

Legislative Assembly.

Monday, 27th November, 1899.

Paper Presented.—Motion: Leave of Absence—Motion: Standing Orders Suspension, to expedite Business—Appropriation Bill, first reading—Subiaco Tramways Bill, third reading—Cemeteries Bill, Legislative Council's Amendment—Loan Bill, £750,000, second reading, debate (continued), Amendment; adjourned—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: Third Annual Report of Acclimatisation Committee.

Ordered to lie on the table.

MOTION—LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by the PREMIER, leave of absence for the remainder of the session was granted to the member for the DeGrey (Mr. Hooley), on the ground of urgent private business.

MOTION—STANDING ORDERS, SUSPENSION.

TO EXPEDITE BUSINESS.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) moved:

That in order to expedite business the Standing Orders relating to the passing of public Bills and the consideration of Messages from the Legislative Council be suspended during the remainder of the session.

In moving this motion the object was to expedite public business, and not to rush through any Bill which hon. members might take exception to. He could assure hon. members that, if further consideration was desired with regard to any measure, he would be glad to assist them to obtain it.

Question put and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL.

The resolution passed in Committee of Ways and Means (annual Estimates) having been adopted,

The Appropriation Bill (giving statutory effect to resolutions on Estimates) was introduced by the PREMIER and read a first time.

SUBIACO TRAMWAYS BILL.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

CEMETERIES BILL.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL'S AMENDMENT.

New clause, added by the Legislative Council, considered.

IN COMMITTEE.

On motion by the ATTORNEY GENERAL the Council's amendment agreed to.

Resolution reported, and the report adopted.

LOAN BILL, £750,000.

SECOND READING (continued)—AMENDMENT.

Debate resumed from 24th November, on motion for second reading, and on amendment by Mr. Leake (six months).

MR. QUINLAN (Toodyay): Before I speak on the Bill, may I be permitted to ask the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) if he intends to proceed with his amendment that the Bill be read this day six months. It would, I think, facilitate matters if the amendment were withdrawn, and we dealt with the items in Committee.

THE SPEAKER: I think that is rather an unusual question to ask.

MR. QUINLAN: I ask the question by request, but the member for Albany does not seem disposed to answer.

THE PREMIER: It would save time if the member for Albany were to withdraw his amendment.

MR. LEAKE (Albany): If the question be put seriously, I can only say that questions of the kind are only replied to by me when they come from the proper quarter.

THE PREMIER: But I cannot speak now.

MR. QUINLAN: To proceed with the question before the House, I desire to say I intend to support the Bill, and deal with the items when they come before us in Committee. So far as a couple of the items are concerned, I require some information and evidence to convince me as to the necessity for the railways therein contemplated at an expenditure of £310,000. In stating that amount, I am aware it is the total cost; whereas in the Bill the total sum is not set forth, but only the amount now proposed to be expended. That will reduce the total liability to a little over £1,000,000, instead of committing us, as under the Bill, to £1,500,000. As to the construc-

tion of the Goomalling and Leonora railways, I am certainly in accord with the proposal. I expressed myself so when the Leonora line was introduced; and I have seen no reason to alter my opinion, because from information I have been able to gather I am satisfied the line is fully warranted. There is no line in the schedule to be compared to the Goomalling line, in so far as it will be the means of settling a great number of people on the route; indeed, as may be seen by the maps which have been placed before hon. members, a considerable amount of settlement has taken place since the promise by the Commissioner of Lands two or three years ago that such a railway would be constructed. A strong point in favour of this line is its cheap construction, as will be seen by reference to the engineer's report, because there will be no land to purchase, and old rails now idle can be utilised in the construction. When I say that no land need be purchased, I refer particularly to land between Northam and the terminus of the line, because I dare say land taken in the town will have to be in some measure compensated for. I am, however, in a position to state that other land required will be given free by the settlers; and in support of the construction of this line, I hold in my hand a petition, which I dare not read at this stage, but which I shall have much pleasure in laying before hon. members when we are considering the items in Committee. Wherever there is any likelihood of agricultural railways paying indirectly, as I am confident this line will pay, the construction of such railways is fully justified.

MR. ROBSON: The policy of the Government is to construct lines where they will pay directly.

MR. QUINLAN: But this line will give many advantages in comparison with other lines, and will, as I say, pay indirectly. I do not pose as an authority, as did the member for Albany, when he wrote to the chairman of the Goomalling Railway League, and told him the line would not be constructed. The member for Albany then assumed the position of Premier, whereas I for the moment have merely asked a question at the Premier's request. I do not admit the authority of the member for Albany on such a measure, and I do not

think his action in entering on a threshold where he had no title, has had any good effect, but rather has detracted from whatever good name he had in the past as a politician.

MR. LEAKE: Is this sarcasm?

MR. QUINLAN: I know that the question of the Greenhills railway will be raised, and I regret to say that, according to my information, that line does not pay. But that is no criterion of the likelihood of this Goomalling line paying, because of the difference there is so far as settlement is concerned. I am assured that if this line be not constructed, there will be forfeitures of land, which will have the effect of decreasing the population there considerably. Although there are settlers who have been in the district for the last 40 years, and whose holdings are upwards of 30 or 40 miles from any railway, the new settlers have determined, if the line be not constructed, to make a move; and such a result would be detrimental not only to the district, but to the colony generally. In regard to the Treasury bills at 5 per cent., I must confess that is a very high rate, and it is to be regretted that the Government have been forced to raise money at such a price when private individuals are able to borrow at $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 per cent. The question of population has been raised during the debate, and I hardly think anyone is warranted in saying the population will remain at a standstill. This argument has been raised in opposition to the Bill; and it has been said, looking at the population of the colony and the amount of indebtedness per head, that we should not further increase the debt of the colony. I hope hon. members will not go as far in their statements as the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) or the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), who spoke in such dismal tones a few evenings ago, did; both those members stating that we are to stand still or must retrace our steps, so to speak. There is no cause whatever for such statements to emanate from members of this House. The member for East Coolgardie has at all times in the past shown confidence in the resources of the country; he has rather been hopeful in his utterances in this House, and it appears strange that such a change should take place in him. I hope the disease will not be caught

by other hon. members. As to the guarantee for the repayment of the loans already raised, to which we will add the amount now proposed by this Bill, I think if hon. members reflect for a moment they will see that at least in two of our mines alone—even in one, however we will say in two mines alone—we have an asset of the value of the whole of the loans which have already been raised, together with the amount now proposed to be raised. That in itself is a sufficient guarantee at least that we ought not to be afraid of raising money for the development of the resources of the colony, especially when we know, or believe, that the construction of the lines proposed will be carried out cheaper than the railway lines have been constructed in the past. It has been argued that the Goomalling railway—and the member for Albany (Mr. Leake) particularly referred to this—was to be constructed out of revenue. I do not think that is any argument against the construction of this line out of loan money now. When the Premier proposed to construct the line out of revenue, the revenue of the colony was greater by £50,000 than it is now, but owing to the reduction of the food duties the revenue has lost at least £50,000 a year; therefore I contend if this line and the Leonora line are warranted, we are justified in constructing them out of loan money. These lines will be permanent works, and considering what has been done since we have had responsible government, we can rest assured that we shall not be burdening those who will come after us with any great debt by carrying out good and lasting works for this country. Reference has been made, and rightly so, to the increased debt per head the people will be burdened with by the additional amount proposed in this Bill. We are told that our liability will be equal to about £80 per head.

THE PREMIER: Nothing of the sort.

MR. QUINLAN: When the amount proposed by this Bill has been raised. But, as I said before, I do not think the population is likely to stand still, and I have that confidence in the future of the country to believe that there will be an influx of people here before long. We have had two years of actual depression.

MR. MITCHELL: And grumbling.

MR. QUINLAN: And I venture to say that to-day the colony is in a sounder position; business generally is sounder, all the kite-flying is practically a thing of the past, and I am justified in saying that business is settled in a better position, so that we shall be advancing the interests of the country by constructing railways and other necessary works. I know a great deal of hardship has existed, and I have knowledge of that fact; but that hardship has been brought about by various means, principally, in my opinion, by the banking institutions of the colony, which were referred to by the member for York (Mr. Monger) in submitting his motion the other evening. I attribute a great deal of the depression to the sudden calling in of money by the banking institutions, and I know I am right in saying that, because a friend of mine was shown a document by his banker who told this gentleman, who is one of the most substantial men in the colony, and who offered ample security to the bank, "These are my instructions: I cannot make further advances to you." That particular bank was referred to the other evening, and I hope will not be forgotten, for we have very little to hope for from that institution in this country. In respect of the expenditure on public batteries and the railway workshops, I am entirely in accord with the proposals. The establishment of public batteries in mining townships has already done good. There may be one or two instances in which batteries are not directly paying, but they give facilities to the poorer class of miners and those who have small quantities of ore to crush; so that I think this expenditure is fully justified, and I shall support it, believing that it will be for the general welfare of the country. I am glad indeed to know that it is proposed to expend a sum of money in building the workshops at Midland Junction, and that it is intended to take some real action in regard to this necessary work. The removal of the workshops was recommended some years ago, but for various reasons the work has been delayed. The removal is justly warranted, seeing the immense railway mileage we have, remembering also that the Government secured, some years ago, a valuable position for these shops. Generally, I intend to support the Loan Bill, and

although the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) the other evening stated that, in his opinion, some members would be influenced by the lines of railway which were to be constructed through their districts, or by works which were to be constructed in the various districts, I need scarcely tell hon. members that so far as I am concerned, if I thought for a moment that either the Leonora or the Goomalling railway was not justified, I should not vote for it. I feel quite as much responsibility as any member in this House, or any person in this country, in regard to these matters, and I am largely concerned, as is well-known, and have good reason to speak feelingly, because I shall be one of the greatest sufferers if we committed ourselves to expenditure which is not justified. I am satisfied to support the Loan Bill, and I hope that a reasonable view will be taken by hon. members of the various items. Although I do not promise to support every item in the Bill, I trust members will take a fair view, and support those items which they believe to be for the general welfare of the colony.

MR. ROBSON (Geraldton): In supporting the amendment proposed by the member for Albany (Mr. Leake), I know full well that it is practically a motion of no-confidence in the present Government. I am taking what I consider to be a serious step; therefore I wish to lay clearly before the House my reasons for doing so, more particularly as I occupy the position of an independent member in this House. I may take some time in going into the details of the Bill, knowing as I do that in the event of the measure passing the second reading and going into Committee, the chance of striking out any item will be gone, because once the Bill goes into Committee it becomes, in my short experience of parliamentary life, a scramble for the "loaves and fishes."

THE PREMIER: Question?

MR. ROBSON: Therefore I take this opportunity of supporting the amendment. In the first place, I may say the present Ministry came into power some years ago on a public works policy; on a public works policy they have remained in power; and judging by the manner in which this Bill has been drawn up, by a public works policy they hope to remain

in power. It would not be a bad thing for the country if we had a change of Government, and it would not be a bad thing for Ministers themselves. After having listened to the financial statements made by the Premier and the reply of the leader of the Opposition, I think any reasonable man cannot help coming to the conclusion that the debt per head of the population is growing somewhat too great. We are told that we have only 170,000 people in the colony, and that each person is carrying a load of something like £80. Should that not make us pause and look around before we go on increasing the debt? We are told that much of the debt has been spent on reproductive works, and that we should not include the amount spent on railways in the public debt, because the railways are paying the interest on the money expended on their construction. When one analyses the balance-sheets placed before the House by the Commissioner of Railways, it appears that only one line is paying, and according to the hon. member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes), who the other night carefully and critically analysed the railway balance-sheets—I think very few business men will not agree with him—none of the railway lines are paying, but that the balance-sheets have been made fictitious ones.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: That is not true.

MR. ROBSON: The balance-sheets of the railways have practically been "faked up," for had the Government carried out the necessary works on the railways, had they spent money on the general upkeep of the railways, and in buying railway rolling-stock, and in repairing the rolling-stock, the railways would have shown an absolute loss. To go back to the loan policy of the country, what do we find? The bulk of the loan money expended in the colony during the last few years has had a natural tendency to centralise in Perth to keep up the capital; and looking at it from that point of view, it is perhaps to be expected the people of the capital, and the members representing the capital and the surrounding districts, will assist the Government in furthering a new loan policy in order that more profit may be attracted to and more money expended in the great centre of this

colony. But I contend it is radically wrong in this country to attempt by a loan policy to "boost" up, and boom up the capital in this manner: I contend it is better to develop the country in a more gradual and legitimate way than by the expenditure of large sums of loan money, of which money that portion given to working men is largely spent in the capital. I should like to ask the Premier what caused the late slump, the recent depression, in this colony? Surely we cannot put it down to the decrease in our gold returns, for they have increased; we cannot put it down to depression in the agricultural or in the pastoral industry, for these are, I take it, more prosperous to-day than they have been for many years. I take it we have to thank the present Government for that depression which has swept over this colony during the last two or three years. We have to trace it back, in the first place, to their over-borrowing, and secondly to the corner in which they find themselves, to their lack of credit on the London market, and to the stoppage of their borrowing powers. I place entirely on the head of the Administration of this colony the whole blame for the recent slump in business during the last two or three years.

THE PREMIER: Oh! That is a very safe statement!

