

I am of opinion that we should not be bound to one money market, if we can open another; and I say we have not been treated fairly in our mining flotations in the London market, nor were we treated fairly in the floating of our last loan for the colony, as there was a big gap between the price of our last loan and the price of the previous one. There is no reason why we should not deal with a country like France, in a matter of this sort; and if the Premier will fix up that scheme with a French company it will, in my opinion, absolutely re-establish our credit in the London market. I remarked with great pleasure that the Premier has thrown something off his chest to-night, that is a certain amount of gloom in reference to the Coolgardie water scheme. That gloom arose from the fact that the people of the goldfields did not come forth as generously as they ought to have done in supporting this great scheme; but now they are admitting their mistake, and are ready to make up for it. I say the Premier deserves from the people of this colony, and especially from the people of the goldfields, very strong support. It is quite enough for him to have to push a big scheme like this through Parliament, and he ought not to have to push the colony along with it. Every man, woman, and child on the goldfields to-day are strongly in favour of this scheme, and the people are sinking every smaller consideration and "planking" every time for the Government in reference to this great scheme. Speaking at this stage in the debate on the Address-in-Reply, one is reminded of the desolation of Goldsmith's "Deserted Village." The dead bones of the Opposition are strewn about the place, and we have a certain amount of regret for those we have slain in the late battle. My main object in rising was to assure the Premier that the people on the goldfields are entirely at one with him, and to express my pleasure at the good sense of the Opposition in dropping the question in this way, and treating this great undertaking as a national work, and not a party matter. But when the member for Central Murchison brings forward the motion of which he has given notice, and which is evidently put there for the purpose of blocking the Coolgardie water scheme —

MR. ILLINGWORTH: That is not my object at all.

MR. MORAN: The hon. member knows that his motion is on the Notice Paper for that object; but I say that the object can be better gained by allowing us to have our scheme uninterfered with than by bringing forward that motion at the present time.

Question—that the Address-in-Reply be agreed to—put and passed without dissent.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:6 p.m. until the next day.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 28th October, 1897.

Presentation of Address-in-Reply—Paper Presented—Question: Boorabbin Telegraph Station—Perth Gas Company's Act Further Amendment Bill (private); Report of Select Committee—Motion: Extra Sitting Day—Return: Purchases under Lands Purchase Act (m. withdrawn)—Return: Government Advertisements in Newspapers—Motion: Coolgardie Water Supply Scheme: Proposal for Select Committee (m. withdrawn)—Adjournment.

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

PRAYERS.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

At 20 minutes to five o'clock MR. SPEAKER, accompanied by hon. members, proceeded to Government House to present the Address-in-Reply to the opening Speech of His Excellency; and, having returned,

MR. SPEAKER reported that he had, with members of the House, waited on His Excellency and presented the Address of the Legislative Assembly in reply to

the opening Speech, and that His Excellency had been pleased to reply as follows:—

MR. SPEAKER AND GENTLEMEN OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY,—

I thank you for your Address-in-Reply to my opening Speech, and for the assurance of your desire to deal with all questions that come before you in such a manner as to promote the advancement and welfare of this colony.

Government House, Perth,
28th October, 1897.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: The fourth annual Report of the Bureau of Agriculture (1896-7).

QUESTION—BOORABBIN TELEGRAPH STATION.

MR. A. FORREST, in accordance with notice, asked the Minister of Education:—
1. Whether the Government intended to remove the telegraph station at Boorabbin from its present site to the railway station. 2. Why this was not done when the railway was completed as far as Boorabbin, over 12 months ago.

THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) replied:—1. Arrangements have already been made for erecting a post office near the railway station. 2. It was not represented to the department until some time after the completion of the line that the change was required.

PERTH GAS COMPANY'S ACT FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL.

MR. LEAKE brought up the report of the Select Committee on this private Bill. Consideration of report made an order for the next Monday.

MOTION—EXTRA SITTING DAY.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved that the Sessional Order with regard to business days and hours, agreed to on Tuesday, 19th October, 1897, be amended by the insertion after the word "on," in line 1, of the words "Mondays, at 7-30 p.m., and on." He said hon. members were aware that the object was to have more sitting hours during the session. He

agreed with the general opinion that, under ordinary conditions, three days a week were sufficient for carrying on the business of Parliament; but, owing to the lateness of the present session, he thought it would be a great convenience, under the exceptional circumstances, if the House were to sit on Monday evenings.

Question put and passed.

RETURN—PURCHASES UNDER LANDS PURCHASE ACT.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, moved, That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing what purchases of land, if any, have been made by the Government under the authority of the Lands Purchase Act of 1896; the area and locality of such purchases; the names of the former owners; the amounts paid for the same; the manner in which the said lands have been disposed of or otherwise dealt with, and the names of those, if any, who have since taken over any of these lands from the Government, and the amounts they have paid in connection with the same. He said the return was desired in order to show the working of the Act as far as it had gone.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest) regretted to inform the hon. member that there had as yet been no purchases made under the Act in question. He had hoped that the Act would at that date have been in effective operation, and that the Government would have been able to report some settlement in consequence of it. For various reasons, however—amongst others the time required to get the provisions of the Act into working order and to consider the offers made to the Government—no actual purchase had yet been made under its provisions. This motion, therefore, could not be acted on. He hoped next session to be able to report that the Act was in full operation, and that a considerable amount of settlement had resulted from it.

MR. VOSPER, in view of the statement by the Premier, withdrew the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

RETURN—GOVERNMENT ADVERTISEMENTS IN NEWSPAPERS.

MR. VOSPER, in accordance with notice, moved, That there be laid on the

table of the House a return showing the amounts of money expended by the various departments on advertising in the newspapers of the colony during the twelve months ended 31st July, 1897; together with full details showing the method and character of the distribution of the same, and the reasons therefor.

Motion put and passed.

MOTION—COOLGARDIE WATER SUPPLY SCHEME.

PROPOSAL FOR SELECT COMMITTEE.

MR. ILLINGWORTH, in accordance with notice, moved, That in the opinion of this House the question of supplying the whole of the goldfields with water should be submitted to a Select Committee, and that meanwhile no moneys should be expended, and no contracts or agreements entered into, in connection with the proposed Coolgardie waterworks scheme, until the estimate of the expenditure of loan moneys for this work has been approved by Parliament. He said: I bring this motion before the House with the feeling that I am fulfilling a public duty. I must, at the same time, say that hon. members on the Opposition side of the House are in no way responsible for the motion, about which I have consulted no one. I bring the motion forward on a conviction that certain facts ought to be laid before Parliament, in order to facilitate and not to hinder the desire of the Government to give the Eastern goldfields water. Some remarks have been made in reference to myself on this question; and only recently the Premier, speaking in a highly enthusiastic way, which is his wont on occasion, said I was unwilling to give the people on the Eastern goldfields a drink of water. That statement is just like another statement made some time ago in this House by someone—I do not remember who made it, but the statement has been repeated in the goldfields press many times, and which I will take the present opportunity of contradicting. The statement was that I opposed everything in connection with the goldfields—that I voted against the Coolgardie railway, and opposed the water scheme. [THE PREMIER: I did not say that.] I know you did not, and I am quite sure you would not make any statement of the kind without a sound basis

of fact. I say, however, that the statement has been made; but if it had not been that the member for Coolgardie and other representatives of the goldfields districts were until recently under the strong belief that my opposition was a fact, I should not now take the trouble to contradict any newspaper report. I will ask the House to allow me to read a few lines of what I said about the Coolgardie railway. On page 380 of *Hansard*, vol. vi., I say:—

The Premier asks, firstly, are these works (railways) necessary? And I answer, yes. I answer they are absolutely necessary. Some of them. These two railways to the goldfields are absolutely necessary, and they are absolutely urgent.

