

strong political feelings, I am quite sure that at the end of the session members will not be able to tell what my politics are, while occupying this Chair. I thank you again, hon. members, for the way in which you have received me and appointed me your Speaker. I will leave the Chair until half-past 2, and I hope members will be here at that hour to go to Government House and present me to His Excellency the Governor.

PRESENTATION OF THE SPEAKER-ELECT.

At half-past 2 o'clock, the Speaker-elect, accompanied by a number of members, proceeded to Government House, where His Excellency the Governor was pleased to approve of the appointment of Sir Jas. G. Lee Steere as Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

A Commission was issued by His Excellency to the Speaker, to administer the oath to members who had not yet been sworn.

THE GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

Black Rod having appeared at the Bar, and delivered a summons from the Governor:

Mr. SPEAKER and hon. members proceeded to the Legislative Council Chamber, where His Excellency delivered the opening Speech, setting forth the intentions of Ministers. [*Vide* Council report, p. 2, *ante*.] Mr. Speaker and hon. members then returned to the Legislative Chamber.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the SPEAKER: Public Accounts for financial year 1900, accompanied by Report of Auditor General.

Ordered to be printed.

By the PREMIER: Reports (annual) of — 1, Customs, etc.; 2, Chief Inspector of Explosives and Government Analyst; 3, Rottneest Prison; 4, Fremantle Lunatic Asylum; 5, Fishing Industry; 6, Education Department; 7, Superintendent Public Charities and Inspector Industrial and Reformatory Schools, etc.; 8, Superintendent Government Labour Bureau; 9, Stock Department; 10, Agricultural Bank; 11, Woods and Forests Department; 12, Gaols and Prisoners; 13, also Report of Royal Commission on Rabbit Question.

By the COLONIAL TREASURER: By-laws of municipalities of Busselton, Bunbury, Southern Cross, Kalgoorlie, Perth, Fremantle, Leederville, Helena Vale, East Fremantle, Leonora, Gingin, Perth, and Fremantle.

By the MINISTER FOR WORKS: 1, By-laws under Coolgardie Goldfields Water Supply Construction Act, 1898; 2, Regulations of Sea Jetties.

By the MINISTER FOR MINES: Regulations under Goldfields Act, Mines Regulation Act, and Mineral Lands Act.

Ordered to lie on the table.

INDUSTRIAL CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER (without notice), and read a first time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

MR. J. GARDINER (Albany): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to move the Address-in-reply to the Governor's Speech, and following parliamentary custom, may I be permitted to congratulate you, sir, upon your reappointment to the highest office within the gift of this Assembly, and to express a hope that your health may withstand the arduous duties the position entails. In common with every loyal citizen of these British dominions, I felt grieved at the death of Her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen. I am sure it is the wish of the people throughout the Empire that the reign of her son shall be equally as beneficent as that of his mother; and I trust that on the occasion of the visit of the Duke of Cornwall and York we shall not be behind in this State in expressing that loyalty to the Throne for which Australians have ever been celebrated. I am proud to think we are now a portion of the great Australian Commonwealth. Having taken some little part in the consummation of that union, I feel proud indeed to be a citizen to-day of Australia. I think, too, that this State is to be congratulated upon the choice by His Majesty's Imperial Ministers of the gentleman whom they have sent as Governor of this State. From first impressions, Sir Arthur and Lady Lawley bid fair to find a very warm corner indeed in the hearts of the people of this State; and I am sure I am expressing the wish of this House that they