MR. ROBSON: Quite right. I am pleased to see the present state of affairs. It was gratifying to find that the Premier, a year or two ago, had bottomed, had found his true position; and, having got him there, I hope we shall keep him there. But he is crowing again: he has begun to flap his feathers once more, and he wants to go ahead again on the road he has travelled for so many years; but having got him down, and got the colony down to bed-rock, and all our industries down to bed-rock, I say, so far as the loan policy at the present time is concerned, let us keep it there: let our rise be gradual; let our industries speak for themselves; and let the commerce and prosperity of the country advance naturally, instead of being boomed by loans. The right hon. gentleman the other night gave us a quotation which I do not exactly remember, but which was to the effect that where a carcase was there the carrion did come round and fatten. It is

true it was a most inapt quotation from his point of view; for as sure as ever he goes on borrowing and loading up this country with debt, this country will die, and the carrion crows will fly from all parts of the world to fatten on it; and what do they care for the carcase? Nothing. The Premier knows as well as I do that there is a class of people who follow up the new countries of the world, who rush to all countries where there is a public works policy carried out with borrowed money. It is immaterial whether that country be Australia, China, or South America—they follow it up. As long as the Government can borrow money to spend on railways or waterworks, or whatever it may be, those people rush to share the spoil; and the Premier knows that they clamour for votes as soon as they come here: they get into Government billets and clamour, clamour, clamour; and their sole object is to keep the boom going as long as it will pay, and as long as the Premier can borrow money; but once the Premier has to bring in a policy of retrenchment and reform, and dispenses with the services of these men when his loans and his works are done, the same as an ordinary contractor, these men are the first to turn on him and to hound him down; and if they succeed, and put in another Ministry who will borrow, well and good; but if they do not, they are off to Chicago or Japan—which country they go to is to them immaterial. The Premier knows that full well; but it will not do him any harm to hear it from the independent benches of this House. As I have said, I shall not wait for the committee stage of this Bill before dealing with the items in the schedule. I say that with all due deference to the Premier, because I have a sincere hope that the items will never get to that stage; and if they do, my arguments will, I believe, be fruitless. I shall therefore go on to deal with some of the items. I admit there are items in this Bill which, if the country is in a sound financial position, I shall be prepared to support when I have a clear statement of the financial position of the country placed before me. The first item is "Albany, £10,000." The Premier has already informed us that this money has been spent; therefore it is useless to deal with the item.

THE PREMIER: No. About £3,000 has been spent.

MR. ROBSON: Oh, well, then you are spending in an unauthorised manner.

THE PREMIER: No, no!

MR. ROBSON: The next item is "Bunbury." After a visit to Bunbury with the right hon. gentleman the other day, I admit that further work is necessary at the Bunbury harbour, and in connection with the jetty; but still that is a question of ways and means. Works in other districts may have to be tied up for some time before they can be adequately completed; but certainly I admit that the industries of Bunbury justify more berthage at the jetty, and if ways and means are found, I shall be pleased to support the item. We come next to two items, Busselton and Carnarvon—harbour works, jetties, approaches, etc., £4,000 and £5,000 respectively. It seems to me these are very small and paltry items to put in a Loan Bill. I believe there are other items of greater moment which are covered up as "departmental" and "development generally"; but probably it suits the right hon. gentleman to enumerate these two items for the benefit of the members for those constituencies: it looks well; it may assist in passing this Bill through the House.

THE PREMIER: Carnarvon jetty was built out of loan.

MR. ROBSON: The Fremantle harbour works undoubtedly require to be proceeded with; but I do not think their immediate completion is absolutely a matter of vital importance; and I think they might be hung up for some little while pending a clear financial statement regarding the loan policy.

MR. MORGANS: What will the Fremantle members say to that?

MR. ROBSON: I have already given it as my opinion that once these items get into Committee there is a scramble for the "loaves and fishes"; therefore I take this opportunity on the second reading to oppose the whole Bill. We will deal with the loaves and fishes by and by.

MR. MORGANS: It would be interesting to watch the direction of the scramble.

THE SPEAKER: Order!

MR. ROBSON: We pass on to the railways; and here we come to the most important and the heaviest items in this

Bill; at all events, they are like a red rag to a bull as far as I am concerned.

THE PREMIER: Especially the Leonora line!

MR. ROBSON: Exactly: we shall deal with that presently. We have "Additions and improvements to open lines, construction, £65,000." I take it this item is intended largely for the relaying of rails on the Kalgoorlie line; if I am wrong probably the Commissioner of Railways will correct me. That work is mentioned in the Railway Report as absolutely necessary. The Boulder railway extension has been most admirably advocated by an hon. member who sits on the Government side of the House, and who seconded the amendment of the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake). I think it needless for me to deal with that item. As regards the Coolgardie to Bonnie Vale railway, £10,000, it seems to me, after reading this elaborate report, that the only justification for that line is that the Coolgardie racecourse is some two miles along the track; but it is a fair proposition to ask the people of Coolgardie to drive that two miles once a year, without making this country expend £20,000 to build a railway to a racecourse. It may be that the hon. member who so strongly advocates this proposition has other interests further along the line; but as regards this proposal for the railway from Coolgardie to Bonnie Vale, signed by "John Muir, Inspector of Engineering Survey," of which we have a plan here, this report fails to show to my mind any justification for the building of this line. The report, I admit, includes a plan of the racecourse; but, as I say, that establishment is only two miles from Coolgardie, and surely the people of Coolgardie can either drive to their racecourse or shift their racecourse so as to bring it near to the existing line to Coolgardie. It would be much better to give them another piece of ground on that line, and turn the existing site into a tank or dam or something else, than spend £20,000 in building that railway. After reading that report I must say there is absolutely no justification for the building of the Bonnie Vale railway, and unless I hear something further in Committee I shall oppose the project. Then we come to the Coolgardie-Norseman line.

THE PREMIER: What about the Leonora line?

MR. ROBSON: I am taking the items as they stand in the schedule. In opposing this item, as I intended to do, I regret that I shall have to oppose any measure brought forward by my colleague on this side of the House, or any measure likely to be supported by him. I refer to the member for Esperance and Dundas (Mr. Conolly). Holding as he does this unfortunate dual position, I cannot help opposing that hon. member at present, and looking on him as member for Norseman. Were he advocating this Bill or a proper Bill as the member for Esperance, I have no doubt he would have my hearty support.

THE PREMIER: You believe in a railway from Esperance to Norseman?

MR. ROBSON: I do.

THE PREMIER: Then you are not afraid to borrow some money?

MR. ROBSON: I believe in it, provided the funds are there. In my opposition to these lines I am not opposing the hon. member in matters of finance. I am going further; I am taking what I consider a broader view; I am considering the question of policy.

THE PREMIER: You have never been to that district.

MR. ROBSON: Perhaps not; but you have never been to Lawlers either. I will deal with that point directly.

THE PREMIER: You will lose yourself amongst your papers.

MR. ROBSON: No; I have found the bit of paper I wanted. The Premier says I will lose myself amongst my papers. I have found this bit of paper, and I am going to give the Premier the benefit of it. When I contested my seat some few months ago, the Premier placed himself in communication with me; and though I did not carry on much correspondence with him, I told him that one of the things I would try to do when I came into this House would be to educate him—[A MEMBER: To what?—]—and on questions of geographical policy and of broad policy, I shall try to educate the Premier now.

MR. WOOD: You have undertaken a large order.

MR. ROBSON: There are none so blind as those who will not see. I wish, in dealing with this Norseman railway

and with the Leonora railway, to take as a starting point and as a basis the proposition that trade always follows the shortest and cheapest route, unless there be other and more weighty interests to be considered. In dealing with geographical facts and actual distances, I wish also to lay down this axiom, that a sea route makes very little difference, if any, in the cost of transport. I think the right hon. gentleman will concede me that point.

THE PREMIER: Oh, yes.

MR. ROBSON: Another thing is that with increased trade at the ports of Esperance and Geraldton, a better steamboat service along the coast will follow, which will naturally reduce the cost in relation to the question of freights. I think the Premier will concede that.

THE PREMIER: It is a good service now, I think.

MR. ROBSON: It will be better by and by, when you let us have the trade. As far as the Norseman line is concerned, the distance set out in the schedule is 108 miles from Coolgardie to Norseman, and the estimated cost of the railway is £290,000. At present a first instalment of £60,000 is asked for, and also I think a portion of that £100,000 for rails and fastenings.

THE PREMIER: How about rolling-stock?

MR. ROBSON: As to rolling-stock, £165,000 is a mere drop in the ocean for what you require. You cannot supply the existing lines with rolling-stock, to say nothing of future lines. I have been asking the Commissioner for a long time to give me two new cars in my district, and he has failed to do so.

THE PREMIER: You want to sleep in the day time, do you?

MR. ROBSON: No; they do not want to sleep in the day time: they want to keep their eye on you and see what you are doing. The right hon. gentleman does not like the arguments.

THE PREMIER: I do not mind them at all.

MR. ROBSON: He cannot resist interjecting, and he tries to draw a red-herring across the track, but I will merely proceed with what I am saying and take no notice of his interjections. If he gets unruly by and by, I shall have to ask the Speaker to keep him in order.

The Government are asking for the construction of 108 miles of railway, from Coolgardie to Norseman. The Lands Office supplied me with figures relating to 125 miles from Esperance to Norseman by the ordinary route. Probably the hon. member for Esperance (Mr. Conolly) will correct me if I am wrong. I want to point out that in asking this House to grant the construction of 108 miles of railway from Coolgardie to Norseman as against 125 from Esperance to Norseman, the Government are plunging or trying to plunge or to commit this House to a pernicious policy, to quote words I have heard used before. They are not only taxing the country to build a more expensive railway than one by the Esperance route would be, but having built it they will be taxing the consumer by very much heavier freight. If you will allow me, I will give you a few figures on the matter. Figures are necessarily somewhat dry, but in dealing with the construction and equipment of railways it is needful to bring forward figures in support of arguments. In the first place the Government propose to rail all the material for the construction of this railway to Coolgardie. Before ever they lay one single line or put down a sleeper we are faced with the fact that we have to rail the material 363 miles. It will require 11,124 tons of rails to construct that railway; and if these rails are carried at the rate specified in your book, that is to say, £1 7s. 4d. a ton, you will penalise the country to the extent of £15,202, carrying these rails over existing lines, and blocking the traffic with other matters, simply to build that railway from Coolgardie to centralise. I have accused the Premier before of centralisation, and he always says "no;" but here we have the fact that he proposes to carry these rails from Fremantle to Coolgardie to departmentally earn £15,200 and odd and to add that expenditure to this country. In addition to that it will take 216,000 sleepers to construct that 108 miles, these sleepers weighing 10,800 tons, which will be carried over your lines to Coolgardie at 18s. 1d. per ton, amounting to nearly £10,000. You propose in dealing with the Norseman line to spend £25,000 of the cost of the construction of that line in carrying material over the present Coolgardie line.

THE PREMIER: It has to be paid for, you know.

MR. ROBSON: Exactly.

THE PREMIER: It is all in the estimate.

MR. ROBSON: It is all in the estimate. The Norseman line works out at £2,685 per mile on the estimate, and I contend that the estimate is excessive; unnecessarily excessive. You have items for water supply, grading, bridges, and so forth, and you have to take into consideration that you have loaded the undertaking with £25,000 railage. My contention is that by buying your rails in London and shipping them in London, the difference in cost from London to Esperance or from London to Fremantle is infinitesimal; it is a mere nothing. I have here somewhere, but I will not weary you with them, the figures supplied by the department as to the cost of rails landed in this colony. The amount is something like £4 odd free on board in London, and £5 2s. 6d., or something like that, put on trucks at Fremantle. I think you may safely place the difference as between London and Esperance and London and Fremantle at half-a-crown a ton. As far as sleepers are concerned, by shipping them from Bunbury and Denmark they could be brought to Esperance at a lower rate than by railing them to Coolgardie.

MR. DOHERTY: How do you get over the 120 odd miles?

MR. ROBSON: I would begin at Esperance and build the railway from there. What would you do? I have shown that the Government will be penalising the colony in constructing these railways under the policy they are going to adopt. I will go further, and give figures showing what you are doing to the people of Norseman in relation to this great boon you are conferring upon them, this benefit that you are giving to them, and to the people of Fremantle and of Perth too. The difference in mileage between the routes is shown by these figures: Norseman *via* Coolgardie 471 miles, Esperance 125 miles. I think it is fairly safe to say that the cost of most things will be the same at Esperance as at Fremantle. I do not think the right hon. gentleman opposite will argue otherwise, or why does he keep the port shut up.

THE PREMIER: I do not shut it up.

MR. ROBSON: Did you not? What does this railway mean? I think the hon. member for Esperance (Mr. Conolly) told you a very different story when he crossed the floor of the House. However, let us return to the subject, and never mind about these side issues. The difference between the rates is this—if the right hon. gentleman wishes to give his mind to the subject for a little while. I have no doubt he knows something about the classification of goods. At all events his colleagues on the right will be able to enlighten him if I go wrong. Goods in this colony are classified in this rate-book under heads of minerals, agriculture, B1, 2, 3, and so forth. It is proposed by building this Norseman railway *via* Coolgardie to penalise Norseman to this extent: the mineral rate, 14s. 5d.; agricultural rate, £1 1s. 7d.; and the beef rate, £1 8s. 10d. a ton; class 1, under which most things come, £2 19s. 5d. a ton; class 2, £3 12s. 3d.; and class 3, which is the highest class, dealing with wines, spirits, drapery, and so forth, £4 8s. 4d. per ton. I have the figures here, and will be very pleased to supply them to the right hon. gentleman, if he cares to take the trouble to look at them, but I do not think he has any desire to do so. I think I can show conclusively that this is a very left-handed compliment which is being paid to the people of Norseman. Now, to deal with the gentleman who has been interjecting somewhat over there, I will refer to the Menzies and Leonora line.