Then further on:—

I am prepared to say these railways to the goldfields are so necessary and so urgent to the future of this colony that, if it were requisite to stop every other public work in the colony in order to construct these railways, those works should be stopped and these railways should be constructed.

THE PREMIER: That was private enterprise.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: No, it was not, and that is where you did me an injustice. I said, in connection with this, that it was not necessary the expenditure on those works must be out of loan money. But I did not oppose the construction of the railways—in fact I voted for it. So it was also in connection with the question of the water supply. I have taken the trouble to go through the whole of *Hansard* since I have sat in this House, in order to see if I have incidentally said anything against the water scheme. I find that in no case have I given any grounds for the statement that I am not willing to give the goldfields water. I do not think there is a member of this House who is more deeply convinced that the goldfields must have water immediately than myself. [A MEMBER: That is a "climb down."] I am not "climbing down," but simply repeating what I said long ago. If however, I do "climb down," I do not see that it would be a dishonour to a man to confess himself wiser to-day than he was yesterday. If hon. members are trying to learn, they have frequent lessons, and they must be very idle indeed if they are not able to profit by these lessons. I think it would save the time

of the House if I were to connect what I have said just now with what I said before. On page 275 of *Hansard* I say:—

It comes to this, that while the Government are proposing to give the country larger representation, they practically tell the country this: You can put in what Government you like, you can put in what Parliament you like, but while we have the power we will obtain a loan of five millions in the British market, and we will commit this country to what we think is right, and the people who come after us can do exactly as they please. We will commit the country to the loan, and to our scheme of public works, and then we will give you increased representation. Now, what is the use of increased representation, if increased representation is not to have a voice in the settlement of these large questions? I think it is a very important point, and it is the reason why some hon. members are voting for the amendment proposed on the second reading of the Bill before the House.

That is the amendment of the member for Geraldton, and I desire to call the attention of the member for Coolgardie to what I say here:—

If the scheme is as vital as the Premier says it is; if the very interests of the goldfields are depending upon the effect that the water supply will have on the loan market; if, as we are told, the success or failure of the undertaking will affect the country in its most vital part, and will make the difference between complete success and failure for all time; if that is the position—for that is the position that has been placed before the House—I will ask the thinking men of this House to consider whether it is not absolutely necessary to be quite sure you are right.

On the next page I say, continuing this argument:—

When we are brought to such conclusions, I ask, is it unreasonable that the Government should be requested to stay their hand until we get into this House, under the Redistribution of Seats Bill, the representatives of the goldfield for whom this water scheme is meant? As the hon. member for West Kimberley says, that everyone on the goldfields is in favour of the water scheme, the Government would not be injured by waiting for the election of those members; neither has the scheme anything to lose by waiting until we get the voice of those new members.

Further on I say:—

If thirty-three men in this House are wise in passing a scheme of such magnitude as this, that is to "make the desert blossom as the rose," and "create a river in the wilderness;" if there is such a tremendous advantage to result from the combined wisdom of thirty-three members of this House, what will be the result of the deliberations of forty-four members, if we get the intelligence of the men from the fields where this water is required,

and upon which these two and a half millions of money are to be expended? I say there is no more reasonable proposition to put before intelligent men than that there should be a reasonable delay and care observed before we start upon this tremendous scheme; and the amendment only asks that a delay should be granted. I would emphasise that it will not delay the scheme; it will probably hasten it.

I conclude thus:—

I commend these suggestions to the Premier. I would commend to him that very wise American axiom, "Be quite sure you are right and then go ahead." But we are not sure we are right, and at this stage the Engineer-in-Chief wants information and is asking for it.

That was what I said in August, 1896, when I added:—

I say the people of these fields must be supplied with water, and my only objection to the scheme is that it does not supply them early enough. While I say that, I would rather wait another year and be sure they would get the water, than have to leave them to suppose they were going to get an effective pumping scheme, and then disappoint them with an utter failure that would crush the fields.

That was the position I took up, and my attitude was only reasonable, seeing that circumstances over which none of us had any control have led to the very delay which we then desired, but which was refused. Seeing that it is not at all possible, or at any rate probable, that the Government can obtain the money immediately to begin to carry out this scheme, it is only reasonable that this new House, which does not constitute a moribund Parliament such as that was to which I addressed the words I have quoted, should have an opportunity of expressing their mind on the question. More particularly would I like to hear the opinion of the hon. member for Albany, leader of the Opposition, who was in England at the time of the discussion in August, 1896, and who doubtless knows something of the feeling in London on this question. I am not speaking in the slightest expectation of convincing the Premier, but I have a conviction, which I have expressed over and over again, that this scheme is largely visionary. When it was first proposed to the House, a distinct declaration made by the Premier was that the water would be in Coolgardie in three years. Twenty-two months of that have gone already, and the work has not been begun.

THE PREMIER: A lot of preliminary work has been done.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: But have you authority to do it?

THE PREMIER: We got authority from Parliament last year.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If the House will give me a little attention, I will endeavour to place my case before it, and will pledge myself that, if hon. members will consider the facts which I will lay before them and decide to go on with the Coolgardie water scheme, they will never hear another word against it from me. I will leave the responsibility with the House.

THE PREMIER: You are against it, then?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Yes, and I will give you my reasons why. First of all, dealing with this question in order, I want to impress the House with the fact that Coolgardie is not the only goldfield in this colony. A return furnished by the Mines Department—which is not, however, strictly accurate—shows that up to the 30th June, 1897, the output of gold from Coolgardie was 92,000 ounces; from Kalgoorlie 260,000 ounces; but from the Murchison it was no less than 200,000 ounces.

MR. MORAN: The comparison is not a fair one.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: According to the Government scheme, only Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie will be supplied with water.

MR. MORAN: Broad Arrow and all round there will also be supplied.

THE PREMIER: Where did you get your information from?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I want the House to grasp the situation that there is really in this country another goldfield besides Coolgardie—I think the hon. member for East Coolgardie will acknowledge this—but when this question comes before the House we hear the scheme spoken of as a water scheme for the goldfields. Is Coolgardie the only goldfield that wants water? Are there not, out beyond the range of that field, Menzies, Dundas, and Norseman, which also require water?

A MEMBER: There is plenty of fresh water north of Menzies.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Are there not other things to consider besides this one question? I want the House to look

clearly at the motion before the House. My motion is that the whole question should be considered. Water is required at other places besides Coolgardie, and, not only so, but water is not the only thing necessary for the conduct of these fields. I have a statement here made by the hon. member for West Kimberley at Coolgardie. If he is correctly reported—and I take the report from the *West Australian*—Mr. Alex. Forrest said, in responding to a toast, that he was an ardent supporter of the water scheme, and he believed that if it were not immediately undertaken we would become a bankrupt nation. I wish to say, in all earnestness and seriousness, that this is merely nonsense. I affirm that if Coolgardie—important though it is—were wiped out, we should not be a ruined nation. I say that a member of this House who makes such a statement as that does an immense amount of injury to this country, and I desire to contradict it. This country would not be bankrupt if not another ounce of gold were taken from Coolgardie. At the same time, we rejoice in the fact that there is a splendid goldfield in Coolgardie, and we are hoping that it will double its output; and we further rejoice that there is a still finer goldfield at Kalgoorlie, and we hope it will quadruple its output. But for a public man to say that the country will become bankrupt if the scheme is not carried out is unwarranted. [MR. A. FORREST: It is quite true.] A remark like that is an endeavour to coerce this House by terrorism, and to frighten the people into the belief that by this means only can the country be saved from ruin. Now, I deny that. It is an important question, I admit, but it is not one so important as to ruin the country if not carried out. Next, I say that water is not the only necessity for the goldfields. We have a rich goldfield at Peak Hill that would be much assisted by a railway. The member who represents Dundas tells us that it is imperative to build a railway to Dundas and Norseman, and there are several places where a railway is very much needed. We are asked practically to exhaust our borrowing powers for years on a scheme to carry water to Coolgardie, and deliver it—when? In about seven years hence. I am not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet, but I know

what contingencies there are about this kind of work, and I most distinctly state that, if the work were undertaken immediately, it would be impossible to get a gallon of water in Coolgardie for five years. I may be wrong. My reason for taking the course I have is that I believe that water can be given, and I am going to show you how it can be given, to the whole of the Coolgardie fields in twelve months. I want to know what is behind this scheme. We have one opinion—that of the Engineer-in-Chief—which is confirmed by certain interested representatives of syndicates, who are prepared to coin money out of the transaction.