may find among us a home, in the truest and highest sense. This House has lost one of its prominent members. I had not the pleasure of being intimately acquainted with the late Mr. Alex. Forrest, but judging with humane charity only the good works we know of him, I say this State and this House have suffered a great loss indeed. I feel the responsibility of proposing the first Address-in-reply, after the first change of administration in this State; and I think I may take the opportunity of giving expression to my political faith, which is, after all, but a reflex and an echo of the wish of the State that we should have sound financial and departmental administration, that we should bring in earnest measures aiming at uniting all our great interests, and that we should give to the people of this State the fullest measure and meed of the benefits of constitutional government; in other words, that we should hold in the most sacred trust both the great revenues and the great assets of this State, to be developed in the best interests of the whole of the people of this State. I will give the greatest assistance to the present Government, because I recognise, as I am sure this House recognises, that those are the principles underlying His Excellency's Speech. I am not supporting the Ministry as men: I am supporting them rather as the crystallisation of the public's desire. Almost the first line in the Speech is, "Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Legislative Assembly, the finances of the State will require your earnest and close consideration"; and I think that both inside and outside this House that sentiment will find a very great indorsement. We recognise—in fact we must insist—that our finances shall be put upon a sound business basis; and that we shall have placed before this House, not an elaborate array of figures, but in a concrete form the exact financial position of this State. In this State, unfortunately, we have a number of advocates of the borrow-and-spend policy; men who would leave it to posterity to "foot the bill." Posterity comes very quickly in Australia with regard to financial matters. We found that out in the other States, and I do not think we shall be behind in finding it out in this State. In fact, we are already "posterity" in

regard to that monument of financing, the £1,000,000 of Treasury bills which we floated some two years ago. Let anyone go carefully into that matter, and he will find that not only did those bills mature at a most inopportune time, but that they will have cost the State something between £50,000 and £60,000. Future Treasurers—and I am sure the House will insist on this—must not permit either their personal optimism or their personal inflation to get into the Treasury chest; and we must see that, in future, reports are not supplied to the Press stating that we have plenty of funds, that we have £1,000,000 in the Treasury chest, when a careful analysis would show that, if we paid the public creditors up to date, and did not take credit for £400,000 of the savings of the thrifty, the chest, instead of being full, would be absolutely empty. We want to see that the public creditors are paid promptly; and, in addition to that, we do not want the accounts for May to be left unpaid in order that we shall show a surplus instead of a deficit at the end of June. I think we in this House have a right to guard the credit of this State as carefully as we would guard our own personal credit. We do not want a Treasurer who is a financial genius, but we want a Treasurer who is courageous, who will say "no," and say it emphatically, when that "no" means the conservation of the public funds of this country. It is easy enough to say "yes." A man who has the courage to say "no" is the man we want as Treasurer of this State for some little time. We do not want a Treasurer to be always looking after the pennies and trusting the pounds to take care of themselves, because under those circumstances that sometimes means being "penny wise and pound foolish"; but we want a Treasurer who will say, "Let us observe every care, and see that the public Treasury chest is thoroughly guarded." I suggest to him it would be a wise thing to make a new departure in the floating of this £500,000 of old authorisations. I suggest that this be put on the financial market of the Australian States. Judging from the experience of other States, I am sure that, even at a higher rate of interest, there would be no difficulty in having that money taken up; and it would have

this effect: not only would the principal be in circulation here, but the interest would be kept here, and that would be but a beginning for each individual State in Australia financing her own public works. I would suggest that instead of borrowing in inflated times, for the future we borrow in depressed times and pay even a higher rate of interest. This will have two effects. In the first place it will be a corrective of the dulness of the times, and in the second place it is more than likely we shall receive a greater amount of principal. And the purchasing power of that principal, practical men will tell you, in dull times is considerably increased. Thus, though at first sight it might appear that we were paying too much interest for our money, the practical result of the expenditure of that money would, I feel, justify us. It should be the aim, and I am sure it will be the aim, of this House to inspire the greatest possible confidence in our credit. We have to borrow some enormous sums to complete the works which are stated to be authorised, and which the Speech says the Government feel inclined to carry out; and therefore it should be our aim to put our finances on a business footing, and in every possible way to give investors confidence. It is a staggering thing to think that when we have borrowed to our full limit, every man, woman, and child in this community will be responsible for something like £4 a head per annum interest. Let the man who says "Borrow; you can get capital anywhere you like," just think of that for a moment, and I am sure he will realise that this is no time for us to continue the policy of borrowing as much as we possibly can. And I think a step towards allowing the investor to feel a greater confidence in this country would be achieved if the Treasurer could show an intention of constructing necessary unproductive works out of revenue. We have a revenue here of something like three millions, and I say that if we have careful administration there ought at least to be a considerable surplus—not on paper, but in actual cash—so that these necessary unproductive public works might be constructed out of the surplus. I have the greatest possible faith in the future of this State, but I do not want to see that future mortgaged to such an