THE PREMIER: That is the one.

MR. ROBSON: Yes; that is the one, all right. You will have it. The same arguments that I brought forward in regard to the Esperance railway as to geographical situation and so forth hold good here.

THE PREMIER: Now I am interested.

MR. ROBSON: Are you?

THE PREMIER: Yes.

MR. ROBSON: I regret you have not been so before. You must be very dense. It is proposed to carry into the northern portion of this colony, from a point somewhere east of Perth, a railway on which it is intended to spend £165,000, or an average of £2,538 10s. per mile; a railway which is called the proposed railway from Menzies to Leonora. The actual

proposition is that there shall be a railway from Menzies to Malcolm, showing Malcolm as the objective point for loop lines further on, one going in a westerly direction to Leonora (that is, striking in again towards the coast), and the other going in an easterly direction to Laverton. The Government propose to extend their line from Menzies to Malcolm, and from Malcolm to Leonora. The distance from Menzies to Malcolm, according to this schedule, is 65 miles, and from Malcolm to Leonora another 15 miles, making a total of 547 miles from Fremantle, taking the basis of this route as from Fremantle. The distance from Fremantle to Menzies, according to the Government railway maps, is 467 miles, but the total distance from Fremantle to Leonora *via* Menzies is 547 miles. I have some other figures to lay before hon. members, for which I contended prior to entering the House, but the right hon. gentleman said I was wrong. I come now to the House and give him the figures supplied by the Government department, and they are absolutely correct.

THE PREMIER: You go as the crow flies.

MR. ROBSON: You have never been to the country, whereas I have.

THE PREMIER: I think I have been to that part of the country.

MR. ROBSON: You have never been to Lawlers and about there.

THE PREMIER: I have been all around there, anyhow.

MR. ROBSON: And you are going all around the country by this Bill. I take as my starting point Geraldton, which is 300 miles north of Perth, and then I go to Laverton, due east of Geraldton; from Geraldton to Mount Magnet is 216 miles; from Mount Magnet to East Magnet, 40 miles; from East Magnet to Lawlers, according to the figures supplied by the Lands Department, 115 miles, allowing for deviation from Lawlers to Leonora *via* Doyle's Well, Kurrajong, Diorite King, and other mining centres which it is proposed to serve.

THE PREMIER: How much gold do they return at Kurrajong?

MR. ROBSON: Whatever gold may be returned, Kurrajong appears in big letters on the map as one of the justifica-

tions of this proposed line, as if it were a city in the wilderness. The total distance to Leonora, the objective point of the Bill, is 444 miles from Geraldton, as against 547 miles according to the Government scheme for a line from Fremantle, or a difference of 103 miles in favour of the Mount Magnet route; and I challenge the Premier to contradict the figures.

THE PREMIER: You go as the crow flies.

MR. ROBSON: No; I do not. I dodge along from one waterhole to another, just as I am dodging along with my statement to-night. The Premier gets me off the track, and I have some difficulty in getting back.

THE PREMIER: The distance by road is greater than you mention.

MR. ROBSON: I am not dealing with roads, but with railways.

THE PREMIER: You cannot go straight.

MR. ROBSON: The gentlemen who sit on the Government side of the House certainly cannot go straight.

THE PREMIER: I do not mean it in an offensive sense.

MR. ROBSON: Then I beg your pardon. I have shown that the difference in favour of the northern and true route to the fields is 103 miles. The argument in favour of the Government proposal is that the people deserve a railway because there is a big industry to be served, and the country must be developed and opened up. I agree with the Premier in both these arguments, and I shall be glad to assist in opening up the country if funds permit; but in the name of reason and common sense, let us set about the work in a proper way.

THE PREMIER: Where does the trade go now?

MR. ROBSON: The trade goes to Fremantle because you have forced it.

THE PREMIER: The trade always did go to Fremantle.

MR. ROBSON: Exactly, because, as I have said, it has been forced there. But the trade of Lawlers, Lake Darlôt, and Mount Sir Samuel goes to Geraldton in spite of the shorter cartage from Menzies, and Geraldton fought for the trade and deserves it. First of all the Premier, in regard to his goldfields policy, says the Government will build railways where they will directly pay; but

railways should be built where they will open up the country and pay in the future. The policy of the Government is to go on constructing a few miles of railway here and a few miles there, and dodging into the interior; and, as a result, the railway map to-day is like a dog's hind leg. When is there to be any finality to this policy of centralisation? The Premier, addressing a meeting at Geraldton, told the people he did not know where the policy would end; and I quite believe the Premier does not know. He says railways will follow the gold; but that policy is unjust to a large portion of the population of the colony, because it centralises all the traffic in one district and in one harbour. Is it not fair that each district should have the advantages of its own gold and of its own trade? Can the Premier not see that if he builds a railway from Mount Magnet to Leonora by its true route, it is possible to benefit this colony to a large extent? Does he not see that in giving Leonora a cheaper and shorter carriage, he is also conferring a benefit on my district? The Premier knows the Victoria district to be one of the finest wheat-producing districts in the colony, and coal is locked up in the Midland Railway Company's concession. Many industries might be developed if the chance were given.

THE PREMIER: How many miles of railway do you want?

MR. ROBSON: I am dealing with a broad question, and not with parochial matters, which I will leave to the Premier. In building the line on the route I have suggested, and opening up a big district, great benefits would be conferred, not only on the people of Leonora, but on the settlers all along the country traversed. The Premier may argue that to adopt this route would be to cross a sandy plain and a lot of barren country; but such an argument remains to be proved. In any case, what are railways for, if not to bridge the howling wildernesses in the centre of the country? Surely blocked roads are not desired there, but railways, in order that distance may be covered quickly; and wherever we have bare country of this character, the probability is cheap railways can be built, because, as a rule, it is only necessary under such circumstances to throw the sleepers down and lay the rails. The Premier will, I

think, remember meeting me, a dirty ragged sort of customer, on the end of a line in course of construction, and will, in consequence, give me credit for some experience of pioneer railway work.

THE PREMIER: The distance would be 280 miles from Mount Magnet to Leonora.

MR. ROBSON: The Premier can work out that calculation by and by. I was very much struck with a remark which fell from the Commissioner of Crown Lands, dealing with the question of federation from a West Australian point of view, when he said, "The geographical position of Western Australia prevents the application of the principle of federation to this colony"; and these words, I think, apply most aptly to the construction of the Norseman and Leonora lines. In building the line which I advocate, the Premier knows well he would serve not only all the people he wants to serve now, but a great many more between Leonora and Mount Magnet.

THE PREMIER: The distance is too great.

MR. ROBSON: That is your argument.

THE PREMIER: How many people are there, all told?

MR. ROBSON: What does the Premier propose to do? He proposes to rail all the necessary material for the construction of this line, from Fremantle to Menzies, on the line which he or the Commissioner of Railways has already told us will not carry the traffic, and on which it is a very pressing work that something like 200 miles of light rails should be relaid. The Commissioner has told us he can see a big block like the old one, looming ahead; but he proposes to block the traffic still further by carrying railway material, and pipes for the water scheme. That is no doubt the reason we have the support of the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), who knows that if these works are carried out, the people on the Eastern goldfields will pretty well have to starve, owing to the impossibility of getting stores carried over the existing lines.

THE PREMIER: We will make a great effort.

MR. ROBSON: The proposed Malcolm extension will require 6,695 tons of rails to be carried from Fremantle to Menzies at a cost of £1 13s. 9d. per ton, which

means £11,297, and will no doubt figure as another departmental earning, in order to swell the railway revenue before the world.

MR. MORGANS: How much would it cost to send the material from Geraldton?

MR. ROBSON: About half, and we start the construction of our line much more cheaply, with less railage.

THE PREMIER: Where would you get sleepers from?

MR. ROBSON: And there will be 6,500 tons of sleepers, which it is also proposed to rail from Fremantle to Menzies at a cost of £1 2s. 5d. per ton, so that there will be spent for carriage over existing lines a sum of £18,583 in connection with the Mount Malcolm extension. Then, if the Leonora and the Laverton extensions be added, £23,718 more will be spent; or in all, supposing the extensions be in accordance with the Bill, £42,302 will represent the railage of material over existing Government lines.

THE PREMIER: Government lines are not included in the Bill.

MR. ROBSON: They are included in your brain and in the scheme, and that is the point. The Premier told us at Geraldton that this line would perhaps go on to Lake Way, and form a junction with some other improbable or impossible line in the far-back beyond. Is there to be any finality to this centralising policy? Until I get some definite answer, I shall be absolutely opposed to the policy, and hence I am supporting the amendment. In the proposed Leonora extension, the difference in railage in favour of my suggestion is only 100 miles; but, comparing the rates, we find in favour of the route *via* Mount Magnet a difference, in Class M of 4s. 4d. per ton, in Class A 6s. 5d. per ton, Class B 8s. 7d., first-class 12s. 11d., second-class 17s. 2d., and third-class £1 5s. 9d. Surely no reasonable member would urge any other scheme, when money can be saved by adopting the route from Geraldton *via* Mount Magnet. Does the Premier not know that the policy of the people who are badgering him for this railway is to get all they can for the time being? Does he not know that their interest in their mining properties is greater than their interest in this country? Once they have this concession, and get the

line, does the Premier not know they will be the first people to "turn dog" on him and clamour for a shorter route? And would it not be wiser to build the shorter route first, and let the other part of country, which will not run away, wait a little while for development? I do not think there is anything remarkable or wonderful in regard to the British capitalists, who are able to take care of themselves; and if they have to pay a little more cash capital into a mine for a year or two, it will not hurt them. They will only have to do a little less loading up of scrip. Mines have been inflated to a heavy degree, and nothing but good will come if capitalists are debarred from inflating their mines. In the old country if people wish to bore a mile for coal, they roll up with a tidy sum of money; but here in Western Australia, capitalists come forward with £10,000, or £15,000, or £20,000, and £100,000 of inflated scrip. It is for the mine owners that the Government are going to build these railway lines; those people about whom the leader of the Opposition gave us a nice object lesson the other night on the Companies Bill. Let the Government build the line in their own time. The gold will keep in the earth; it will be there in two years' time. I will deal no more with that particular railway, trusting as I do that the objections I have raised to-night will bear due weight with Government supporters. Hon. members on the Government side have accused me of taking a parochial view of things. To that I take great exception. It is perhaps unfortunate that I should have to be the champion of my own district: that is a matter to be regretted, and in championing my own district hon. members can call me parochial. But there is a broader view, of opening up the country geographically, *via* the ports of Esperance, Geraldton and Port Hedland. That is the broad question which the House will have to consider in due time. I tell the Premier that in advocating a centralisation policy, in bringing everything to Perth and Fremantle and throwing out great feeders to the one port, he is pursuing what is known as the policy of the ostrich. The Premier knows very well the policy I advocate is the right one, but he is burying his head in the sand, and will not see the arguments which I

raise. I have no more to say on the subject, except that I shall support the amendment of the leader of the Opposition.

MR. WOOD (West Perth): I shall not attempt to emulate the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), and make a Committee speech on the second reading of the Bill, neither do I intend to say much in regard to the Loan Bill itself, because the measure can be dealt with in few words from me. I may say I am exceedingly sorry to think this country should have to go to the London money market again to raise a loan before the present loan authorisations have been either raised or exhausted, and whilst this country owes so much for what are known as Treasury bills, which are of course a great convenience. In business, bills are looked upon as a sort of kite-flying or temporary accommodation, so that when we get into a chronic state with them there is an element of danger arising which we shall have to face shortly, and it will be a great and serious danger too. The supporters of the Government and the members of the Opposition have a duty to perform to protect the country and its interests; and whether we sit on one side or on the other side of the House, it is our duty, if we think the Government are going a bit fast, to put our hands to the brake and help to steady the coach again. I do not intend to support the amendment of the member for Albany—hon. members know well that I do not intend to do that. The questions I asked myself when the Loan Bill was introduced were: what is the position? and what is our duty? The position is this: I take it the country has not been able to keep pace with the necessities and the great developments that have taken place in consequence of the immense discoveries of gold, and the other developments over a wide and extended area—the country is not able to grapple with that, nor to come up to its needs; so we must have money. I think the mistake was made in asking for too big an authorisation in the first place; also for the Coolgardie water scheme. That was too big a matter. We asked too much for the first instalment towards the Coolgardie water scheme, and no doubt that has blocked us in borrowing in the London market to a large extent. Again, many of the works we have

undertaken have cost more than the estimate. Why the estimate was under the actual cost I think is easy to see. There was a great rush of work, and the officers were not able to give that attention to details which was necessary; therefore the works cost more than the country expected they would cost. Perhaps not railway works; but there was a great leakage in regard to public works which were carried out. I am not blaming anyone in particular, but I say the great rush we had from 1896 to 1898 was the cause of the under-estimating for public works. In regard to the second reading of the Loan Bill, I do not mind stating here in the House, and to the people, that I intend to vote against several of the items in the schedule; but I do not think it is necessary to take the House into my confidence and tell them what I am going to vote against. If the Bill is thrown out on its second reading what does it mean? I warn the hon. member for East Fremantle (Mr. Holmes) and other members that it means wind-up, cut the thing off short, and stand still for a year or two. I would like to see what would happen to the country if we had to stand still for a year or two.