A MEMBER: I thought you said it could not be done for the money?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It can be done, if you allow French firms to come here with foreign labour. If certain work is scamped, it can be done. Just consider what amount of work there is in 400 miles of piping, and calculate how long it will take to construct that with ordinary labour. I say that, unless this scheme is carried out by syndicates with foreign labour, it is impossible to my mind to have it finished within anything like reasonable time. I should only be too glad to be proved wrong. Pretoria was promised a similar scheme in three years, which took 14 years to construct, and I am afraid it will be the same thing here. My contention is that if this country can live while the work is proceeding, it can probably live without the scheme at all. The fields want water immediately. This motion asks for full information. I am not in favour of these commissions, but the exception only proves the rule. We gave a lot of money to Sir John Coode to report on the harbour at Fremantle, and he recommended a very expensive scheme. Somebody moved that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the matter. The committee reported, and as a result we have a magnificent harbour at Fremantle.

THE PREMIER: The other would have been a magnificent one, too.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Admitting that the scheme proposed by the Government is a good one, I propose that we should find out if another scheme can be brought forward for doing the same work

for less money, and within a shorter time. Some time ago I had a report from a gentleman with whom the Government are well acquainted. [MR. MORGANS: What is his name?] Mr. David Reed. He was in the service of this Government from 1890 to 1896 on the Coolgardie fields in connection with the water supply. If he was good enough for the Government in those six years, his opinion should be worth something at any rate, and we have nothing to pit against it except that of Mr. O'Connor, who has never seen the fields, whereas the opinion I am about to lay before the House is that of a man who has been all over the fields, and who lived there for six years. More than that, he came here accredited from the Indian Government. He afterwards served in connection with the Queensland Government, and while I am not going to quote his words as if they were gospel, I say that the report I have from him is sufficient reason for me to bring this motion before the House. Mr. Reed says water can be conserved in the districts of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, Bulong, Menzies, Kanowna, Mount Monger, and all over the eastern goldfields, sufficient to supply five times the present demand, at a cost of not more than a million of money. Right or wrong, I commend this to the attention of the House. He further says: "By judicious embankments of gorges and excavations to clay beds, there is, within one mile of Coolgardie, a position where storage could be provided." We are dealing with simple facts. Here is a statement by a man worthy of some attention.

MR. A. FORREST: We have got our minds made up.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: We have heard this remark made so very often. I understand that Parliament is a place where questions are debated, and it is the duty of every hon. member to debate every question he wishes brought forward. And if hon. members are not prepared to debate every question, they have no right to occupy seats in the House. Parliament does its work by debate. If the hon. member will not allow me to read the quotation without interruption, it will not be my fault if I delay the House to some extent, but I will begin the quotation again.

Water can be conserved in the districts of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, Bulong, Menzies, Kanowna, Mount Monger, and all over the

Eastern goldfields, sufficient to supply five times the present demand, at a cost of not more than one million pounds. By judicious embankments of gorges, and excavations to clay beds, there is, within one mile of Coolgardie, a position where storage could be provided for 100 million gallons at a cost of under £5,000. There are other sites as good as this one, and from all these the water could be pumped to Mount Burges and distributed to Coolgardie. Kalgoorlie also has several excellent conservation sites with good catchment areas, with hills to which the water could be pumped for reticulation to every mine and townsite in the Kalgoorlie district. Bulong has a watershed area capable itself of supplying all the Eastern goldfields; also hills 400ft. above the level of Kalgoorlie to which the water could be pumped, and thus a gravitation service given to the whole of the field. At Torras there are natural places for the storage of hundreds of millions of gallons by the outlay of a few thousand pounds. Only four miles from Bulong, and in the centre of the auriferous belt, over 200 million gallons of water could be stored for an outlay under £20,000 by simply embanking the gully, and excavating down to the clay level and then forming the reservoir in the clay bed. Full supplies for present purposes within twelve months. Kurnalpi, Menzies, 90-Mile, and 42-Mile all have their own natural catchments, with suitable sites for conservation sufficient to supply ten times more water than they require.

These are statements made by a gentleman who was six years in the Government service on those fields. They are either true or false. [A MEMBER: They are not true.] At present there should be no delay, but the Government cannot go on with the work except in a very primitive manner, and what my motion asks is that a committee be appointed to investigate the truth or otherwise of these statements. I ask, is that too much? This House should test these statements before it is prepared to spend two-and-a-half millions of money on this public work.

THE PREMIER: What is the date of that letter.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I have not the date, but it is signed by David Reed. I consider that while such statements are being made, whether true or false, in the interest of the country this question should be set at rest, and we should know whether it is possible to get a supply of water at an early date for these fields. What I desire is to get sufficient water at the earliest possible date to supply the Eastern goldfields. I am not, in my motion, pleading for anything for the Murchison, and the insinuations thrown

out by the Premier are not worthy of any one in the House. [THE PREMIER: What was that?] That I wanted to make a bargain with you for the Murchison. In the face of this statement, it would be a crime to proceed with the waterworks without investigation. I say at the outset that I do not wish to unduly occupy the time of the House. There is a feeling of unrest amongst the people that this Coolgardie water scheme will exhaust all our resources for some time to come, and that every other public work will have to wait. If it can be proved that the scheme can be carried out at an early date, I am willing to admit that the necessity of the case is sufficient to warrant the delay of all other works, for the carrying out of this scheme—that is, if it can be shown to be a practical scheme. My present impression is that there is no necessity for the Government scheme, but that the water can be provided for the different districts at an early date, and at a much lower cost than it is proposed to spend over the Government scheme. All I ask is that this House shall appoint a Select Committee for the purpose of going fully into the question, and finding out whether there is any truth in the statements which I have read, or not. It is a reasonable request, and one that should be acceded to. If it is not—if it is all moonshine and all false—it is well that the public mind should be set at rest. When we are going to undertake a scheme that may be ruinous in its consequences, we ought to be perfectly sure we are right. I am back where I was twelve months ago—only asking the House to be satisfied it is right.