extent that we shall look forward to it with dread. Necessarily following the question of finance is the great question of public works, and I think the Government, before continuing the works of their predecessors, might go carefully into them to see which are works of absolute utility. Wherever they are works of convenience only, I would suggest that the Government honour the contracts so far as they have gone; and that after that they say, "Let the completion of these works remain until we are in a position absolutely to afford them." I shall be asked whether I intend stopping public works. I say unhesitatingly, no. In regard to public works we must not go rashly, neither must we go timidly: we must endeavour to construct those works which are of absolute utility. Only works of such a kind ought to receive the sanction of this House, in the present condition of the finances. I am sure that even from an economic standpoint, it is an unwise thing to construct huge works that the surrounding circumstances do not justify. The immediate neighbourhood in which they are constructed possibly derives a little temporary prosperity from them; but the after-depression, and the knowledge that the works were not works of utility, are bad for the community as a whole. We cannot afford to follow the "Santa Claus" policy of the previous Administration. We have only to construct works of necessity, leaving those of luxury to a later and probably better financial period. I am glad to see, and am sure the State is glad to see, that we are to have a Public Works Committee. I have no doubt that this committee will be established on the same lines as the Public Works Committee of New South Wales, and that it will be selected from the members of this Assembly; and I hope that when that selection is made, there will be no suggestion of party patronage in the appointments. If we have here capable men of wide and broad experience, the country has the right to ask that those men be appointed to the committee, irrespective of which side of the House they sit on. I have in my mind's eye two members at least who are not on this side of the House, and I should feel very disappointed indeed if their selection on this Public Works Committee did not

occur. I am also glad to think that the Government purpose in the future to allow this House, as a House, to hold the keys of the Treasury chest, instead of giving them, as has been done in the past, entirely into the hands of Ministers. It is the undoubted right of this House to have a say as to how the public funds shall be spent. We are promised no construction of railways. I am pledged to support two railways—a railway from Menzies to Leonora and the Esperance-Goldfields railway. Although we are not to have any construction of railways, we are promised surveys of railways; and I think that if this is the case, one of the first trial surveys should be that of the Esperance to the fields railway. We have heard a great deal lately of the Collie railway, and I think the member for Collie is to be congratulated on the great amount of energy he has shown in his desire to educate the people as to the necessity for that line. But if the arguments which are adduced in justification of a trial survey of that line are conclusive, how infinitely more emphatic are they as applied to the Esperance-fields railway! It is said that the reason why the Collie line should be constructed is that one necessity, coal, may be taken to the fields at a less cost. I believe that is the strongest argument, that coal may be sent to the consumer at a much less cost. Well, that is one necessity. Surely, then, the fields make out a very strong case indeed when they ask for the railway from Esperance because it will materially cheapen the cost of every necessity. And into this, of course, has come the question of private enterprise. When private enterprise comes up in this House, we shall, I trust, be able to review the whole history of private enterprise with its benefits and disadvantages; and from that, honestly threshed out on the floor of this House, the people will be able to judge whether or not it is advisable to conserve for the State whatever appears to be for the benefit of the State. Then there are the railways, and I think it will be candidly admitted there is every possible scope for investigation into the management of our railways. I do not wish to say one word that may be unkind, but still it is strange indeed that we should have at one time out of this State