MR. GEORGE: What about the Fremantle harbour works?

MR. WOOD: I am speaking generally, and I say if the House throws this Bill out it means wind-up, cut off, stand still for two or three years. Are we prepared as a House of Parliament to do that? No. It means also that we shall have the Loan Bill dished up in another form, because in my opinion the Government cannot accept this amendment in any other way than as a vote of want of confidence. We have seen how several Governments have been tripped up. In Queensland Mr. Dickson had a majority of one and had to resign. What would our Government do if the main plank of their policy was thrown out on the second reading? They would have to resign, and the Opposition would come into power and bring forward this self-same Bill. The Government must resign if this Bill is thrown out on its second reading, and the Opposition would bring forward a Loan Bill in a slightly modified form, and hon. members would have to support it.

MR. JAMES: Are you supporting the Bill or the Government?

MR. WOOD: I am supporting part of the Bill. If hon. members on the other side are going to make a party question of this matter, they know where I am. Bill or no Bill, I am here in my place. No Government with any self-respect could take this amendment in any other way than want of confidence. Could we respect a Government which would take it in any other way than as a motion of want of confidence in them? If the amendment be carried, the Government will have to resign to-morrow morning.

MR. GEORGE: Is there anything they will not take as a motion of want of confidence?

MR. WOOD: I do not know that it is necessary to delay the House to-night on this question, and it is not my intention to make a Committee speech at this stage. We shall have ample time to deal with details when we pass the second reading, because the second reading must pass; if we disapprove of every item in the Bill, it must pass. There are hon. members on the other side of the House whose interests are bound up body and soul in this Bill; and the interests of the towns which they represent are bound up body and soul in some of the items of the Loan Bill. Those hon. members must vote for the Government, and it is a petty and paltry act to try to make this Bill a party one. I shall support the second reading of the Bill, but reserve to myself the right to deal with items in Committee. I am under no obligation to anyone to say of what I approve, or of what I disapprove.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I think this House and the Government will give me credit for the accuracy of the statement I am about to make, that on no occasion have I made a party speech on the great financial questions that affect this country. I have endeavoured, with such little knowledge as I have, to give this House and the country the very best advice that I had at my disposal on every occasion, without considering the question of party and without a single desire to influence members in a party way in any debate in which I have dealt with the finances of the country. What I have to say to-night will be of a similar character. It is somewhat new for me to hear from the

member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) that a motion of want of confidence is before the House. I do not think so; I do not think such was intended; only the Government thought that would be the best way to get the Bill through, and consequently we find to-night a large number of members actively engaged in the work they were elected to perform, all sitting in the House in a somewhat unusual manner.

THE PREMIER: In what way?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I mean that hon. members are here in their places, which is a very unusual thing, though it is quite necessary, because the Government require the votes.

THE PREMIER: It seems an important occasion, from your point of view.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As far as I am concerned, it is not an important occasion at all. There is not the slightest doubt, as I have said on a former occasion, that if the Government were to come into this House and propose to raise a loan of forty millions, the gentlemen who support them to-night would support them then.

THE PREMIER: And the Opposition would vote against them.

MR. JAMES: I hope they would.

THE PREMIER: You always do so, anyway.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And consequently—

THE PREMIER: We had better get to work.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If the right hon. gentleman will assist me in keeping order, I will endeavour to do so. I say that while I am conscious that the Government intend to give to this debate a party tendency and a party tone, I decline to deal with the question from that standpoint. All I want to say is in the interests of the country as a whole, and without any regard as to whether the Forrest Government are in or out. Of course we all know they are in, and that they will be in and will stop till the crack of doom, if it be possible for them to maintain their seats. As far as I am concerned they are welcome to the seats just as long as they live: they can have them for the rest of their natural lives.

THE PREMIER: It was not ever thus.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It was ever thus. I never desired a seat on the Treasury benches.

THE PREMIER: I deny that absolutely.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You may deny it, but it is true all the same. We are asked to deal with a Loan Bill.

A MEMBER: Perhaps the hon. member would like to be Minister of Mines.

MR. DOHERTY: Or Minister of Religion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And it is proposed in this Loan Bill to expend the sum of £10,000 on a railway from Coolgardie to Bonnie Vale, for construction only. The information placed before hon. members regarding this railway is that it is to cost £20,000. The Coolgardie to Norseman railway is to cost £290,000, while we have down in this Bill £60,000 for its construction. The Menzies to Malcolm line is to cost £165,000, while £60,000 is in this Bill.

THE PREMIER: That includes the rolling-stock and the rails.

MR. GREGORY: Not rolling-stock.

THE PREMIER: Yes; in the total, the rolling-stock and rails and fastenings are included.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am aware of that.

THE PREMIER: But you do not say so.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If the right hon. member did not say so much, I would have a chance of saying more: that is where the difficulty comes in. For "Northam towards Goomalling," £20,000 is set down, and the railway is to cost £52,000.

THE PREMIER: We are not going to carry it all the way.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The total of these figures is £150,000 according to the Loan Bill, but the amount to which this Loan Bill commits us is £527,000.

THE PREMIER: No, no!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The right hon. gentleman has tried on several occasions, and is now trying, to divert attention by stating that these figures include rolling-stock. Well, we know that.

THE PREMIER: Yes; and rails and fastenings.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But the rails and fastenings under Clause No. 2 are not the rails and fastenings wanted for these lines.

THE PREMIER: They are.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If they are, then there are other rails and fastenings more urgently needed for the existing lines than these, and the former rails and fastenings we must buy, and the money must be paid for them, before these new railways can be built. And therefore it is not fair to say that this amount includes rails and fastenings. If this Bill has been constructed on these lines all round—and as far as I can see that is the case—then this Bill will commit us to two millions of money; and I do not think for one moment that the works here proposed to be begun and finished will be completed for anything less than two millions of money. At all events, they will not be completed for £750,000.

THE PREMIER: It is not necessary to complete them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Of course not. I once read in a book of a man who began to build a house and who was not able to finish it; and I have heard of a financier in this country whose whole style of finance is built up on the Micawber principle of taking the chances of what will turn up; and we have the same thing proposed in this Bill. But supposing these works were only to cost the money here proposed to be spent, and supposing that expenditure were to be final as far as these items are concerned, still I say it is unwise for this country to mention the words "increased loan authorisation" at the present time. It is absolutely unwise as a policy for this Government to suggest that they want this money; because here is the position: we have £2,550,000 worth of Treasury bills out—

THE PREMIER: How much? That is good!

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Will the right hon. gentleman wait—

THE PREMIER: That is not right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It will be right when I have finished. I know these figures just as well as the Treasurer.

THE PREMIER: Well, let us have them.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Well, just hold your tongue. I have just as much right to be heard in the House as the Premier. He complains about interjections, but no man in the House interjects more than he; and I claim my rights, Mr. Speaker, on the floor of the House. I say that we

have at the present moment £2,550,000 worth of Treasury bills out.

THE PREMIER: And I deny it absolutely.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I say, if the Treasurer denies it, he denies what he knows to be a fact. On the 1st of December, £500,000 worth of these have to be paid off.

THE PREMIER: Well, the others are not yet raised.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Then that leaves £2,050,000 worth of Treasury bills for which this country will have to be responsible.

THE PREMIER: No; you are at once taking off £500,000 worth.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If the Premier insists upon misrepresenting me to the House, I cannot help it. I am dealing with the figures that have been published, and if the publication be incorrect, the Government, and not I, are responsible for the inaccuracy. The Government have declared that they have handed to the London and Westminster Bank, or to some of their representatives in England, £1,000,000 worth of Treasury bills.

THE PREMIER: To be paid on the 1st December.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: And they have sold those bills for £98—that is, 5 per cent.

THE PREMIER: To be paid on the 1st December.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: To be paid on the 1st December; and the Government are going to repay £500,000 worth that are due on the 1st December. They have £1,550,000 worth out; they have arranged for one million pounds' worth more; that is £2,550,000. With this million they are going to pay off £500,000 worth of Treasury bills that are due on the 1st December.

THE PREMIER: Yes; on the same day.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Very well. There will then be £2,050,000 worth of Treasury bills out on the 1st day of December. That is what I was trying to get at, if the Premier had only left me alone. He would not allow me to finish my sentence.

THE PREMIER: That is all right.

MR. CONNOR: The hon. member is only half a million out.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am not half a million out. I know the facts as well as the Premier, and that is where the injustice and the unfairness of the Premier are observable. He will never allow a sentence to be finished; he always breaks in with an interjection that is thoroughly and utterly irrelevant. I am not going to be diverted by this sort of thing. Speaking in round numbers, there are two million pounds' worth of Treasury bills which will have to be provided for, and they must be provided for by going on the London market for a loan. We are told by the Engineer-in-Chief that the Government propose to finish the Coolgardie water works inside two years. If they finish the Coolgardie water works they will require money to pay for the scheme. For the purposes of the present argument we of course accept that statement, although I know, and the Government know, that there is no intention of finishing the scheme in that time. But the Government, for the sake of their present policy, affirm that they are going to finish the Coolgardie water works inside two years. To finish these works they require two millions of money; they have expended the two millions that they have in Treasury bills, and consequently they cannot pay for the Coolgardie water works out of that. They must have a new loan; they must then come back upon their authorisation, and the balance of their authorisation at the present moment is something under one and a half millions. We will assume that one and a half millions would complete the Coolgardie water works. Well, they have to raise that one and a half millions by loans in the London market; they must raise two millions to pay off their Treasury bills.

THE PREMIER: When?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Inside the two years of which we are speaking.

THE PREMIER: Perhaps we may renew them.

MR. HOLMES: At 5 per cent.?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: This is like a fourth-rate debating society—not like a Parliament. We are dealing with the most serious question this House can possibly entertain, and we have to meet interjections that would be unworthy of a fourth-rate debating society.

THE PREMIER: You never renewed a bill yourself, did you?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Unfortunately I have had to renew a good many, and because of the bad financing of the Government.

A MEMBER: Oh!

THE SPEAKER: Order! Do not interject so frequently.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: These debates last twice as long as is necessary because of these irrelevant interjections. We must raise two millions for the purpose of paying off the Treasury bills; that is, if we are to conduct proper, honest and straightforward financing. If we are to continue borrowing all the time, of course we can do it in another way; but as regards these works, the country was told from the very start that the Government would get the money on three per cent. bonds, or at something like a reasonable rate; and I want to quote what I previously asked the Government to do on debating this question. According to *Hansard* for 1897, page 804, I said:

We are informed that the Government have sold over a half a million pounds' worth of bonds, bearing interest at 4 per cent., and that they have sold them for the sum of £101 per £100 bond. The market value of our inscribed stock is between £110 and £112, according to the varying market; but the Government have sold for two years the identical bonds at £101.

The Premier: Those are bonds running for 40 years.

Mr. Illingworth: I am making a correct statement, and know the responsibility I am taking upon myself. The inscribed stock at 40 years is salable to-day at from £110 to £112 per £100 bond, according to the varying market. The Government have assured this House, over and over again, that they could sell 3 per cent. bonds in the London market if they were prepared to take the price. To ascertain the exact relation which the 3 per cent. bonds at £93 bear to the 4 per cent., I put this question to the actuary: What amount should be paid for a 4 per cent. loan of 40 years' currency in order to make it equal, from an investor's point of view, to the investment of a 3 per cent. loan of equal currency issued at £93, each loan being repayable at par on maturity? I will stop here to comment, and say I have not the slightest hesitation in believing that the Government can raise all they require at over £93 to-day.

The Premier: They are £98 in the London market now.

Mr. Illingworth: That is only confirming what I say, and I ask, what have the Government done? They have sold a 4 per cent.

bill, worth £110 in the market with a two-years currency, when they could sell a 3 per cent. bond for £93, or perhaps as high as £96. Supposing the exigencies of the case required that the Government should sell their bonds at £93 net in the London market to-day, the 4 per cent. bonds they have sold are equivalent in market value to £114 19s. 4½d.

My object in quoting that is to prove that in the opinion of the Premier he could have sold his bonds at over £93. How are we financing to-day? We are financing that identical two millions at from 3½ to 5 per cent.

THE PREMIER: Not for 40 years, though.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Granted it is not for 40 years; but this country would have been infinitely better off if the Government had floated the loan and we had known exactly where we stood, and the people of the country would have rested for the next 40 years. To-day we have to face the anxieties of finance with 3½, 4, and up to 5 per cent. Treasury bills to be provided for at near dates, some as early as 1901. We are not dealing in the London market with people who do not understand the question, but we are dealing with the sharpest financiers in the world. Look at the position with regard to this £1,000,000 worth of Treasury bills we sold. On the very day the Government sold them for £98 at 4 per cent., our 3½ per cent. bonds were fetching £104 15s. in the market. This is what is called clever financing! Three and a-half per cent. Western Australian bonds were selling in the market at £104 15s. on the very day the Treasurer of this colony handed over to the London and Westminster Bank, or some other financial institution or people, our Treasury bills for £98 at 4 per cent.