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS (Hon. F. H. Piesse): Taking the motion of the hon. gentleman, I cannot see what good can follow by the appointment of a select committee. In most instances where we have had select committees appointed, especially on works of this kind, there have been consequent delays, and very little good attained. In this instance I certainly think no good at all would come from the appointment of a committee. First of all, Parliament has decided that this scheme shall go forward, and the Government has decided that, immediately we are in a position to carry out the work, it shall be commenced. Allusion has been made to

the delay that has taken place. I would like to point out that the delay has been occasioned by many causes, the principal one being the necessity for obtaining information. We have had to obtain information, and although a great deal of time has been taken in gaining it, the information will be of service to the Government in arriving at the best possible conclusions for carrying out the work. I do not think that any valuable time has been lost, because the inquiries made by the Engineer-in-Chief at home would have had to be made at any rate. Most of the work, the drawings and the necessary plans in connection with the reservoirs, have been put in hand; and that part of the work could be commenced to-morrow if we were able to commence it. I do not intend to deal with the Coolgardie water scheme: that has been so frequently discussed before the House, and the expressions of opinion have been more favourable than otherwise; and public opinion is more favourably disposed to-day as to the carrying out of the work. It is necessary that we should have the money for the work, and all I hope is that the money will be forthcoming at an early date, so as to enable the Government to commence the work, and thus provide the people on the fields with a permanent supply of water.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: How long do you estimate it will take to carry out the work?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: It was estimated it would take three years from the time the matter was before the House. We have gone into certain investigations which have taken a short time, seven or eight months, and we gave ourselves a full limit when we said we could carry it out in three years. If the work is commenced within the next three or four months, it ought to be finished in two and a-half years. There are no difficulties in carrying out the work. It is not an impracticable scheme: it is as simple as possible. The great question is one of means. But I rose principally to deal with the question of the water supply on the goldfields. I hope in the course of a few days to place a document on the table of the House—the Public Works Report for the past year. A portion of the report I now hold in my hand, and as the question has been raised

I would like to give, for the information of the House, some figures to show what has been done during the past year. The Government have expended during the past year £156,000 on the goldfields, distributed over four of the principal fields. We have expended at Coolgardie, £126,400; Menzies, £23,400; Pilbarra, £4,800; and on the stock routes, £1,730, making a total of £156,330. That is irrespective of maintenance, and the expenses in connection with the upkeep.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Do you mean the stock routes to the goldfields?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: To the North, through the goldfields. In addition to this, tenders have been accepted for 20 tanks and reservoirs in the Coolgardie district, and the total amount for which these tenders have been accepted is £183,888. Allowing that we have paid out of that amount £57,000, we have still to pay £156,000 to complete these works, so that there will be a total expenditure for the purpose of supplying water for these fields of £282,000, or with maintenance something over £300,000, which is a very considerable sum. I listened with interest to the remarks of the hon. member, and especially to the quotations which he made from the report given by Mr. Reed. While admitting, of course, that there is a good deal that is practical in the report of Mr. Reed, and knowing full well that he is a gentleman who has travelled about the country and has had a good deal to do with the water supply of those districts, yet we must certainly consider and deal with these reports in a reasonable way. The hon. member alluded to the fact that Mr. Reed stated that large quantities of water could be conserved in these districts. The Government admit this, but we know also that we have no certain rainfall; and, admitting that it can be conserved, we have anticipated what little rainfall there is by constructing those 20 tanks and reservoirs, which will be nearly all completed during the next four months. We are expending £183,888 upon the construction of these works, and I think the subject is so interesting to hon. members that I would ask for a little time to enumerate those which we have put in hand. The total sum is £183,888, and

the total capacity which we are to have in these different reservoirs is 92,600,000 gallons. As I said, most of the works have already been done or are nearly completed. These works are as follow:—Niagara, 38,750,000 gallons; Menzies, 3,049,410; Mulline, 1,502,700; Goon-garrie, 1,006,110; Speakman's, 1,008,450; Bardoc, 2,032,540; 42-Mile, 3,121,683; Kalgoorlie, 1,630,000; Londonderry, 3,098,000; Parker's Range, 4,963,000; Siberia, 1,515,532; Bulong, 3,027,155; 50-Mile Rock, 3,025,110; Kanowna, 3,691,800; Black Flag, 3,244,000; Wood-giemooltha, 3,026,000; Broad Arrow, 10,060,000; Brown's Lagoon, 348,000; Norseman, 3,000,000; and Kurnalpi, 1,500,000. This list totals 92,600,000 gallons. It is a most astounding fact that, although we have about three-fourths of this work completed, we have not a drop of water in any of those tanks to-day. [A MEMBER: Will they hold water?] Certainly they will. About one-third of the tanks have been cemented, and the rest, of course, we have had to puddle, and some of them have been tested. Some time ago some of them had a little water, but to-day there is no water in them. Now I think this points most clearly to the fact that it is no use to depend for a permanent supply of water upon these catchments. We have a proof of it here in the fact that these tanks are not filled to-day. It has been shown that we have from 6 to 8 or 10 inches of rain per annum in different parts of the fields, yet to-day we hear it said that we have only 3in. in places where we had 7in. last year. Now if we are going to depend upon the catchments for water in those districts, I think we are depending upon what may prove to us a very unsafe reliance, for we know that the rainfall is altogether too treacherous. We cannot depend upon it, and the only way I can see by which we can deal with this question of water supply is to pump it from the coast by the scheme we have brought forward.

MR. A. FORREST: How much did you say the 92,000,000 gallons would cost?

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS: £183,888. Of course the expense which I mentioned before, £156,000, would be principally in connection with the wells and other conservation throughout the district. That is a smaller supply, and nearly all these wells are salt, and are

put down only for the purpose of condensing. If it had not been for the supply of water by tanks and by means of these wells we have put down, I think the people would have had a sorry time on the goldfields. The way in which the Government have carried out the water scheme throughout this district will be more convincing to hon. members when I lay on the table in a few days a map showing the works carried out by this department. It was of no use counting upon any considerable supply by rainfall; and as to this large catchment area near Coolgardie, spoken of by Mr. Reed, if 100,000,000 gallons could be conserved at a cost of £5,000, the Government would welcome the information if it were authenticated. If this information were authenticated, and we can have it shown to us that there is a possibility of conserving so large a quantity of water there, we would only be too pleased to take advantage of it. [A MEMBER: Mr. Reed is in your employ now.] How is it that Mr. Reed has not brought this under the notice of our department, and that they have not availed themselves of it? We have in our Engineer for Water Supply a gentleman who is well versed in water conservation; we have also Mr. Saunders, who has been there during the last three or four years. If Mr. Reed possessed this information, I certainly think it was his duty to bring under the notice of the Government those places where water could be conserved; and if he has brought it under the notice of the engineers, and those engineers have not acted upon it, I take it that he should have brought that under my notice, and I would have immediately taken steps to have acted upon it; because, admitting that there is a short rainfall, I quite agree that we would be justified in making preparations to conserve such a large quantity of water as is said can be conserved at a place so near Coolgardie. I am confident that no such place does exist; and, if it is known to Mr. Reed, it would have been known to the officers of my department, and they would have taken it up long ago. The difficulties which we have had to contend against in this large district are very great, and one of them is the question of puddling tanks. We all know that the very large tank at Kalgoorlie, although it will hold 1,000,000

gallons of water, was so defective in this respect that the whole of the water escaped in nine days. The soil is so porous, that we have had to go to great expense in bringing clay from great distances, and also in constructing some of these tanks in cement. Considering the large consumption which must follow as population increases, we could never possibly provide sufficient water for the people by this means. And even out of the £183,000 that we are spending, we find that nearly half of it has to go in one big reservoir at Niagara. How many days' supply have we there, at five million gallons a day? We have 90,000,000 gallons, which only mean an 18 days' supply of water for the fields; whereas what we want is a continuous supply of five million gallons a day, or, in time, fifteen million gallons a day, possibly. We could never expect to get it by conservation. I certainly think the proposal to conserve water there is altogether an exploded one, and anyone who has visited those fields and seen their condition recently, must agree with me. The goldfields members will agree with me that at Kalgoorlie it would be the height of folly to depend upon water conservation. There is only one course, and that course is to adopt the scheme which we have put forward. Everyone must admit that, to make certain of a fresh water supply there, we must fall back on the Coolgardie water scheme. I certainly oppose the motion of the hon. member for Central Murchison.