the General Manager, the Chief Traffic Manager, the Chief Accountant for Railways, the Engineer for Existing Lines, and three or four other highly-paid officials. I think that if our railways can go on temporarily without all the heads, it is quite time we should dispense with the heads, and carry the railways on for all time under the same management. The condition of the rolling-stock evidently needs very careful inquiry indeed; and I think we have a right to see that repairs are done in time, as it is better to spend the profits which we have been supposed to be making out of the railways on keeping the rolling-stock in thorough repair, than it is to make great efforts to pay those profits into the Treasury, where the money may be spent in different directions. If you look at the railway balance-sheet, you will see that for the last seven years there has been a suppositious profit—I call it a suppositious profit under the circumstances—of over £700,000; and now in this £3,000,000 we are asked to pass authorisation for, we have I believe to provide £1,000,000 for renewals of rolling-stock and other very necessary and requisite works with regard to railways. I am pleased to see that every encouragement is to be given to the settlement of our lands. I have always been an advocate, in this State especially, of giving every possible facility for the producer to get his products economically to the consumer, and I do not think it is a matter we can be genuinely proud of, that in looking over the last customs report we find that last year we received from other States more butter, bacon, cheese, and eggs than in any previous year in the history of this State. I want to see that remedied, and I think that to remedy this the Government may very well go out of their way a little, and, wherever there are senders, act as delivery carriers, so that the people can get their products right to the consumer straight away.

MR. GEORGE: Drain the South-West: then you will have it all.

MR. GARDINER: The member for the Murray once thanked me for saving his voice. I hope he is not going to make me sorry for that act of courtesy. I would like to see some consideration given to those selectors who take up poison country. I think we might give them

deferred payments for a year or two, so that every encouragement should be afforded them to clear their land of poison. There is no doubt speedy steps will have to be taken with regard to the rabbit question. I lived for some five or six years in one of the worst rabbit-infested portions of South Australia, and I say unhesitatingly that this question of rabbits is not a jesting matter. I saw men ruined who for years had been in fine circumstances; and I say I will give assistance to every member here who will devise any means to check that pest from coming into Western Australia. It is all very well for our friends on the goldfields to say the rabbits will give them cheap meat and fresh meat. I quite appreciate that cry; but if the rabbits get into possession of this country we shall have to obtain all our meat from abroad, and not be able to produce any here at all. Then we come to the question of farm labour, and I am sure the farming community ought to have the sympathy of the House in this particular matter, more especially as they cannot afford to pay the ruling rate of wages for farm labourers. It would be wise for the Government to ask the farmers to send in to them the number of men they can employ all the year round at a minimum wage, say, of £1 or 25s. a week; and then, as soon as the Government knew exactly the requirements of those people who would give permanent employment, they should endeavour to bring those farm labourers from other portions of the world in order that the farmer here may receive the full benefit of that land which he has selected. I think it will be candidly admitted that it is the duty of this House to try to cement, if they possibly can, the kindly feelings that should exist between the agriculturists and the vigorous people on the fields. Any one of us who goes out of his way either for personal advancement or in order to favour the advancement of his political party, and seeks to sow seeds of dissension in this particular direction, should be at least execrated not only in this House but in the country. It should be the aim of all of us—and although I am not a native of this country, I love it just as much as any man who was born here—to try if we can possibly cement this feeling, so that all our industries may be to each other

