaints, even from those em-

ployed on the railway, that they are overmanned altogether, that there are too many employes in the Government service in the Railway Department. In these bad times, we should try to cut down the expenditure in every possible way. We read, in telegrams from the other colonies, that they are reducing the cost of their Civil Service in every possible way. I believe there is extravagance in the railway service here, but I am content to abide the result of the inquiry which a Commission is to make, and it would be well to defer further remarks until that report is before the House.

MR. COOKWORTHY: It appears to me that several members of this House have been holding forth on the extravagance of the Engineer-in-Chief, and doing so without any data whatever. It is possible that expensive works have been carried out, but I believe that when these returns are studied, and when we have also the report of the Civil Service Commission, we will find that the Engineer-in-Chief has done his work in an economical manner. It has been said there is extravagance in the building of large stations on the South-Western Railway, but under a former Government an economical station was built in Perth; and, when the Governor was laying the foundation stone, remarks were made that too much land had been taken for the station, and there would be so little traffic that some of the land should be sold. Accordingly, the land adjoining the station was sold; and the result has been that the present Government have been put to a great expense in having to purchase more land for enlarging the station accommodation. Before we condemn either the Government or the Engineer-in-Chief, we ought to be acquainted with all the facts.

The PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I should like to remind hon. members that railway construction is a very expensive matter. We know that, in all our railway contracts let up to the present, every member of this House has said they have been let very cheaply. Take the Bunbury and Yilgarn Railways, for example. It was considered that those contracts were let at very economical prices; and that being so, and as the station buildings are included in the contracts, if those buildings are a little in

advance of present requirements, we are not only not paying more for those railways than we expected to do, but we are getting a better class of station buildings for a less price than we should have to pay for poor buildings under the former rates paid for railway construction. I think that previously we have paid more for station buildings in this colony, and they were not so good, nor was the construction work better at the higher price than the work being done now. I am aware there is a feeling that there are too many persons employed in the offices of the Public Works Department; but if we admit, for the sake of argument, that there are more persons employed than are absolutely necessary, that is not the item which is absorbing the money. Thirty or forty men at £150 to £200 a year each, may be an extravagant number, but the money really goes in the large sums paid out of the Treasury month by month as progress payments for work done by contractors who are executing the large works of the colony. Referring to what the member for the Gascayne said about hon. members standing by instead of helping him to reduce some of the items in the Loan Estimates, I say that if the hon. member had got all the House to go with him, he could not have done much in that direction, for the whole of the salaries on the Loan Estimates amounted to only about £13,000, and although that is a considerable sum, yet in dealing with large public works the money goes mainly in paying large sums of £10,000 a month on a contractor's schedule for work done, and which claims the Treasurer has to meet. There was no Works Department when the present Government came into office; half a dozen persons constituted the whole staff; everybody in the country was crying out for public works to be started, and for others to be finished as soon as possible; every member of this House was urging forward the works in which he was particularly interested; and under this pressure the Government were bound to get a large staff, in order to have the works executed rapidly. I was one of the principal sinners, for I was determined to push on the works, in order to attract more people to come here and give the colony a stimulus; and, having got them here, I hope we shall be able to keep them here, by maintaining

the country in a prosperous condition. I have tried to urge on these works by every means in my power, while we were giving the colony a start; and that has necessitated a large expenditure in the employment of draftsmen and other professional men, to get out the plans and to let the works by tender. These preliminary labours are over, and the Director of Public Works will now tell you I have latterly been urging him just as strongly to reduce the temporary men on the professional staff, because the principal works have been let for construction, and we can dispense with a great many of the employés. In fact, during the next two or three months the Director of Public Works will dispense with the services of a great number. When they are discharged, I shall be sorry that we have no further employment for them, and they will have to do the best they can for themselves; but the country cannot be expected to pay them unless it requires their services. So that when you examine closely into this cry about great extravagance, you will find that these extra men were required to get out the contracts for large public works which were wanted urgently by the country, and that their temporary services are now being dispensed with. I am sorry that this matter has come before the House to-day in the shape it has done. I find no fault with the hon. member for bringing it forward, in any shape, but it has come rather as a surprise. I was not prepared to meet it, but I think the discussion has had this effect, that hon. members will not agree in saying very much against the Engineer-in-Chief. I have often said to my friends that it was fortunate for the colony that we obtained a professional man with the grasp of our Engineer-in-Chief, to deal with our large undertakings and carry them out. I know he wants to do things well, that he is a man of great integrity and ability, and I do not think he is extravagant. It is fortunate we have such a man, because it is on his professional recommendation we have to act, and we cannot, to a great extent, go against his recommendations, because he has a practical knowledge of what is exactly required. I think he is a most excellent officer, in every way reliable, and a man of great ability. I hope this motion will now be allowed to

pass. There is nothing in it we object to; but if any hon. member has anything to say against the Administration, let him put it in the form of a definite motion, so that we may be enabled to meet it.

Question put and passed.

#### CHARGES BY MAIL CONTRACTORS FOR CONVEYANCE OF PASSENGERS AND PARCELS.

MR. LEFROY, in accordance with notice, moved, "That in the opinion of this House, in the conditions of all future inland mail contracts, provision should be made for limiting the charges made by mail contractors for the conveyance of passengers and parcels." He said: This motion speaks for itself. There is nothing unreasonable in it; and my reason for bringing it before the House is that I have seen, on different occasions, mail contractors who have been subsidised by the Government charging considerably more for the conveyance of passengers and parcels than the public consider is reasonable. When a contractor is subsidised by the Government for carrying mails, I think the Government should be able to limit the charges he may levy for conveying passengers and parcels; because we all know that competition is necessary to keep down prices, and as the mail drivers obtain a practical monopoly over their mail routes, competition does not exist, and the driver may charge what he likes. I hope the House will recognise the reasonableness of keeping the charges within certain limits, and that the Government will accept my motion.

MR. PATERSON formally seconded the motion.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): I do not think there will be any difficulty in meeting the views of the hon. member, in regard to future mail services. There is a great deal in what the hon. member says. Of course, under ordinary circumstances, competition should be a sufficient check; but I am aware that in many parts of the colony mail carriers have a monopoly of the way, and can charge as they think fit. I do not think that a limit to the charges will press unduly upon those who tender for carrying mails, if they be asked to fix a charge for passengers and parcels, at the time of sending in their tenders for carrying mails. They will be able to fix such a

charge as will be sufficiently remunerative. I think I may promise, on behalf of the Government, that the Postmaster General will be instructed to have this provision inserted in any future mail contracts, where the mails are carried by coaches, if the House approves of the motion.

MR. PATERSON: Some years ago we, in the Murray district, called attention to these charges, in reference to the mail running southward, and the Government at once made an arrangement with the contractor. I think that if the hon. member had called the attention of the Postmaster General to the matter in relation to his district, it would have been attended to long ago.

MR. LEFROY: I thank the Premier for supporting this motion. I may mention that I had already spoken to the Postmaster General on the subject, and he thought it would be better for the Minister to be armed with a general power, rather than that it should be left to him to act on his own responsibility. I know of certain cases where a charge of sixpence per mile for passengers has been imposed on one of the best roads in the colony; so I think it is time we did move in the matter. Many of the public find fault with the charges, and I have heard of men declaring that, if they were able to walk the distance, they would do so rather than pay the sixpence a mile charged by the mail driver.

Motion put and passed.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 7:36 p.m.