A MEMBER: Would the Minister kindly tell us what mining centres it is proposed to supply under this scheme, besides Coolgardie proper?

THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC WORKS: It is intended to take the supply over the whole of the goldfields as far as Menzies; but the first part of the reticulation will go to Kalgoorlie as well as Coolgardie. We have provided 100 miles of 12-in. mains. If you will turn to the report, you will find that we provide here for all the reticulation pipes, 255 miles, and we provide also for 100 miles of 12-in. pipes which will form the leading pipe; but we expect eventually to continue further reticulation. We intend to first prove the scheme by pumping the water to Coolgardie and district as far as five million gallons will go, and to increase the supply afterwards. It is

of course intended for mining supply. It will be brought to certain places by the Government, and then the reticulation into the towns will be a municipal matter.

MR. MORAN: A great deal of what the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) said has been said before. I remember mentioning all these details he has brought up this evening. I want to show him, if I possibly can, that he ought not to object to the main work going ahead, even although the subsidiary works should have to stand over for the present. Take that 5,000,000 gallons of water, and you need not be in any way afraid that it is going as far as to the South Australian border. By the time that you have served Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Kanowna, you will find that you have not a drop of water left. As I said before, I believe the water will be used, and used up so hungrily, that you will find yourselves obliged, and agreeably so, to duplicate the scheme. You commence with the idea that you require a million gallons of water for your railways, to begin with—Mr. Davies will want that quantity himself, and probably he will want more—and that quantity must be taken off the 5,000,000 gallons at various points along the line of route. Once more I should like to remind the Premier that he ought not to be talking about turning the country into a smiling plain, from Northam to Southern Cross. It is absolutely the maddest dream in the world to imagine you are going to carry on irrigation with this scheme, and at the same time serve the mines up there. The supply would not be sufficient for both purposes.

THE PREMIER: I did not speak of irrigation. What I desired was to give the people a drink on the road.

MR. MORAN: I want to point out that this question of irrigation is an enormous one. [THE PREMIER: I understand that.] Presuming that Northam and Newcastle are going to absorb another million gallons of the supply on the way, I say it would not be fair to divert water from Coolgardie and the other goldfields for an irrigation scheme in the Avon valley.

THE PREMIER: Nobody says that is the intention.

MR. MORAN: Perhaps not; but it might occur to somebody to propose that such should be done, and I fancy I have heard some talk in this direction. There is no doubt that a market will be found for the water. According to my figures, there are 4,000,000 gallons left to deal with. You will have a population of 25,000 or 30,000 at Coolgardie, and possibly 50,000 at Kalgoorlie, if the increase of population at Broken Hill may be taken as a criterion. I would not be a bit surprised, nor would any mining man, to see 50,000 people at Kalgoorlie in three years' time.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I hope your estimate may be true.

MR. MORAN: The indications are that way, certainly. Taking the probable population of Kalgoorlie at 50,000 three years hence, each person should be supplied with not less than 30 gallons a day, a quantity which is below the European and also I believe the Perth estimate.

A MEMBER: The Perth estimate is 30 gallons per person.

MR. MORAN: Well, take the quantity at 30 or 40 gallons a day for each person and if it is necessary to give 30 gallons a day to a person in Perth, no doubt a larger proportion will be required on the goldfields. Then, with Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie, there would also have to be served the London-derry district, 25-Mile district, Black Flag, Dead Finish, and other mining centres where batteries can be carried on. We have also to deal with Broad Arrow, Bardoc, Kanowna, and other large places. Who can say what those places may become? Kanowna may in the future be a bigger place than Kalgoorlie, giving as it does now evidence of becoming a very important mining centre.

MR. LEAKE: Will those places, in the aggregate, require more than 100 miles of pipe?

MR. MORAN: I will give the exact mileage, if I can.

MR. LEAKE: That is what we want to get at.

MR. MORAN: I presume it is not yet decided whether we are going to take the water from the top of Mount Burges or not. I am inclined to think that is an open question. It would be much better to utilise hills in the various centres, if such hills can be found, instead of bring-

ing the supply to the top of Mount Burges, and at a large expenditure of money obtaining the requisite high pressure to serve all the various centres. Mr. Scarevell, from Victoria, has been over here taking details in connection with the water-supply of the goldfields, and his opinion is that it would be far better to have a dam in each district, than one dam on the top of Mount Burges, where an accident might throw the whole system out of gear. The distance from Coolgardie to Kalgoorlie is 24 miles, and 12 miles more to Kanowna. Taking Coolgardie as 20 miles from the 25-Mile, Mount Burges is not more than 15 or 16 miles away, while Black Flag would be distant 12 or 15 miles. Take another 15 miles for surrounding centres, and on to Broad Arrow as another five miles, and another eight to Bardoc; then if you wish to go to Bulong from Coolgardie it is another 18 miles — all these figures together making up about 102 miles.

MR. LEAKE: How do you get to Menzies?

MR. MORAN: If you want to go to Menzies you go through the Ninety-Mile, equal to another 50 miles of piping, and that is allowing liberally for the supplying of places such as Black Flag and other little centres. I hold that, in connection with the water scheme, there must be opened an extensive system of narrow-gauge trams. It will be found far easier to have central batteries for reducing the ore; and, if authority be given to construct such tramways, private people will be found ready to provide them. As I said before, I am not yet prepared to say the Mount Burges scheme is the best. There is a hill only two miles out of Coolgardie, from which a pressure could be obtained much greater than that which we have in Perth; and at Kalgoorlie the Mount Charlotte hills would give a fine pressure for any of the surrounding mines. These, however, are points of detail which will have to be gone into afterwards. This water supply question is one in which I have taken a prominent part. I have seen Hannan's Lake itself filled with fresh water four times during my public career. I have seen the Broad Arrow Lake containing more fresh water than the Government could pump up in 10 years under their scheme. Well, we know that the evaporation per annum is not less than 8ft., and

it is greater in open lakes, the average depth of which is not 8ft. Could it be arranged to centralise all this water in a certain place? This presents a problem on which I have consulted many engineers, and amongst them Mons. Virgine, the eminent French engineer, tells me it would cost six millions of money to construct one dam, and that when you have that one dam constructed you would remain at the mercy of the heavens. Much could be done with local schemes. East of Northam there is no such thing as a defined water course or channel on the whole of the Eastern goldfields. No such condition of affairs exists in the Eastern colonies or in the very worst parts of the back blocks of Queensland. I have known places in Queensland where for four or five years there has been no rain, and where very often, in consequence, places are deserted for years. I remember a seven-years drought in one period in Queensland. But right through that colony there are distinct water channels, for hundreds of miles in many cases. The country there has defined watersheds, and when rain does come, in these places, as at Broken Hill, one dam can save sufficient water to keep the district going for years. In Western Australia there is no such condition of affairs. The member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), and the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), have both looked into this matter, and none of us knows of any places in the goldfields districts where there are defined water-courses. The soil is so porous that, except where the dams have a coating of clay on the top, it is absolutely impossible to conserve water. In those places mentioned by Mr. Reed, I have seen water careering along at a great rate to the salt lakes; and I have pointed out to the Government that it would be possible to construct dams of a temporary character, or get private enterprise to carry out the work, so as to give a fall-back for some gigantic scheme of water supply. The expense of making a dam so deep and so extensive as to give an unfailing and reliable supply of water, is absolutely out of the power of the Government in this country. We all know a bit about dam construction, and the member for the Canning (Mr. Wilson) is a practical man with strong views on the question. Every one of those salt lakes