industries of mutual advantage. Let us marry this shy, covetous maiden of husbandry to the strong, vigorous life of the fields; let us bind them together by the greatest commercial chain, the chain of self-interest, and I am sure that no matter which side of the House we may sit on, it will be our earnest endeavour to bring about that highly desirable end. I had rather anticipated that a Mining or Private Property Bill was to be brought in, and I hope it will be brought in, enabling us to have the deposits of coal at the Irwin developed, and also the Northampton lead mines, although reports as to the lead deposits seem unfavourable. More than once reports of geologists have been “unfavourable,” and the reports have afterwards proved to be absolutely incorrect. I trust that in the case of the Northampton lead mines, history in some respects will be repeated. And another thing: I hope the present Government are going to pursue the policy of open ports, and of giving to every port its geographical trade. We own a third of Australia, and I think it is only the policy of the statesman, who wants to see every possible port open instead of closed, to serve the best interests of the community; and this applies especially where we have such a large area under consideration. As you know, I represent a port (Albany) which—rightly I think—says that it has not received the consideration it should have had. I am not going to make that a plea in this House at all, but I am going to make a plea for all ports, and I am going to ask this House to indorse any sentiment which says that every port shall have its geographical trade. I venture to say that all those of you who have wide experience will admit that much of the success of other lands is due to the fact that they have encouraged the opening in every possible direction of their ports, which have acted as feeders for the trade of those communities. And farther, I hope the Government will give every possible encouragement to inter-colonial steamers. There has been a lot of trouble taken to provide accommodation and everything else for the largest steamers from the old land; but in doing this—a very laudable and desirable thing—do not let us forget that it is on the coastal steamers we rely to a great extent

for the advancement of trade. Harbour trusts were mentioned in the Premier's speech at the Queen's Hall, and I want to see harbour trusts established. I think it will be a good thing to have them on an elective basis, taking the municipal rolls as the ground on which the people should vote. I see we are to have an amending and consolidating Bill with regard to arbitration and conciliation, and I hope we will all join to try and make that Bill as perfect as possible, in order to prevent strikes occurring. We are faced, as we know, right here at the present moment with a strike threatening our railways. Now if the demand made by the men is an honest demand, and one that will stand investigation in this House, then I am sure this House as a whole will do those men justice. If, on the other hand, it is not a demand that will stand calm investigation, I venture to say this House, wherever members may sit or to whichever party we may belong, will combine to see that measures are taken to prevent any wrong being done to the greatest asset of this State, the railways, or any inconvenience being caused to the people. We are willing, I am sure one and all who are outside of the party that strictly represents labour, to do justice to labour. The sympathy of most of us is with labour; but when there is a desire shown to use the power of labour for other than legitimate ends, then I say our sympathies with labour are lost, and we must all combine to protect the best interests of the State. I am glad to see that Savings Bank Commissioners are to be appointed. I think we have a right to remove from future Treasurers the desire to look on the Savings Bank funds, which are the savings of the thrifty, as a sort of private purse into which Treasurers can dip whenever they wish. I think that whatever transactions take place between the Government and the Savings Bank should take place on a sound financial basis. I would like to see the operations of the Savings Bank extended, so that we could have small current operative accounts. We are now taxed or charged by ordinary banks to the extent of a guinea a year for keeping accounts, and I think this taxation, absolutely direct as it is, might be saved by an extension of the powers of the Savings Bank. Whilst on banking, I

wish to express the hope that the Government will bring in a measure such as that in South Australia, providing that all inoperative balances in the associated banks shall, after a certain time, be paid into the Treasury. We are promised an amendment of the Public Service Act, and not, I think, before it is time that we had some alteration in our public service. I am of opinion that if we appointed two strong men right outside Parliament and right outside the service, and added to them one of the Under Secretaries of departments, we would probably get a very equitable board. The public servants are rather a sore point with the people at present, and I think the Government might well give a gentle hint that there are two things on which public servants might restrain themselves: that they might be oftener found in their offices than attending public functions, and in addition that they might avoid publicly discussing contentious questions. We are promised also a redistribution of seats, and I hope this will be, not on a population basis, but an equitable basis. I am sure it would be an unwise thing to have a Parliament of centralisation, and I am also sure it would be an equally unwise thing to have the will of the majority set at naught by the representatives of a minority. Probably we shall hear a little later of this House being a shocking example of this principle; but now that the Speech has been read, and the policy of the Government is before us, I am sure those members who took their seats (probably waiting for this Speech) will be able to make up their minds as to which side of the House they will follow. I am also sure that under any circumstances they will give loyal support to a Government which goes undoubtedly straight. My ambition, in common, I feel assured, with other members of this House, is just to serve the State first; and I bring to this task the highest possible ideal. I have seen instances of environments lowering an ideal considerably: I hope they will not in my case. I want to serve the State as well as I possibly can. After the State comes my constituency. If I let loyalty to party, or personal ambition, or anything else of a personal nature, interfere with my desire to serve the State to the best of my ability, then I hope that when