THE PREMIER: How many transactions?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have quoted sufficient to show that in the opinion of the Treasurer and the London financiers worth paying any attention to, our Treasury bonds for £2,000,000 of money could have been sold for over £93, and I stand here upon the floor of the House and defy the Premier to bring his actuary to bear upon this proposition, that it would have been better for the country and cheaper for the Government to have sold £2,000,000 worth of bonds two years ago at £90 than to

have carried out their financing in the way they have done. After paying 4 per cent. and selling your bills for £98, is it at all probable that you will get your financiers to take up bills at 3 per cent. to relieve you regarding the security with which they are just as well satisfied as they are with your bonds? Two years ago I called attention to the fact that the system of Treasury bills was a pernicious system, and that it would complicate the raising of loans in the proper financial manner. I did my best to sustain the progress of the country, and I have done so all through without any consideration of the question of parties.

THE PREMIER: I do not agree with that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I say it is a suicidal policy for this Government to talk of loans until they have properly arranged and properly fixed the dates of all authorisations that now exist. It has been said on the floor of the House over and over again—in fact it is the basis of the question upon which the whole discussion has gone on every occasion when we have had to borrow money—that the point is whether the works are necessary and whether they will pay. My hon. friend who so ably represents Coolgardie (Mr. Morgaus) says it does not matter how much money the country borrows, provided that the money is invested at a price that will pay. I say that with a population of 170,000 there was never a more fallacious proposition put before the people than that you can go in for unlimited borrowing simply because the work will pay. Take the plea of necessity: I admit that the works in this Bill are necessary, but I could make you a better list than this. I could make you a list that would cover £5,000,000 worth of works that are more necessary than these, and which would pay better. I will give you half-a-million to start with. It would pay you better to take up the rails between here and Coolgardie and lay down heavy rails, and it is more necessary for you to duplicate that line than put another mile of railway into your railway policy. You are proposing to add other railways, the traffic for which would have to go over the railway already over-weighted. If you attempt to get the traffic for the water scheme and for the railway supplies over the present line,

you will not be able to get the stuff over yonder hill, because you have not the facilities to carry it. You want more rolling stock. And here is the position. You are more in want of money at the present moment to duplicate the Coolgardie railway line, and to supply yourself with sufficient rolling-stock to compete with your present traffic, than you are to build another mile of railway. Here is £1,000,000 of the amount, anyhow, and I can show you plenty more. It is not a sufficient reason to come before the House and say that the works are necessary and will pay. But is it true that the works will pay? We have to project these railways out into a comparatively waterless country in two directions. As you go towards Leonora you approach water, I admit, but when you are going to Dundas you are going away from water. You have added to the difficulties of your present system 150 miles of railway to be worked with the same difficulties of traffic and same want of water. Two millions of pounds are wanted for the Coolgardie water supply scheme, and we have this great scheme in hand with all its difficulties, doubts, and uncertainties. We have committed ourselves to that work, which must be finished, and we have engaged in other works which must be completed. Yet, in face of this, the Government come and ask the country to embark in another loan policy. The very name of it will destroy the chances of raising the money which this country is languishing for. The moment it is telegraphed to London that the House have passed another Loan Bill your securities will fall and your difficulties will increase. I am apprised, though not fully apprised, of the fact that the difficulties in the London market are not small, and that the Government have now as much as they can do to cover the difficulties which lie behind them in the London market. What is proposed is simply madness, midsummer madness, the wildest madness that can be conceived, on the part of the Government, situated as they are with liabilities standing before them. They have to meet Treasury bills with a certainty that these Treasury bills must be provided for, and it is to be expected that they will be provided for at something like a reasonable rate of interest,

and with a certainty that if it were possible to add these works on to the end of the present line they could not possibly work these railways until they duplicated the Coolgardie line and laid down heavier rails. What sense is there in the proposal? It is, I say, midsummer madness to think of borrowing money to construct——

THE PREMIER: You have said that before.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have never uttered it before.

THE PREMIER: Hundreds of times.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You will not find the expression in my name. But never mind if I have uttered it before. I say it is midsummer madness to go and talk in the London market of a further loan when you are not able to raise the money you want now. If you were able, why did you sell a million pounds' worth of Treasury bills for £98 at 4 per cent.? Of course it is all very well to say there was the African war, but there was no African war nearly two years ago.

THE PREMIER: It was not 4 per cent. in London.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Some of it was 4 per cent.

THE PREMIER: We got £101 for it. If you get off the rail, I can put you on.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I do not require the assistance of the Premier on this question.

THE PREMIER: I think you do.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I know what I am talking about on this subject as well as the Premier, but he sees his difficulties, and his policy is to throw me off the track. He assumes to contradict people, and does so on the off chance that men cannot reply.

THE PREMIER: That is not fair, and it is not true.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is absolutely true, and it has been done. Now, to go back to this question of policy. Look at the Bill. It is merely a drag-net Bill. There is a little bit for everybody. There is the £10,000 to buy the member for Albany.

THE PREMIER: Is that in order?

THE SPEAKER: No; it is not in order.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I withdraw it. I did not mean absolutely to say that. Sometimes a word gets out which one does not intend. It is imitation, because

I have been hearing so much from the Treasury benches. I say that here is a drag-net Bill. Every district is interested in this Bill. I do not object to it in any way, but assumedly no member can vote against it; and I confess it seems to me that unless hon. members vote on a broad policy, on the question whether it is desirable to borrow or not, it will be difficult when we go into Committee to deal with the items. But I suppose it is absolutely necessary to continue the works we have in hand, and the principal work is the Coolgardie water scheme, with which we have gone too far to retract. I did my best to stop this scheme in the beginning, but when it got to a stage where it was impossible to go back, I pledged myself as far as I could to the House, to give every assistance towards the rapid completion of the work; and that, I think, is the proper position to take up. We are in the midst of this work, and I presume plates purchased and paid for in London are being manufactured into pipes, while I have heard something about tenders having been submitted, whether accepted or not, for pumping machinery; so that we must be committed to a very large sum. How are these goods to be paid for? By the issue of more Treasury bills? The Government have a right, an unfortunate right, which I opposed with all the power I possessed at the time, to raise £3,000,000 against loan authorisation, on Treasury bills. The Government have raised £2,050,000; but even if they draw the £950,000 by borrowing on Treasury bills, would that complete the work? I say it would not. The Government will have to recoup the money they borrowed from this loan, amounting to close on half a million, in order to complete the Coolgardie water scheme. If we must complete the Coolgardie water scheme, surely it is time we waited a bit and said calmly, "We have undertaken a good deal in this country; we have gone a long way, and, in the present condition of the money market, the wise course for us is to do the best we can with the authorisation we have, and steadily complete the work we have in hand." Of course, if the Government do not see the matter in that light, they will act otherwise, and no doubt they will get a majority to support them.

MR. MONGER: I hope so.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No doubt the hon. member would hope so, even if the amount involved were fourteen millions. Members on the Government side of the House adopt the policy of voting with the Government, no matter what the consequences may be.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member never votes with the Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is very unfair, because the Government have often complimented me on supporting and voting with them.

THE PREMIER: It is so long ago we do not remember.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Not so long ago; but the fact does not matter in the slightest. So long as I am in the House I will vote for what I believe to be right for the country: that is what I have always done, and always shall do. Of course, if there is a difference of opinion, and I do not see with the Government, it is my blindness, or theirs. One point has been ably dealt with by the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), who strongly urged it on the attention of the Government. There are between 50,000 and 60,000 people on the Eastern goldfields who have to be supplied by means of the existing lines; and if the Government start carrying pipes and other material for the Coolgardie water scheme, it will be almost an utter impossibility to convey the rails, fastenings, and sleepers for the construction of the proposed railway lines. The hon. member had no need to labour the point, but he certainly presented the fact to the House very strongly, that the people in that part of the country must be supplied with daily food and necessaries, and that the mines must also be supplied with materials, and, under these circumstances, the railways would become so blocked as to make it impossible for the department to do anything. An urgent work before the country is that of substituting heavy for light lines, combined with a duplication of the railways as far as it is possible to carry out that work. But, necessary as this work may be, and even if the supply of rolling-stock be more necessary than the construction and duplication of lines, I could not possibly advise the Government to ask for a loan on the London market at the present time. I

am speaking with a full knowledge and appreciation of the seriousness of the situation when I say that, if the Government act wisely, they will not attempt, whatever may be the nature of their financing, or however they may get out of their present little difficulty, which I trust will not last long, to ask for a loan in London at the present time. Such a step would result in nothing but mischief to their borrowing policy, and prevent their getting the very money they want and must have for other purposes. These are my opinions, for what they are worth, and I give them without regard as to where I sit in the House. I strongly urge the Government to withdraw the Bill, and to re-cast their financial arrangements in such a way as to prevent the necessity of going to the London market for a loan. In a little while the colony will, I hope, be in a different position; and if we go slowly, as we ought to do at the present juncture, and simply try to control our finances, we will be able to face facts in a better way. But to me it seems altogether unwise, not to use a stronger term, for the Government to ask for further loan authorisation until they have located the present authorisations in proper bonds, in a proper way, at the best market price. For the reasons I have given, I cannot support the Bill.

THE PREMIER (in reply) : I cannot say I have listened to the remarks of the member for Central Murchison with any great pleasure.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I do not suppose you have.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member always professes so much as to his sincerity and his desire to do what is right, that I suppose he means no one else has any sincerity or any desire to do right.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I mean nothing of the sort.

THE PREMIER : But we who have listened to the hon. member for the last four or five years know all about him. We know he gives the same speech year after year, on every progressive motion brought forward by the Government; and, accustomed as we are to the hon. member, we do not value or take so much interest in his great professions as persons who may, perhaps, hear him for the first time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : It does not matter whether you do or not.

THE PREMIER : It does not matter a bit. If I were to take the trouble, which I will not, to read the speeches of the hon. member on the goldfields water scheme, and on nearly all the railway proposals submitted since he has been a member of the House, hon. members would find his speech to-night the same as speeches he has delivered over and over again. It would be found that the hon. member claims to have a great and intimate knowledge of finance and of the London money market.

MR. ILLINGWORTH : I never made such a claim; and you are misrepresenting me.

THE PREMIER : The hon. member claims to know how to raise a loan, whether on Treasury bills or on bonds, and whether we shall sell bonds at £93 at 3 per cent., or Treasury bills at £101 at 4 per cent., and, in his own opinion, he is the greatest financial authority in the colony. But we do not have the same opinion of the hon. member's knowledge of finance as he has himself. I rejoice very much to-night that I am again here to urge on the House the same progressive policy I have urged for the last nine years, during the whole of which we have had the same pessimism, the same foretelling of evil, the same want of faith in the colony from members of the Opposition. The Government have never brought forward a motion for the construction of a great public work but they have been met by the pessimism, foretelling of evil, and want of faith in the colony we have seen in the course of this debate. Where does this wail come from? Whence arises this desire to protect the country from ruin? Does it come from the careful men of this colony who sit in the House? Does it come from men of substance in the colony, from old colonists, or from those who have most to lose? I say emphatically the wail does not come from these men. The men who sit on the Government side of the House, and have more to lose, have more faith and more interest in the colony than those on the Opposition benches, and always have had during the nine years I have had control of affairs.

MR. ROBSON : They follow you blindly.

THE PREMIER: The hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) would have us believe that when we get a loan authorisation we shall at once run to the London market and raise money. An authorisation does not mean the raising of money, but means the legalising of expenditure; and so long as we know that loan money can be raised on inscribed stock, and there is a million of authorised loan to raise, it will not be necessary to borrow this three-quarters of a million in order to proceed with these works. If the market were so bad as it is now, I do not suppose anyone would advise us to proceed with the construction of the railways, or at any rate with most of the railways proposed. In fact, so long as the market is in its present condition, the greatest economy will be essential on the part of the Government, so as not to spend more than is absolutely necessary, but rather to curtail expenditure. We know very well we must have authorisation at the present time to meet the purchase of a large amount of rolling-stock. Perhaps the hon. member thinks we can send to London and order engines and other rolling-stock to be delivered a year hence, without authority from the House; but that is not the case, because it takes nearly two years to fulfil an order of the kind. To have an authorisation now does not mean we shall spend the money immediately; because, as I have said, the authorisation will merely legalise our action in ordering the rolling-stock so much required on the railways. One would think the colony was in the throes of despair and despondency, to listen to the hon. member's croaking, whereas Western Australia has never been in such a sound position since it was a colony. We have a revenue of two millions and three-quarters at the present time, and the revenue for this month is the best we have ever had. What reason is there for anyone to despond and despair? I will be able to show, to the satisfaction of any business man, that we owe scarcely any money at all; that, instead of having an immense debt, there is scarcely any debt at all. Though hon. members may laugh, I will deal with this matter in a business way, and business men may listen, and then make their own criticism.

MR. LEAKE: There is nothing like a new departure.