has a thin coating on top of it, and just below that you get into bed-rock very quickly. I maintain that a dam, to be of any service, should be 30 to 40 feet deep, and then we must allow for an evaporation each year of at least 7 or 8 feet of water. To avoid that evaporation, dams would have to be covered over, which would prove an expensive operation; and after the dams had been covered, there would still have to be provided an enormous power to pump and reticulate water over the goldfields. Take the lakes from Mount Monger, Bulong, and right on to Lake Lefroy, and I doubt whether you can get the water to run without cutting a canal. It would be impossible to sink a dam without blasting 30 or 40 feet of bed-rock; and, after all the expense, I doubt whether a dam could be made sufficiently deep to meet a three or four years' drought, which occurs in every part. I do not think a conservation scheme could be devised that would stand a three or four years' drought. It would be almost impossible to keep these dams all right, even if they were cemented out. Dams are cracking now, and the Commissioner of Railways knows that. I am putting the facts before the House in a calm and deliberate way. I am informed that every member of the Opposition is looking at this question as if he had no party bias one way or the other, and therefore I have the greatest pleasure in telling them the facts of this matter. I am inclined to believe, with the highest engineers, that it would be almost beyond our power to construct dams of a character sufficient to give such a supply as the Coolgardie water scheme would give; and then we should be dependent on a rainfall which is not copious enough to supply our needs. I maintain that this country would not be ruined if this scheme took five years to complete. The ruination would come if the scheme were not gone on with. Our available supplies might give out. I know perfectly well, and I am not a civil engineer, that I could find water to keep Kalgoorlie going for the short time this scheme would be in course of construction. [A MEMBER: Salt water?] I would undertake to find sufficient water in the bed of the Broad Arrow Lake for the purpose; but salt water is a limited supply. Here is a fact

which has been proved in the last few months in Kalgoorlie. We have been sinking wells and shafts two or three hundred feet deep, and some engineers have said that we do not want any Coolgardie water scheme at all, that we have plenty of water in our mines; but I tell this House there is not a single mining manager on the fields who has not arrived at the conclusion that we are going through the water-bearing strata, and are coming to a dry level like that at Charters Towers, in Queensland. Another fact has been proved, namely, that the more water we draw in that district in the mines, the less supply the lakes are getting. We are carrying the lakes in our shafts, and the lakes will run dry. Of course, a lot of the water will go back, and we have to deal with the great question of evaporation also. I hope to have a number of the members of this House up in the Kalgoorlie district very soon, when we open the Mechanics' Institute, and then we will show them the field. I hope to have the pleasure of showing them some of the rivers in that district. They are like the rivers in the interior of Queensland, which die away as they spread out: they evaporate and disappear. There is always a strong current of air blowing there, and that takes the water away. I would point out to the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) the fallacy of appointing a commission to inquire into this matter. Such a commission would probably consist of the members for Coolgardie, Central Murchison, Geraldton, and myself, with others, and we would have a word or two to say on the whisky question during the long and arduous journeys we would have to make. The routine would be that we would call evidence about what every man, woman, and child, and certainly every member of this House, already knows, namely, that there are salt lakes and that salt water is to be got at a certain depth; and then we would visit the various lakes, and as soon as the commission saw Lake Lefroy, and watched the salt glittering in the sun, they would go back and decide that, after all, whisky is a decided improvement on salt water. I do not believe in commissions. There is a commission sitting in this country at the present moment, which has not excited the admiration of all the people

in the colony, and yet the Mining Commission is nothing to what a Water Commission would be. To go exhaustively into the question, every member would have to be dumped down the mines to see for himself if the water was going up or coming down. I believe sincerely that a water scheme is required for Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, Menzies, Broad Arrow, and neighbouring districts. When once we have supplied Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie with water, surely we can duplicate that scheme and send it on to Menzies; and what is to prevent the Government and this House doing the same thing for the Murchison? We are told that they do not want a water scheme for the Murchison. I was always led to believe that it was a fresh water country. The trouble is, however, that it is only a surface drainage, and they are going through their water strata. If they want water there, where the rainfall is greater than in the Coolgardie district and where they have water-courses of a definite character, how much more is water wanted in that part of the country where there are no definite water-courses, where there is very little rainfall, and where there is a population of from 30,000 to 40,000 people! The hon. member for Central Murchison is not an unreasonable man, and I wish to point out to him that it is absolutely impossible to meet the demand in the way in which he proposes. There are alluvial fields round Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie and at other places that would pay for the expenditure of almost any sums of money for the purpose of giving them a proper water supply. There is a six-mile rush at the back of Charlotte Hill, and there is enough round Kalgoorlie to use up all the water that could be supplied. The average assay of the streets in Kalgoorlie is 8dwts. per ton. At Bayley's Flat and other places, it is just the same. I am rather surprised therefore to find that the hon. member for the Central Murchison should at this late hour of the day adopt the tactics he has. I give him my solemn pledge to help him in his electorate, if he will help us. It will take the Government at least three years to construct the proposed canals, and I give the Commissioner an extra three months which I have no doubt will be required. When that scheme has been completed, it will

be twelve months before the people will be able to get the least benefit from it, as they will have to go in for reticulation, and the laying of mains and all that sort of thing, which cannot be done till the water is brought to the spot. Therefore you cannot get to work with the scheme too soon. Two and a half millions sterling, which is the estimated cost of the scheme, is only the price which has been paid to-day for one single mine, the Ivanhoe, which has been bought by one of the shrewdest mine corporations in the world. The Coolgardie water scheme, which is not estimated to cost any more, may be the means of making 50 other mines like the Ivanhoe. When you find hon. members on both sides of the House willing to pledge themselves and generations after them to find the money for this scheme, I am very sorry that a gentleman representing a mining district in this House should be unwilling to give the Government his support. The agricultural members are those who have most to fear from the carrying out of the Government proposal, yet these very men come forward in the most plucky manner and are willing to support the Premier in the course which he proposes to take.

A MEMBER: It is to their interest to do so.

MR. MORAN: They are men of honour, everyone of them, and men of independence also, and certainly men of courage. They are not going to pledge themselves and their children after them for a scheme that is going to turn out badly. I am sorry that the gentleman who represents one of the goldfields has not the same faith in the goldfields as the agricultural members have. I do not say that he has not the same faith, but I do say that I fail to understand his tactics. I know that the hon. member's Parliamentary motto has been "the greatest good for the greatest number," and that he prides himself on never condescending to any Parliamentary tactics; but I am afraid on this question he is not practising what he preaches. If the Government came to this House to-morrow and said, "With the concurrence of our Engineer-in-Chief, and after careful consideration, we have decided to let this contract to this or the other strong European corporation, men of repute,

who will do the work for two and a half millions of money, and it is going to be constructed inside of two years," I do not think a single member on this side of the House would say they had done ill.

A MEMBER: Nor on the Opposition side of the House either.

MR. MORAN: Hon. members would say that the Government had done well, and they would be prepared to sink all minor matters while this great national work was being carried out. One result of the motion moved by the hon. member for Central Murchison has been that the Commissioner of Public Works has brought forward facts and figures to show what the Government have been doing in the matter; and another result has been that I have given to this House information on this great question which has taken me years to obtain, and several other hon. members have enlightened the House on the subject. Whatever the Government may decide on doing, the majority of the members of this House will uphold them in carrying out this great national work, and included in that majority will be both the agricultural and the mining members.

At 6:30, p.m., the SPEAKER left the Chair.