I face my electors, whether it be in a month's time or at the end of my term, they will give me every evidence that I am not a fit and proper person to represent them in Parliament. I have very great pleasure in moving the following Address in reply to the Speech of His Excellency:—

To His Excellency the Honourable Sir Arthur Lawley, Knight, Commander of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and St. George, Governor, etc., etc., etc.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,—

We, the Members of the Legislative Assembly, in Parliament assembled, have heard with profound regret of the demise of Her late Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, of blessed and glorious memory, and we desire to assure you of our loyalty and devotion to Her successor, His Most Gracious Majesty King Edward VII.

We beg to thank your Excellency for the Speech which you have addressed to Parliament.

It will be our endeavour to carefully consider the matters mentioned in the Speech, and all others that may be submitted to us, and we join with Your Excellency in the hope that by Divine guidance we may advance the well-being of the people.

I thank the House for its very courteous hearing.

Mr. J. M. HOPKINS (Boulder): Mr. Speaker, I have pleasure in rising to second the Address-in-reply which has been so ably, and I may say so eloquently, moved by the member for Albany (Mr. Gardiner). In doing so, permit me to preface my remarks by reciprocating the kindly sentiments uttered by the member for Albany when he expressed the hope that you will long be spared to preside over this House. Since the last session of the last Parliament there have been many historic incidents, and chief amongst these has been the loss the English-speaking races have sustained by the death of our late Sovereign, Queen Victoria. This great calamity, following as it did so closely on the inauguration of the Commonwealth of Australia, seemed to indicate that the great Queen had been spared to see consummated the greatest achievement in British colonisation during the last century, namely the consolidation of the colonies of Australia into one indissoluble commonwealth under the Crown. We have it recorded in Australian history that some 50 years ago, when one of

the eastern States asked for and obtained separation, the people said, "We will call this colony Victoria"; at a later period, when the north-east portion of this continent obtained separation, they said, "We will call this colony Queensland"; and right throughout the history of our island continent we find that the people of Australia have been intensely loyal, and that loyalty has recently received the hall-mark of sincerity upon the bloodstained fields of Africa. I am not going to enter into a dissertation on the rectitude or otherwise of that war. Suffice it to say that it has exemplified to the world one very important fact—that when the supremacy of the English-speaking races is in danger we shall find these people standing together, united and ready to shed their life's blood for what they believe to be the advancement and progress of Christianity and civilisation. I come now to a question of local concern and local sorrow, and I am sure this honourable House will not object to my referring to it. I allude to the loss this country has sustained by the death of one of its sons, the late Mr. Alexander Forrest, C.M.G. and member for West Kimberley in this local Parliament. Hailing as I do from the eastern gold-fields, a part of this State which has very often been at variance with the political views expressed by the deceased gentleman, and speaking as one who was never under an obligation to him or his relatives, I desire to take this opportunity of recording my last tribute of respect for a gentleman who was in every way worthy of the name. He was one whose bigness of heart, whose generosity, and whose enterprise will live long in the memories of the people of Western Australia. I think he was one whom I may well epitomise in the words of Shakespeare:

He was a man. Take him for all in all,
We shall not look upon his like again.

The position of parties in this House to-day affords food for reflection. We know that at the last general election the people of Western Australia sent forth one mandate, which was that they desired to see a change in the Government. The then Premier, Mr. Throssell, acting the part of a statesman and acknowledging the fiat of the people, sent in his resignation. It then devolved on the new Government