THE PREMIER: The opposition to the Bill comes from those who have opposed the Government all these years. My friend the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) seems, I regret to say, to have gone off at a tangent, because there has been no more progressive man than he during the years he has sat in the House. But generally, hon. members who have spoken—I do not know what the others may do—advocate what they have always advocated in the House, namely the do-nothing policy of those who do nothing and oppose everything, and I may say those who have very little personal knowledge of this country. It is notorious, I say, that members who are opposing this measure have not travelled over this colony, at any rate they have not travelled far off the railway line. Take the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson): what does he know about the country? Except the jarrah belts, he knows very little about the country and its resources. I do not believe the member for East Perth (Mr. James) knows anything about the country, although I think he was on a station in the DeGrey district once: it is a pity he did not stay there. One thing seems strange to me in dealing with this question, that three-quarters of the amount contained in the Loan Bill—I am not going into nice figures—is intended to develop the Eastern goldfields of the colony. I believe, if I can judge by the public press of the Eastern goldfields, I am not altogether the *persona grata* of the people who live there. The leader of the Opposition is the friend of the people there, but I find myself in this House advocating the interests of the goldfields, trying to develop their resources, trying to give comfort to the people who live there; yet the hon. member who is supposed to be such a friend of the people on the goldfields is opposed to doing anything. One ought not to be surprised because we know what tremendous trouble I had to carry through this House—not once or twice, but three or four times—the project for giving the Eastern goldfields a pure and plentiful supply of water. This friend of the goldfields, this great person—because he is a great person, overflowing with goodwill for the people—when it comes to practical matters will not give them a

drink of water. I extend my sympathies to two other gentlemen on the Opposition side of the House, who are supporting the member for Albany. There is the member for North Coolgardie (Mr. Gregory): I know he has tried to do his very best during the time he has been in the House, for his district, and to further its interests in every way: he is here, in the House, pledged up to the very hilt—I do not say against his will, but pledged by his full confession, to support a railway from Menzies to Leonora; and I see him the whip of the Opposition and the supporter of the member for Albany who has moved to destroy this railway, which is so much desired and so much longed for by the people of North Coolgardie.

MR. GREGORY: Why did you not speak so nicely when the Constitution Bill was before the House?

THE PREMIER: Does the hon. member want me to speak roughly? The hon. member left this side of the House, and he is now over there, sitting behind the leader of the Opposition who is doing his level best to deprive the hon. member's constituents of the railway they have longed for and which they so much desire.

MR. ROBSON: He takes a broader view of the situation.

THE PREMIER: I have to take a narrow view, perhaps, in this matter. Then there is the member for Dundas (Mr. Conolly).

MR. MORAN: He is still with you in his soul.

THE PREMIER: I know he is, but I want to tell him where he has got to. He has got on to the Opposition side of the House and is supporting the member for Albany, who wishes to deprive the hon. member's constituents of the railway to Norseman.

MR. CONOLLY: What has the member for Dundas to thank the Government for?

THE PREMIER: I did not say anything about thanking the Government. I was saying that the member for Dundas is sitting on the Opposition side supporting the member for Albany.

MR. MORAN: He will not.

THE PREMIER: I am not saying anything against the hon. member. I sympathise with him and with other members who find themselves in the position they are. Those members are giving loyal support, I believe, to the

member for Albany, who is doing his best at the present time to deprive their districts of the one great thing, the one great project the people have been longing for for years, and which they so much desire.

MR. ROBSON: You give him the Esperance railway and see where he will be.

MR. GEORGE: What about the Marra-dong railway?

THE PREMIER: As I said the other evening, the trump card that I wished to play then, and which I shall play again, is that our railways at the present time are paying the working expenses, and are paying the interest on the amount which has been expended on their construction; also paying 1 per cent. to the sinking fund, and besides that, last year they paid £20,000 to the general revenue of the colony.

MR. LEAKE: Only the goldfields line.

THE PREMIER: I say the whole of the railways of the colony: we must take them altogether. We must take the whole railway system, and what I have stated is according to the statement which has been placed before us by the Railway Department.

MR. LEAKE: Only the goldfields line is paying.

THE PREMIER: I do not want to be taken off my track by the member for Albany. I say the whole of the railways of the colony are paying the working expenses, the interest on the money used in their construction; they are paying 1 per cent. to the sinking fund, and last year they paid, besides that, £20,000 to the general revenue.

MR. ROBSON: That is a departmental fiction.

THE PREMIER: I do not suppose the hon. member has given any time to investigating these matters, if he has the ability to do it. I do not suppose he has done it.

MR. ROBSON: Yes, he has. I gave you more figures to-night than you wanted.

THE PREMIER: I will give some more figures before I sit down. If we extend the railway system in the way we propose to do we shall be opening up these various districts of the colony; we shall be giving facilities for the extension of trade for our merchants throughout the length and breadth of

the land wherever the railways extend. To those who say we are overburdened with debt, who say we ought not to do anything except to sit still, like the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), I would like to point out that when we undertook to construct the Yilgarn railway—

MR. GEORGE: Ancient history.

THE PREMIER: All that the Yilgarn goldfield district had produced was 22,806 ounces of gold. When we undertook to construct the Coolgardie railway, and the Murchison railway, and many other railways, amounting to 300 miles of railway line, in 1894 the whole of the gold produced in the colony for the year 1894 was 207,131 ounces. Now, when the output of the gold in the colony is a million and a half ounces, valued at something like six million pounds sterling, it seems to me hon. members all at once—or some hon. members, not many I am glad to say—have awakened to the fact that £750,000 additional debt on the colony is going to bring some trouble and disaster upon us. I need hardly say that I have no such fear, and I expect my anxieties in regard to the finances of the country ought to be, if they are not, greater than those of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), seeing that I have to watch them daily, and that all the transactions, to a large extent, are controlled by me. Therefore, anyone likely to be afraid of the future, and the inability of the colony to carry on, is myself, unless I was absolutely reckless, and did not care whether I brought disaster on the whole colony and myself and my friends, and those about me—in fact that I was a lunatic.

MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear.

THE PREMIER: I do not like comparisons, as a rule: they are not edifying, and they are not often considered generous. I do not like comparing one district with another if I can avoid it, but the audacity, shall I call it, of the hon. member for Central Murchison in dealing with this question really makes me feel that I ought to make some comparisons. Perhaps the hon. member will think I am giving him too much attention; still I think he deserves some attention when he makes such pessimistical and false speeches as he has done this evening and often before. We have heard a great

deal in the House from the hon. member too, and from other persons, of the great district called North-East Coolgardie, and its immense population, and the terrible wrong that has been done to it by this House not giving it extra representation. I do not know how many thousand votes there are in that district; I think it was said 3,000 or 4,000. North-East Coolgardie district includes Kanowna, Bulong, and Broad Arrow, but I do not intend to include Broad Arrow just now. All the gold from that district, notwithstanding there is a large deposit of alluvial at Kanowna, the whole of the gold turned out of the North-East Coolgardie district proper—the alluvial gold and the reefing gold from Bulong and Kurnalpi—for the past nine months amounted to 65,415 ounces. The district of Mt. Margaret, to which hon. members will not take a railway, has turned out, in the same period, 57,265 ounces; so that the output nearly comes up to the amount which has been turned out of the North-East Coolgardie district proper. Now we come to the great district represented by the member for Central Murchison, from whom we have heard so much, and it includes Mount Magnet, Cue, Nannine, and Day Dawn.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Peak Hill.

MR. MOORHEAD: Not Nannine.

THE PREMIER: Not Peak Hill, but Nannine is in the Central Murchison goldfield district. For the nine months the amount of gold produced in this district was 66,324 ounces; so that the Mount Margaret district, which the hon. member will not give a railway to, produces almost as much gold as the great district he has the honour to represent, for which in order to tap it we had to build about 260 miles of railway.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Remember, I never said a word against your railway policy.

THE PREMIER: What did you say anything against, then?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: About borrowing the money at the present time.

THE PREMIER: How are railways to be built? How can our rolling-stock be constructed unless we obtain the money? The hon. member wants to say that we shall not order any locomotives from London.

MR. GEORGE: You have ordered them.

THE PREMIER: No; and if we had, we could stop the order. The hon.

member says we shall not order another locomotive.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

THE PREMIER: How are we to order a locomotive if you do not provide the money? It is impossible for any Government to carry on at present in this colony, unless there be made a large addition to the rolling-stock of the railways: I do not care what Government it may be.

MR. LEAKE: This Bill is not going to give you such addition.

THE PREMIER: It will give us some addition.

MR. GEORGE: The money will be required for existing railways.

THE PREMIER: It is a funny argument that this Bill will not provide enough money, and therefore we should throw it out. Then we have other places with railway communication: we have Yalgoo, which for the nine months turned out 7,325 ounces of gold.

MR. ROBSON: That is on a line you have already built.

THE PREMIER: These places are represented by hon. members in this House, while Mount Margaret is not.

MR. ROBSON: But you have wiped out their representation.

THE PREMIER: Let us come close home. For the last two months North-East Coolgardie proper returned 9,797 ounces, Broad Arrow returned 8,043 ounces, while the Mount Margaret goldfield returned 16,177 ounces—as much as the others put together; and the Central Murchison district, represented so well by the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth), returned only 11,373 ounces. I do not mention this for the purpose of comparison, because I know well that these districts are going to make another good jump directly, when they get better facilities for dealing with low-grade ores; but, at the same time, this district to which the Government wish to build a railway is as good a district as any of them, and during the last two months has produced more gold than the Murchison district, if we except Peak Hill.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The Murchison, including Peak Hill, has turned out one-seventh of the whole gold production of the colony.

THE PREMIER: I am dealing with the past nine months and the last two

months; and I know my figures are correct.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I got the figures from the *Gazette* to-day.

THE PREMIER: I do not require to go to the *Gazette* for my figures: I have them. When we authorised the railway from Southern Cross to Coolgardie in 1894, the Coolgardie goldfield, then including all the Coolgardies, East, North, North-East, and Mount Margaret, if there were any one so far away as Mount Margaret at that time, that goldfield produced 105,329 ounces; and in the next year, 1895, all those places produced 125,105 ounces. If we had then held the views that have been enunciated in this debate by the members for Albany (Mr. Leake) and Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), would we ever have undertaken that railway at the time we did? We should not have done so: we should have been afraid, as those hon. members seem to be afraid at the present time. I do not credit them with being afraid: my own opinion is that their opposition is for mere party purposes. I will give them no credit for anything else than a desire to annoy and thwart the Government, as they have done all these years I have sat in this House, with them in opposition. I tell the hon. member straight, that in my opinion his speech and his opposition are merely for party purposes, and with no other object.

MR. GEORGE: That does not alter the facts.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Your opinion is against the facts, this time.

THE PREMIER: For this year the Mount Margaret goldfield will produce 80,000 ounces of gold, and the Norseman field will produce 45,000 ounces. Early in 1891, when we authorised the Yilgarn railway, that goldfield had yielded about £20,000 worth of gold only, and it yielded less than 13,000 ounces in 1891. Yet, for all that, we undertook to build 170 miles of railway. We knew what we were about, and the result has been satisfactory. My opinion is that if we had never found Coolgardie at all, that railway would have been an advantage to this colony; for there is no doubt that Yilgarn, Parker's Range, Hope's Hill, and Golden Valley are all auriferous districts, and if we had had nothing better, we should have given attention to

those places, and the railway would still have been successful.

MR. GEORGE: What is Parker's Range worth to-day?

THE PREMIER: No one goes there, because there is better country to be had. The Mount Margaret goldfield, which has only recently been settled and has been a separate goldfield for only two years, has produced half-a-million pounds' worth of gold, and this year it will produce gold to the value of about £300,000. The Norseman (or Dundas) goldfield has produced nearly £400,000 worth of gold, and this year it will produce £170,000 worth; and for the past two years it has been turning out something like £14,000 worth of gold a month. That is not a place we can afford to despise. Surely a goldfield which can turn out £400,000 worth of gold, and which has turned out gold to the tune of £170,000 a year, at the rate of £14,000 a month, is a place that has as much right to demand a railway as those districts which already possess railway communication.

MR. ROBSON: It seems to me that you have been despising it for a long while.

THE PREMIER: I have not been despising it: the hon. member's ignorance of the facts has led him to say so. This year I introduced a proposal for a survey, and had it inserted in the Governor's Speech.

MR. ROBSON: From Esperance?

THE PREMIER: Not from Esperance.

MR. ROBSON: Ah! That is another story!

THE PREMIER: I say that, so far as I am able to judge, there never were two railways in this colony that were more justified than the railway from Menzies to Leonora, and that from Coolgardie to Norseman. [MR. MORGANS: Hear, hear.] In the one case, after going thirty miles we get to Niagara, where there is a reservoir capable of holding some thirty or forty million gallons of water, and which contains ten million gallons at the present time.

MR. GEORGE: Have they stopped up the crack?