At 7:30, p.m., the SPEAKER resumed the Chair.

MR. A. FORREST: In rising to oppose the motion of the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), I do so with a very great deal of pleasure, because the subject dealt with is important to every person who has any interest in this large colony. It is not a question for individuals, but a question for the colony at large, whether living in the North, South, or East. I hope in the few remarks I shall make to the House—and they will be very few—I shall be able to show clearly that it is absolutely necessary that no delay should take place in commencing these works. Even if the Government have not the money at the present time, it is necessary that these works should be started and completed in the shortest time possible. The hon. member for Central Murchison read a paragraph from a newspaper published at Coolgardie of some remarks I made

there, and I wish to emphasise these remarks by saying that from my knowledge of West Australia, which is not small, if anything happens to our eastern goldfields at the present time, where a water scheme is absolutely necessary, a majority of the people in the country would become bankrupt, and I do not make that statement without some consideration. If it goes forth that the leading men in Australia say this, it will hurry the Government to push on the work as soon as possible. The hon. member for Central Murchison has not visited these fields for some time. If he was to take an opportunity very often, as I do, of visiting the principal centres, he would find a very different state of things from what existed few years ago. If I could only read the inner thoughts of the hon. member, I am sure he is one with us in this matter, but it is a very hard thing to "climb down."

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I am learning from you.

MR. A. FORREST: I will read from *Hansard* a speech made by the hon. member, and also some remarks made by myself. [A MEMBER: Oh, don't.] I will only read some of the remarks—just those which suit myself, the same as the member for Central Murchison did. He read a certain portion of a speech he made, and I asked him to go on, but he did not take the cue, and I intend to read the other portion. This question is of so important a character—to me, at any rate, and I believe to every man in the colony—that the works should be started at once, and completed afterwards. All the while they are being constructed they will serve a number of people *en route*, and they will serve the railways. I have it on the best authority that the water supply on the goldfields alone for the railways will be equal to £100,000, and if this water supply had to be made for the railways alone it would be justified; because as we are building railways from Kalgoorlie to Menzies, and from Kalgoorlie to Kanowna, you will find that from Northam to Menzies there will be no water at all, and the water will have to be taken from Northam at a great expense. The Commissioner of Railways informs us that this year alone the Government constructed tanks to impound ninety million gallons of water at a cost of £180,000, and according to the scheme

of the Government it is proposed that in 18 days these ninety million gallons of water can be all utilised there. I went into this country in 1869, and I found the country well grassed, plenty of water, with plenty of rain. I returned to this country in 1871, and I had to run for my life, because there was no water, no grass, no rain. There had been a great drought, and we must expect these times again. We have not been flooded this year. There have only been three inches of rain at Coolgardie. The construction of this water scheme should not be delayed one hour. If I had anything to do with the Executive of this country, I should start the dams at Helena River and Mount Burges at once.

THE PREMIER: We were told the other day we were not to do anything until we got authority.

MR. A. FORREST: There has been a suggestion made in this House that the work of constructing these water works should be handed over to a French syndicate, or some other syndicate. The member for Central Murchison said, on the 20th August, 1894, in reference to the building of the railways to Kalgoorlie and One:—

I contend there is no reason why this country should take upon itself an obligation which will bring up the indebtedness to £2 12s. per head annually for interest alone. If there are legitimate firms, syndicates, or companies, that are willing and able to build these railways, their proposals should be fairly considered. All that we have upon this question is that some hon. members say they "don't believe," and they "don't think" and "don't know." Because we have had some experience of syndicate land-grant railways, one of which had practically nothing behind it, and the other one unfortunately lost its principal in the death of its best financial man—and hon. members know quite well that but for the death of Anthony Hordern there would have been no difficulty in financing the Great Southern Railway—because we have had experience of these syndicates, that is no reason why we should not consider fresh proposals from syndicates to build railways on a different principle, without any land-grants. There are some of the people behind these syndicates who could buy all the railways in the country. I contend that while it is absolutely necessary to build these railways, it is not absolutely necessary to build them with loan money.

The hon. member then went on to say something about the railways being built by private syndicates. What did I say

in reply to the hon. member on the same evening? I said:

The hon. members for Nannine and Albany have treated us to a lot of information about building railways by private syndicates; but I would like to tell the House what my opinion is about that. The syndicate promoters usually come here, and, without having any financial means whatever, make proposals to the Government; and because the Government have not entertained such proposals as those contained in the correspondence now on the table, the hon. member for Nannine and the hon. member for Albany think the Government have treated those persons with discourtesy. I am sure the hon. member for Albany ought to be aware of the way in which private syndicates have been carried on in connection with the two land-grant railways now in existence; and he should be the last man to ask that the Government should entertain further proposals for the construction of railways by syndicates. If I live to the age of 100 years I shall never support private railway proposals in this colony. The hon. member for Nannine said certain persons were prepared to put down a guarantee of £20,000; but he ought to know it is very easy for persons to subscribe £20,000 among a lot of them, but, after doing that as a preliminary, it is a very difficult thing to produce half-a-million of capital for constructing the railway. Take the Midland railway for instance, and the difficulties which have surrounded it. Hon. members know that the Midland Company or syndicate could not have completed that railway without the aid of the Government. It would be the same with reference to these private syndicates; and if the Government had accepted their proposals, I believe the members on this side of the House would have withdrawn support from the Government altogether.

I will go back to last year, when the Coolgardie water scheme was proposed to be sent to a select committee, and what do we find as the result of the division on a motion moved by the member for Beverley for referring the scheme to a select committee? Amongst those who voted against sending the matter to a select committee was the member for Nannine (Mr. Illingworth). He voted with the Government not to send the matter to a select committee; yet now, within one year, he proposes that the scheme shall be referred to a select committee. Is the hon. member consistent?

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Oh, bother consistency! Let us do what is right.

MR. A. FORREST: Several of the members who voted with Mr. Harper are not members of the House at the present time. Those who did vote with him were:—Mr. Moss, Mr. Randell, Mr. Solomon,

Mr. Venn, Mr. Hassell, Mr. Simpson, and Mr. Harper. I may add that Mr. Hassell stated he was pledged to Mr. Harper before he heard the debate, and afterwards asked him to withdraw the motion; but, being pledged to vote for it, he did so. Several other members asked the hon. member to withdraw the motion, but the member for Beverley did not see his way to do it; and one of the strong opponents of Mr. Harper's motion was the member who now represents Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). Who would think that in one short year a member of this House would alter the views he then held so strongly? I do not think he ought to do so, and, if he does, he ought to give some reason for so altering his opinion. When we were listening to the hon. member, he did not say a word in excuse of his turning a complete somersault. Our minds are fully made up that we must have this water scheme at any price. The mines cannot be worked without it, and the people themselves must have water for consumption. Work cannot be carried on without water in those regions, and if any man denies this, I am afraid it is not in the interest of the colony that he does so. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: We never said so.] When members of this House bring forward motions of the kind proposed by the hon. member, and ask other members to support them, I think it is only reasonable to suppose that gentleman did not believe in this water scheme. All the hon. member's speeches on the subject, from the time the scheme was first brought into existence, show that he was against it. [MR. ILLINGWORTH: Against this scheme.] And when it came to a division on the motion of the member for Beverley, he voted with the Government. I wish to impress on the leaders on both sides of the House that this is not a party question, but a national question—that it does not belong to the category of party questions. When members of the House travel in those districts, they must be at once struck with their great importance to the State. I can assure hon. members that in Southern Cross there is very little water for the mines obtainable from the lower levels; and I should like to know—perhaps my friend the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran) can tell me—

