

mission was so important that one of our most efficient surveyors—who, I believe, afterwards left the public service because he was found to do his work too quickly—accompanied it; and with him was one of the most accomplished geologists that ever stepped ashore in Australia, Mr. Göczel. The report of that important survey has been in the possession of the Government for months, and I should like to know why reports of public interest, which are secured at public expense, should be simply dropped into some dusty pigeon-hole in the Minister's department, instead of being furnished to the Press of the colony, for the information of the public at the earliest moment.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (HON. W. E. MARMION): The report in question is in the hands of the Government Printer.

MR. SIMPSON: I have heard that story about the Government Printer before, particularly with regard to the "Votes and Proceedings" of this House, which only reached members a few days before the general election. When I made inquiries as to the delay, I was informed at the Government printing office that they could not get the reports earlier from the officers of the various departments concerned. I have no hesitation in reiterating that the Department of Lands and Mines is a department failing in its duty to meet the requirements of the country. I know that opinion is shared by the Press of the colony, and endorsed by a great majority of the public. If I might venture to offer a suggestion to the Premier with reference to his Cabinet, I would advise him—in the words of a well-known phrase that has recently been applied to the House of Lords—either to "mend it or end it." It is wise sometimes to jettison part of your cargo to save the ship; and, if the administration of the two departments I have referred to continues as it is, the Premier will have himself to blame if he does not accept this advice, offered as it is in the kindest spirit and in the best interests of the colony.

MR. JAMES: I did not intend to rise to offer any remarks at this stage upon the policy of the Government as disclosed in His Excellency's Speech, but, if I must express an opinion at all, I must say it is

with a feeling of disgust that, after our present Ministers have been in office for three years and a half, and after the magnificent opportunities they have enjoyed, I find them coming to this House, on entering upon a second term of office, with a policy so barren. Do they think that the people of this colony are going to be satisfied for ever with a policy of borrowing and of spending? If we are to take a lesson from the political history of the sister colonies, and if there is one lesson which that history has taught us more emphatically than another, it is this: that a Ministry that comes before the country with a policy only of borrowing, is a Ministry that is either weak and desires to continue in power at any price, or a Ministry which is either politically ignorant or politically indolent. Surely there are enough matters of domestic legislation and economic legislation which demand the attention of the Government, and which the country has a right to expect to see brought forward by any Government professing to have the confidence of the country. But the present Ministry, after their long run of power, and after the magnificent opportunities they have had in this direction, bring forward as the result of their deliberations a policy, the alpha and omega of which consists of borrowing, borrowing, borrowing; and they ask us to give them a continuance of our confidence because they have devoted their mighty intellects to producing this wonderfully original policy. For myself, I should have thought that a Ministry that has had such unique advantages—advantages that will never be enjoyed by any future Ministry in this colony, advantages which have not been enjoyed by any other Ministry in any Australian colony—would have proved themselves more worthy of the occasion, and more worthy of the splendid opportunities which have presented themselves to them. I challenge any member who supports them to point to any one measure that reflects credit upon their administration. I challenge any member to point to any measure of which the Government may fairly say "That is a measure of which we are justly proud." All they have done is to bring forward this policy of continuously borrowing money and rapidly spending it. During the time they have

been in office more loan money has been spent in this colony, in proportion to the population, than was ever spent, within the same period, in any part of Australia. That is a fact which cannot be denied. Yet the Ministry lightheartedly overlook the fact, and they come forward again with another proposal to borrow another million and a half of money, as if that was a mere bagatelle for a population of 70,000 people, men, women, and children. Their railway policy has already been scathingly criticised. We are told by themselves that they built the railway to Southern Cross "on spec.," and we have been told that the bottom would have been out of Southern Cross by this time but for the discovery of Coolgardie, and that railway would have been a failure. They built the Mullewa railway simply for the wool which a few squatters might send down by it; and, if the price of wool went down, that railway would be equally a failure. Now they propose other experimental railways. Where is it going to end, this everlasting borrowing policy? If we are going to take the experience, the bitter experience of the sister colonies, as our guide, we ought to approach this borrowing policy with the gravest caution. The policy now before us was put forward by the Premier at Bunbury, but he never condescended to quote one fact or figure, or to use one argument in support of it, nor have I ever heard one solid argument yet adduced in its support. Yet we are asked to endorse it, and to endorse it without anything to commend it beyond that it is the policy enunciated by the Ministry who built a railway to Yilgarn as a speculative undertaking. Sir, for myself, I desire to express in as plain and emphatic a manner as possible the opinion that a Ministry which satisfies itself by producing such a policy as this is not a Ministry that can meet with my approval. I believe that while we are carrying on a public works policy, we should also carry out other measures which are of more importance than the mere spending of borrowed money. We do not require able political leaders, we do not require a Ministry of all the talents, to show us how to spend money. Any individual member of the community can do that. We look to our leaders for something

that will excite our admiration, instead of which we have a barren policy of borrowing and spending, which might have been brought forward by any individual in the community of the meanest capacity. I say again that a policy like this can only be brought forward by a Ministry characterised by one of two things—utter ignorance, utter want of knowledge, or, having the knowledge, being too indolent to accept the responsibility; and the present Ministry can accept either of these alternatives.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): We won't accept either of them from you.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Sir, I should be sorry that such serious statements as have been made by previous speakers against certain departments should go forth to the world unchallenged; and, in order to enable the Commissioner of Railways, and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, to reply to these serious charges of incompetency in the working of their departments, I beg to move the adjournment of the debate until to-morrow.

Question put and passed.

Debate adjourned accordingly.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at eight minutes to 6 o'clock, p.m.