THE PREMIER: I believe they have; and there are several mines there. Then when we go to Koekinie, on through auriferous country, with many mines such as the Britannia and the Tampa; then on to Mount Margaret and Leonora, a

good deal of the way through auriferous ground; and, what is more, that railway does not end in its usefulness when it gets to Malcolm or Leonora. All these mines to the eastward as far as Laver-ton are producing a large quantity of gold, and the country is all auriferous. I have been over it myself, and I have never been wrong yet in regard to auriferous country; and I say I am quite positive that the country will pay for a railway to go through it—in fact I am willing to take the responsibility of urging the proposal upon this House. And if we go the other way towards Norseman, if we go from Coolgardie for the first five or six miles, we find a very rich auriferous belt all the way to Burbanks—country that will be very much utilised. Hundreds of batteries will be erected there so soon as we get water. They suffer from a great deficiency of water at the present time, but the gold is there. There are one hundred stamps, I suppose, at Burbanks, or they are making preparation for a large number being erected. Then we go on to Londonderry, and from Londonderry on again about fifteen miles through Red Hill, another languishing district; then on to Widgiemooltha, where we have a three-million gallon tank of water, and there is also a three-million gallon tank at Londonderry. At that place there were at one time fifteen hundred people, and if there were means of transit provided there is no doubt it would be fossicked and explored, and I believe a great deal of gold would be found. As it is, one cannot get into the country: it is destitute of water except as regards the tank the Government have built. We go on further till we cross Lake Cowan, and we find many more mines; then we go down into Norseman, having travelled auriferous country all the way; and there we get to that very nice town, a town that hon. members who have not seen it have no idea of; a town where there are eight hundred people (men, women, and children), a large community settled there. In that district there are perhaps 1,600 to 2,000 inhabitants; and is that a place we should not try to do something with, seeing that we have auriferous country all the way from Coolgardie to Norseman? As I said before, there are no two railways I have ever proposed in this House that are

more justified than these two railways; and as for the amount of money to be provided not being sufficient for these lines, there is not the slightest risk. We are not going to build the whole railway to Norseman at once: we shall build it to Widgiemooltha. That will lessen the distance to 50 or 60 miles, and will reduce the cost by one-half. Even if we take the railway only to Niagara, to where that water is stored, that will do something for those people who have to bring their supplies from a distance—all their iron, in fact all their timber, because there is no timber in the Mount Margaret district suitable for the large lodes that exist there, and the mines are dependent on the timber from other districts in order to make safe the large reefs and lodes in that locality.

MR. GEORGE: But you cannot build the line for £60,000.

THE PREMIER: That is only for the construction.

MR. GEORGE: You cannot even do the earthwork to the Norseman for the money.

THE PREMIER: Yes; there is only 60 miles.

MR. GEORGE: You cannot do it.

THE PREMIER: If we cannot do it all the way, we can do it part of the way.

MR. GEORGE: For five miles.

THE PREMIER: For 40 or 50 miles, if not 60.

MR. GEORGE: Then you can do "muck" work cheaper than I can.

THE PREMIER: Well, I will try to. The other evening we had the peculiar spectacle of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) rising in his place in response to a proposal of the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Kingsmill) that the Government should take into consideration the construction of a railway from Port Hedland to Marble Bar, a distance of 100 miles. The hon. member said, "I have very much pleasure in seconding that proposal."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But it will take you seven years to consider it.

THE PREMIER: But the motion reads, "at an early date."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Well that would be early for you.

THE PREMIER: I am glad the hon. member thinks we are not in a great hurry; therefore if he thinks that in

regard to this Bill, perhaps he will think we shall not be in a hurry to spend the money. The hon. member would support a motion such as I have referred to in order to serve a political friend, because I cannot think the hon. member was serious when he did it; but when it comes to supporting a railway to a district turning out as much gold as the great district he himself represents—

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I said nothing against the railway.

THE PREMIER: He is opposed to that.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No.

THE PREMIER: What are you opposed to?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: To your borrowing the money at this time.

THE PREMIER: If you stop the money supply, you surely stop the work. The hon. member had great pleasure in supporting the motion, which would have meant an expenditure of £300,000 or £400,000 in a district which I believe will yet become a great district, and which I shall have much pleasure in assisting with a railway in the future, but which, up to the present time, has never turned out twenty thousand ounces a year.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Get a better argument than that.

THE PREMIER: I am showing the hon. member's inconsistency, and he does not like it.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oh yes he does; go on.

THE PREMIER: That only shows to what lengths the hon. member will go. He would not listen to the Government, in his desire to help a colleague on that side. I rather commend him for trying to help a colleague, for that is a generous impulse; but I cannot commend him for opposing the Government on every possible occasion, because I do not think that is generous. It is only for party purposes. If the hon. member would be only a little more sincere, if he would be only half as sincere as he would make us believe, I and other members of the House would have much more respect for him. There are not only railways in this Bill, though I have dealt with them principally up to the present time—there is rolling-stock. We ask for £165,000 for rolling-stock. I have no doubt more

will be required, and probably before this Bill leaves the House I may have something to say with regard to that matter. At any rate £165,000 is provided in this Bill, and it is absolutely necessary. It is impossible to refuse the purchase of rolling-stock at the present time. To-day a deputation waited upon me, or at any rate wished to see me, with regard to trucks, for they thought they did not get sufficient trucks to carry on their business. Still, the hon. member says "Wait a while; wait for a year or two; never mind these people; never mind the trade of the colony being paralysed; do not spend any more money." Then he tells us he is not opposed to buying trucks, but he is opposed to raising money; but if he is opposed to raising money he is opposed to buying trucks. There are the Fremantle harbour works, the sum put down in relation to them being £70,000. We all know that great work is nearing completion and that any day we may find the P. & O. Company have decided that their steamers shall make Fremantle a port of call. We know what great good that will do to the colony, and what good has already been done by opening up the river and getting facilities for shipping. And the hon. member would stop that, or at any rate he would stop it as soon as the present money available is gone. He would not let us do anything else. He would not let us build those wharf sheds all along the sides of the wharf, for which I have had numerous applications from Fremantle, as has also my colleague. I do not know but what the members for East and South Fremantle have been on those deputations, but whether they have or not does not matter. These sheds are urgently required in order to give despatch to ships at Fremantle. The hon. member does not care about all these things. He would let them all go by the board; in fact, let the colony stop altogether as far as he is concerned. And he would allow no more loan money to be authorised by this House. Our railways are paying better than they have ever paid before; the colony is, as far as I can judge, looking at it from a revenue point of view, and also from the point of view of the development of its resources, progressing at a rate it never has progressed at before; and if we were to stop now because the House said they would

not allow a new authorisation of £750,000, I think we would be unworthy of the position we find ourselves in. Then we have to build lighthouses in Fremantle, and we know that a bargain to do that was made with the P. & O. Company. Two leading lights are to be made, and one of them at Rottnest is already in hand. These things cannot be done without money and without the approval of this House. The hon. member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson) has twitted me about centralising. I think perhaps I may say to him that his desire is to centralise everything where he lives, in Geraldton. I certainly desire to open up the harbour at Fremantle, and to make it a port of call and the principal port of this colony. With regard to all other railways, I desire to give them facilities so as to knit and bind together the whole of the railway system of this colony, that people may go from one end of it to the other. I desire to build railways where the people are and where the gold mines are. The hon. member stated that I said the railways must be built where the gold is, but I said a little more than that, my statement being that we must take the railways wherever the population is and where the gold is. Is there any man in this House so foolish and so unmindful of what is best for this colony as to follow the hon. member in his advocacy for his constituency? I forgive him what he says about me.

He takes the rustic murmur of his bourg
For the great wave that echoes round the world.

He would have you build a railway from Mount Magnet to Lawlers, which is about 200 miles by road, or we will say 160 or 170.

MR. ROBSON: You are coming down a bit, by degrees.

THE PREMIER: We will take the distance from Lawlers to Leonora at 80 or 70 miles, if you like; and he would ask the House to build 250 miles of railway to Leonora, and 160 miles of it would go through country where there are not, I believe, 200 people living, and where there are no gold mines.

MR. ROBSON: It is like Norseman. It is full of auriferous country.

THE PREMIER: He would have that railway built instead of building a railway from Menzies to Niagara, where

there is considerable settlement, and to Leonora a distance of only 60 miles, against that 250. The thing is absurd! If it were not that I know the hon. member was making a speech in the interests of his constituency, I should certainly have something more to say about it; but I recognise that he has to do it, and I recognise that the people of Geraldton are imbued with the idea that all roads must lead to Geraldton. I would be glad it should be so; but at the same time I cannot advocate such a plan, or be laughed at by my friends for doing so. At all events, I could not consistently advocate the construction of a railway in that direction, when the railway proposed is only 60 or 70 miles from Meuzies through auriferous country. I congratulate the hon. member on the excellent Geraldton centralising speech he made.

MR. ROBSON: Not at all.

THE PREMIER: I regret I am unable to follow him or give him any support in this matter. I hope another time the hon. member will be more successful, and will move something in which we can support him. It will give me much more pleasure to support him than to oppose him, as I have to do on this occasion.

MR. ROBSON: One for me and two for yourself.

THE PREMIER: I must say that I have been twitted and taunted a good deal all over the colony: on the gold-fields, at Geraldton, at Norseman, at Esperance Bay, and at Albany, the people and all the Press are taunting me with being a great centraliser, and desiring to bring everything to Fremantle. All I can say is, it must be admitted that I do it on public grounds only, because I have not the support in this House of nearly a majority of the members who represent Perth, Fremantle, and the neighbourhood. Out of eleven members representing Fremantle and Perth and the neighbourhood, only about four sit on this side of the House; so no one can say that I am doing this in order to get political support. If I am doing it for that reason I have not succeeded, for, as I say, I have only four members supporting me—I am speaking from memory—who sit on this side of the House and who represent Perth and Fremantle and the neighbourhood. If I followed the line of conduct that some hon. members pursue, I might ask myself

why should I worry myself, why should I incur the odium of my friends in Albany and all about the colony, of trying to serve Fremantle, when I do not get the support of Fremantle? I must say I often feel that it is very hard, and I confess I am not too well pleased. Here I am incurring the odium of people all over this colony, who say that I follow a centralising policy, and the very members representing Fremantle, for which place I do it, never lose an opportunity of voting against me and trying to drive me from office.

MR. EWING: You do it for the country, and not the members for Fremantle.

THE PREMIER: I say it is a fact that one feels he is incurring odium and lessening the grip of the people of this country because he is doing it. He does it because it is his duty, but he does not receive the support of those he is doing it for.

MR. HOLMES: You did not buy them all, did you?

THE PREMIER: I know we put you here, and after getting honours from me under false pretences, you deserted me and went over to the other side.

MR. HOLMES: I am prepared to take the consequences.

THE PREMIER: I say you deserted me, after you made representation that you desired honours from the Government. I was glad indeed to recommend you; but two days after you deserted the Government benches.

MR. LEAKE: Then you did try to buy the hon. member?

THE PREMIER: I did not try to buy him. He came into the House on a pledge to support us, and came in on our votes, and he deserted us after getting all he could out of us. It is time I spoke plainly, and I am glad to have the opportunity.

MR. HOLMES: You offered to make a justice of the peace of me.

THE PREMIER: You bothered a good deal for that honour.

MR. HOLMES: I refused it, too.

THE PREMIER: You never refused it to me, but asked for it many times.

MR. HOLMES: You mean the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) offered it to me many times.

THE PREMIER: Nobody ever told me that. I have heard of members for

Fremantle, when appealed to as to supporting the Government, saying, "Oh, the Premier is too much wedded to the scheme at Fremantle to let it stop now: whatever happens, he must do the work." Is that the sort of treatment I deserve from the Fremantle members, when I have served them and their town honestly and faithfully, with a desire to make the country progress, and to make Fremantle the central port and the high-road of commerce? That is the object I have in view, and the treatment I have described is what I have received from those whose interests I have been furthering, on whose account I have incurred the odium, not only of one place, but of half-a-dozen places throughout the colony, and on whose account, through my honourably furthering the interests of the country, I have to a large extent lost my grip of many districts where I was formerly on friendly terms. But I care nothing for the vote of these members, or whether they oppose me or not.

MR. HOLMES: It seems to worry you a lot.

THE PREMIER: I will do my duty to the country, as I have done all my life. I have tried to be single-minded, and have certainly done my duty to the town and people of Fremantle; and whether the Fremantle members vote against me or not, I shall continue in the same path I have walked during all these years. At the same time, I do not think the more of the members for Fremantle for the way they have treated me: the man whom they know to have done more for their district and town than any person in the colony. It seems to me hon. members take delight sometimes in appearing to be opposed to those who are their best friends, so as to make it appear they are independent; but I say—

The friends thou hast, and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel.

Now we come to another matter, that of the Bunbury harbour. Members who were at Bunbury the other day saw for themselves whether there is any need for the proposed works there; and I shall say no more about the matter except that the wharves were full, two ships were waiting outside, and a great many other ships were expected. The member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) was there,

and I notice he has said "hear, hear" a good many times to speeches delivered from the Opposition side to-night. But he has been on deputations to me urging works at Bunbury, and has been the chief spokesman of those deputations; and what is the explanation of his attitude to-night? Is he cooling down in his advocacy of the construction of the works at the port of Bunbury? Perhaps the hon. member is losing interest in that part of the colony; or something has happened to make him not so eager now as when he pressed me to carry on those works. The works at Bunbury are necessary; and unless ships have to be told to go about their business, the traffic cease, and the timber mills stand still, something must be done to provide increased facilities. Then, as to the Kalgoorlie line, does anyone who knows anything about the condition of Kalgoorlie and the Boulder at the present time in regard to railway traffic mean to say expenditure is not necessary there? We know very well that £50,000 would be required if we did all we ought to do at that place. The railway yard is congested, and the Commissioner of Railways has begun to spend £15,000 there in order to deal with the traffic. The line needs improving between Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie, and we know we cannot carry the traffic on the Boulder line at present, and must give increased facilities. The railway traffic is thoroughly congested, and still we find the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) arguing that no more expenditure is needed. The hon. member may not go so far as to say that, because he would vote for the purchase of rolling-stock; but apart from the rolling-stock, improvements must be made in order not only to carry on the traffic and do the business of the country, but also to make money. The department cannot under present circumstances earn the money it ought to earn.

MR. MORAN: Although I represent Kalgoorlie, I say it is much better for Kalgoorlie to be doubly congested, than to raise any more loans at the present time.

THE PREMIER: I do not see that.

MR. MORAN: I do.

THE PREMIER: We must keep pace with the times.

MR. MORAN: You must not ruin the colony for the sake of Kalgoorlie.

THE PREMIER: I do not think we will ruin the colony, because we have the richest mines in the world there, and we must give proper railway facilities, and so make money for the people through the railway department.

MR. MORAN: You should have done the work long ago, out of revenue.

THE PREMIER: As to public batteries, I do not know whether people are changing their minds in regard to that policy; but there are already two in hand that have been paid for. Are hon. members afraid of the policy of building batteries, or have the batteries been a failure? On the contrary, the batteries have been a great success and they will be a greater success, as soon as the men get more used to the work than they are at the present time. I do not agree with the member for East Coolgardie at all; and I know the member for North Murchison (Mr. Moorhead) will tell us that the Mulline battery is turning out a large quantity of gold, and a large amount of money comes into the colony in consequence of the erection of this battery.

MR. MORAN: But does the battery pay?

THE PREMIER: And as to all the other proposed improvements on the railways, are we to give them up and do nothing? That is not the policy we have carried on in this colony, nor the policy which we intend to carry on. I am afraid I am taking rather a long time, but I will hurry along. Supposing the Government were defeated, what would any other Government, I do not care which, do without funds at their disposal for the works I have named? They would be bound to have a large loan at once for rolling-stock and improvements to railways, harbours, and public works generally. In the way of improvements at Kalgoorlie and other places, it is impossible for us to do nothing; and we want rolling-stock, which is not paid for and received until a considerable time after the order is given. Surveys have to be made; and a survey from Menzies to Leonora, or from Coolgardie to Norseman would take a great deal of time. We must have authorisation before we can undertake the work. In fact, the work will take months and months. This House will be in session, I believe,

before these railways are undertaken, with the exception of one railway which we may try and hurry on with to tap the water at Niagara. I do not think there is any railway in the list which will be actually in hand before we meet in June next. I do not suppose if we hurry on with these works as quickly as we can that they will be started. I would like to point out that a little while ago—not many weeks—we passed through this House a Bill which we believed will bring in £100,000 of revenue. Do hon. members want to put all that money in the Treasury? Some of this money could go towards extending the railway system into these very goldfields.

MR. WILSON: That is not the money you are proposing to expend.

THE PREMIER: It will help to supply the interest; it will provide interest on three millions of money, or thereabouts. We ought to be just to the goldfields, which are doing so much for this colony. We should open up the country by means of this dividend tax, and it will help us in other ways. No one can say that we cannot afford to expend this money, seeing that we shall have £94,000 from a source which we never anticipated. I come now to another matter upon which hon. members have had a good deal to say, and it is more to the point, perhaps, or as much to the point, as anything that has been said. I refer to the indebtedness of the colony. The old plan has been followed by the member for Albany: increase the indebtedness by every means and divide the amount by the population. I think the leader of the Opposition made £15,000,000 as the amount of indebtedness, he divided this by the present population, and got as a result something like £88 per head. It is past endurance that a man can take such talk as that seriously. I do not know whether the hon. member has been sitting at the feet of the Central Murchison Gamaliel, and has been learning finance from him; but these two financiers first make out that we have an indebtedness of £15,000,000 adding our present proposals: I wonder they did not make it £50,000,000; it would have been just as reasonable. According to the published accounts, the debt of the colony on the 30th June last was £10,000,000, but we have added another

half a million to that. The present population is 171,000; therefore I say the indebtedness is £62 per head. Take away six and a half millions which has been spent on railways, from that amount—because that amount is not a burden on the taxpayers to the amount of one halfpenny—take six and a half millions, and assuming that the remaining four millions was not interest-paying, there would only be left an indebtedness of £23 per head of the population. An expenditure which is bearing interest and paying working expenses, interest to the sinking fund, and carrying a balance to revenue, cannot be said to be a burden on the taxpayer. I will show directly that there is not an amount of four million pounds left; less than that. If in the future we increase our indebtedness, it is reasonable to suppose our population will increase also. It is unfair to reckon our indebtedness by the authorisations, because until the money is borrowed it is not a debt. You cannot reckon money which has not been borrowed as a debt; money which you have not had the benefit of. Surely that cannot be the meaning of the English language.

MR. MORAN: If you commit yourself to the expenditure, you can.

THE PREMIER: But the colony will change by that time, surely? Our present authorisations, including everything, amount to nearly £12,000,000, of which amount about £7,000,000 will have been spent on railways, which are self-supporting; £2,000,000 will have been spent on the Coolgardie water scheme, which is supposed to be self-supporting.

MR. LEAKE: Ha! ha!

THE PREMIER: I do not see anything in that "ha! ha!" It seems to me to be a foolish ejaculation. If we sell the water in Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, and everybody says we shall, the scheme must pay. It will not be a burden on the State: no one ever said it would be; no one, at any rate, with any responsibility, on this side of the House, has said so. Then there is three-quarters of a million on the harbour works at Fremantle. The harbour works in Melbourne pay their way, and there is no reason why the harbour works here should not pay their way. Therefore there is nine to ten millions of money included in the public debt and authorisations up

to the present time, out of 12 million pounds which have been expended in works, which are either self-supporting or will be when the works are completed. Where is the taxation on the people in regard to that amount? I cannot see it. Of course if the Coolgardie water scheme fails, if our railways do not pay, if we have to carry goods for nothing, there will have to be taxation; but that has not been our experience up to the present, and I say it will not be, and as we know that most of the loan money is on account of railways, which pay the interest and the amount to the sinking fund, I hope I have made it pretty clear that there is very little taxation on the people. There is another point. If we do not want to build these railways ourselves, knowing as I do they are good railways and will pay, they should be constructed by private persons. Private people will be glad to carry them out.

MR. LEAKE: Let private enterprise do it.

THE PREMIER: I know the hon. member, or his friends, would be the first to ask for the contract: we might not be able to see the hon. member in the matter, but his finger would be in the pie somewhere. I say we do not want to give our railways to private enterprise to build: we can build them cheaper ourselves; that is my opinion. We know that if private enterprise constructs the railways the public will have to pay, after all. If private enterprise builds a railway, depend on it the general public will have to pay the money to run the railway; they will have to pay high fares, and thus find the money to pay the working expenses. If the public did not pay the expense of running these railways they would not be carried on for long by private enterprise. The Leonora and Norseman railways will bind the colony together; they will be trunk lines, and if we cannot build them ourselves, I say in regard to railways of this sort, if we are not prepared to construct them, certainly I would vote to allow others to do it. But we cannot agree not to construct these railways. Members of the Opposition believe in private enterprise, but I know that there is a good deal of plunder in private enterprise. If the work was to be carried out for a million pounds a company would

be floated for two millions, and the people in this country would have to pay interest on the two millions. Railways like the Leonora and Norseman lines will be feeders to the railway system. They are works which are in every way desirable, and we have no right to sit here and do nothing, and say that we will not let anyone else do the work. At the same time, I do not advocate private enterprise in the building of these railways, anyway. I am not opposed to private enterprise in the matter of feeders for our railways; but as regards these two trunk railways, it would be far better for us to build them ourselves, for we could do the work much cheaper. I should like to point out to my friend the member for Geraldton (Mr. Robson), who talked about circumlocution and the circuitous route first to Menzies and then to Leonora, that the people at Norseman, concerning whose terrible taxation we have heard a great deal, and a great deal concerning the heavy freights they have to pay—those people, when this railway is finished, will be in exactly the same position as the people of Menzies: they will be one hundred miles from Coolgardie; and I think the people at Menzies are very grateful for the easy means of communication which have been afforded them, and I see no reason why the people of Norseman should not be equally grateful.

MR. ROBSON: The people of Menzies are not within 125 miles of a port.

THE PREMIER: I should like to say, in conclusion, that in advocating these additions to our railways and other public works—works that are absolutely necessary, in my opinion, in the interests of the country—speaking now for myself and for those who support me, we are not, never have been, and never will be reckless. We have too much interest in this country, and too much regard for our reputations, to do anything reckless. We are not reckless adventurers, and therefore that argument as to our being reckless may be set aside. There is a question, of course, and a great question too—perhaps if I say this I may be misrepresented—there is a question of giving employment to the people we have already here, of attracting others to this colony, and of giving work to our own people. Are we going to sit down and say that

every work is completed, and that we shall do nothing more? Are we going to say to the people who come to our shores: "We have done; the public works are finished because we have no more money; we have no more credit, and we are going to sit still and do nothing?" Is that the way we are going to deal with our great patrimony—perhaps the greatest patrimony held by any British people in the whole world? There is no country where 170,000 people have so great a patrimony as we possess. When the ball is at our feet, when of all our loan money there is scarcely any that is not reproductive and paying, and it is no weight and no burden whatever upon the people, are we to begin to follow the example of hon. members opposite, and to adopt a do-nothing policy except by private enterprise? That has been their cry all along. When they come into office, they will perhaps have an opportunity of flying this wonderful kite of theirs—that is, private enterprise. Their cry is either for private enterprise or for stagnation—the private enterprise policy or the do-nothing policy. I say we have the ball at our feet; we have nothing whatever to fear; our credit is good. This two millions the hon. member (Mr. Illingworth) talks about is nothing at all. We have two and a half years' time; we have over two years to think about it; and if we cannot deal with that two millions of floating debt in two years, I certainly think we can get better terms than we have at the present time. In this matter we must take the rough with the smooth: money can always be obtained. If it is cheap, we get it cheaply; if dear, we have to pay more for it. It is the way of the world, always has been, and always will be. We cannot help that; we cannot rule the destinies of the universe and make the money market just to suit ourselves. All we have to do is to take advantage of the opportunity when it occurs. At any rate, I have no fear. The revenue of the colony is increasing; it will be £40,000 more, I believe, this month than it was this month last year: in fact, it will be, I believe, £240,000 this month. With a revenue like that, with a large credit in the local banks, as I said the other night, what have we to be afraid of? I say our revenue is good; we have had a good season; the industries

of the colony are flourishing. The railways are doing better than they ever did before; and if you only give them a chance now, and sufficient rolling-stock is provided, they will do still better. Gold, tin, coal, and everything in fact seem to me to be prospering. In commending the second reading of the Bill to the House, I again ask what reason is there for the pessimistic speech of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), or for the wailing speech of the member for Albany (Mr. Leake)?

MR. GEORGE (Murray): I move the adjournment of the debate.

Motion put and passed, and the debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

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

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 28th November, 1899.

Papers Presented—Question: Mail Delivery in Perth—Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill, third reading—Constitution Acts Amendment Bill, in Committee, postponed clause, etc., reported—Subiaco Tramways Bill, first reading—Fisheries Bill, in Committee, Clause 6, progress—Mines Regulation Amendment Bill, first reading—Bills of Sale Bill, Assembly's Amendment, etc.—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: 1, Third Annual Report of the Acclimatisation Society; 2, Return of Expenditure on Eastern Goldfields during the last four years (ordered on motion by Hon. C. E. Dempster).

Ordered to lie on the table.

QUESTION—MAIL DELIVERY IN PERTH.

HON. R. G. BURGESS asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, If the Government intend to make any alteration in the delivery of mails at Perth delivered by the second daily train from Beverley, also by the Albany daily train to Fremantle, as at present all letters from places along the line arrive in Perth late at night, and no delivery takes place till half-past 8 next morning, and very often not until half-past 10 the following morning, which thus renders the service useless: 2, If the Government intend making better provision for the carriage of loose letters from railway sidings, as the present system is most unsatisfactory.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY replied:—1. (a.) The late arrival of the second train daily from Beverley, and the Albany through train, at 6 p.m. and after midnight respectively, does not admit of a postal delivery on the same day, but letters are sorted into the private boxes and available to their owners up to 10 p.m. daily. (b.) The time of the morning delivery is contingent upon that of the arrival at Perth of the Eastern goldfields express. 2. Each siding is provided with a private mail bag, and anything outside of this arrangement is a matter for the consideration of the Railway Department.

BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time, on motion by Hon. F. T. CROWDER, and transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.

CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

IN COMMITTEE.

Consideration resumed from 22nd November, at postponed clause.

Clause 28—Disqualification for membership of either House:

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY moved that Sub-clause 5 be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu thereof:—

Be an undischarged bankrupt, or a debtor against whose estate there is a subsisting receiving order in bankruptcy, or a debtor who has taken the benefit of any Act relating to bankrupt or insolvent debtors, the proceedings being subsisting; or.