what amount of water there is coming from the lower levels of the deep mines at Kalgoorlie. [MR. MORAN: None.] The water for nearly all these mines is being pumped from certain indents at the salt lakes, miles away. That is the supply of the fields. There are hundreds of mines round Coolgardie which have no water, and are not likely to get any. They are being developed with as little labour as is possible for complying with the labour conditions. But what would be the result if this water scheme were it to be carried out there and people could get water at 3s. 6d. per thousand gallons? We would not know the place! Men would bring their wives and families there, and would live in comfort. This Parliament is practical, and believes in the colony; and members intend to carry out this great scheme in spite of anyone who may attempt to prevent it. In August, 1894, I replied to an interjection made in this House by the then member for the Swan (Mr. Loton), who said that the people at Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie did not want this scheme. My answer was to the effect that the people there were so confident of its value, were so well represented in this House, and were so satisfied that the Government were going to carry the scheme through Parliament, that they did not at that time take the trouble to call public meetings for advocating the project. One of its strongest opponents now in this House, the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), who was then the editor of a strong proprietary newspaper at Coolgardie, did not leave a stone unturned in opposition to this scheme when it was proposed. In article after article, every day of the week, there was this bogey of a water supply to the Coolgardie goldfields thrown at us, as though it were going to ruin the colony. He wanted a supply from the lakes. I think he did more harm to the Government scheme, at the time, than any other man in Western Australia. But now I am glad to say the hon. member, in the interests of the district which he represents so well in this House, is prepared to "climb down" a bit, and agree that the scheme is necessary, because all other schemes that have been tried have proved failures. Nearly a year has been wasted, during which time, if there had not been this opposition, a number of works in con-

nection with this scheme—the building of a dam at the Helena River, tanks on Mount Burges, and a lot of other important works, might have been going on. I am sure, also, that the great interest which the mother country and all the colonies have in this scheme, which they are looking to us to carry out, renders it imperative that it must be undertaken at any cost; and when we have the confident opinion of the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans) and the assurance of the head of the Government that the scheme will pay its working expenses, and will pay for the cost of construction, why should we be afraid? If anything could happen to prevent these goldfields from taking all this water, which I deny, we know there are thousands of acres in the Avon Valley, along the route, which could be irrigated by means of this scheme at the cost of a few shillings per thousand gallons. Another argument in favour of this scheme is that the surrounding country, where no flocks can now be depastured, could be cut up into paddocks in which cattle and sheep could be fed in thousands on those beautiful plains. I can assure hon. members on the other side of the House that water at 3s. 6d. per thousand gallons is much cheaper than you would have to pay for a man to draw it out of a well for the use of live stock. The beautiful country to the north and east of Coolgardie should not, as it is now, be in such a condition as will not support a living animal, but should be a great pastoral country; and then the people of the goldfields could not complain, as they do now, that the price of meat on those goldfields is exorbitant. You never hear the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth) say anything about the high cost of meat on the Murchison goldfields, because those mines are in a pastoral country; and I may say the same class of country—a little better in some respects—is to be found on the Eastern goldfields, where this water scheme would be the means of keeping thousands of sheep and cattle. You will hardly believe me when I tell you that the present Government are not prepared to let land on lease on the eastern goldfields for the purpose of feeding cattle and sheep. It has been my constant complaint, almost from the time the Government first came into office,

that this soil on the eastern goldfields, where grass grows so abundantly in good seasons, is not let like the Murchison country, to sheep farmers, and yet it is a fact. If a man wants 10,000 acres of land for the purpose of feeding sheep and cattle, the Commissioner of Crown Lands refuses to give him a lease of it—for what reason we shall never know. It is an astonishing fact that of the whole of the land from Southern Cross to the eastward boundary of the colony not an acre has been let for pastoral purposes; and even those people who are plucky enough to provide water themselves are denied the use of the grass on the land, because it is useless to them unless it is fenced in. All that is asked is that they should be allowed to lease the land at nominal rentals for feeding sheep in the goldfields districts. This has, so far, been denied to the pastoralist; but I hope when this debate is finished, members of the Government will see that, for the future, leases shall be granted to pastoralists on those goldfields.

THE PREMIER: They would take all the water required for miners. That was the objection in the early days; but the time has arrived now, I think, for doing something.

MR. A. FORREST: If a sheep farmer digs a well, I do not think anybody can object to his using the water from it for his stock. The Government provide water for the miner, but do not provide any for the sheep farmer. When a pastoralist has dug a well, I do not think a miner has any right to it, seeing that he has not paid for it. I am glad to give my small amount of support to this scheme, and I am sure that everyone who has any regard for the colony of his birth, or who has come here to throw in his lot with us, must feel that something must be done to make the goldfields capable of attracting population, and capable of keeping going the mines that we have at present, so that the idea should never again go forth that there is any fear of the batteries being shut down for want of water. If they are shut down, then I am afraid a great many of us would have to leave this colony and go elsewhere, because our interests are so bound up in the welfare of these mines that we are almost wholly

dependent upon them." We West Australians, the people who were born here, are frequently called hard names, and sometimes we are called Boers—that is the latest term applied to us. It is said we want to give nothing to the goldfields; but I say we are not Boers, that we give everything to the goldfields, and we also expect them to give us something in return. We want to give them a good supply of water, and when they get the water, and when the sheep farmer is allowed to lease land for feeding live stock, there will be no more cry for cheap meat.

MR. LEAKE: I scarcely think that hon. members regard the debate on this subject as one of want of confidence in the Government. We are all at liberty to discuss this question, at any rate, on its merits. I ask hon. members to listen while I venture to criticise the proposed scheme from my point of view. The views which I advance are not put forward in any captious spirit, but are the result of considerable thought on my part. I assure hon. members that I approach this question with a desire to discover, if possible, what is the best, perhaps the only means, of supplying water to the Eastern goldfields. If hon. members remember my public utterances on any occasion, I think I may fairly defy them to put their finger on any phrase or remark which would entitle them to tell me now that I have declared I was opposed to the supply of water for the Eastern goldfields. I am conscious—as any hon. member must be if he has the interests of the country at heart—that it is of paramount importance that a good and substantial water supply should be found for the fields. But what has troubled me in the past, and is troubling me at the present, is the method we should adopt towards that end.

A MEMBER: You were not here last session.

MR. LEAKE: I know I was absent, but even in my absence I was perplexed over this subject. I believe the chief objection urged when the scheme was proposed last year in this Chamber, was based on the ground that all possible sources of supply had not been inquired into. In that expression of opinion, I think I am borne out when I refresh my mind by a reference to *Hansard*, wherein

we find that the member for Beverley (Mr. Harper) urged that this question should be referred to a select committee. We all know that the member for Beverley gives his influence and sincere support to the Government; we know there is no member in this House who has the interests of the country more at heart than that hon. member; and I do not think I am following a bad lead when I find myself asking the same question that the hon. member asked. What I require now is a distinct and emphatic answer. Have all sources been tested? Is this method of pumping water from the Darling Range the last resource? Is it impossible to get water by sinking or by conserving it in reservoirs? If we are told by the people on the fields, by engineers and everybody who understands the subject, that there is no other possible means of getting water to the goldfields than by pumping it from the Darling Range, then I am prepared to say, "Adopt such a scheme." [MR. A. FORREST: Hear, hear.] Before the hon. members cheers, I wish him to distinctly understand that, in expressing an opinion upon this point, I do not commit myself to the particular scheme that is proposed by the Government, or the particular methods to which the Government intend to resort. Let me for a moment, in response to the encouraging cheer which the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) gave me, implore him when he is applying his ability to the discussion of a question like this, to weigh with greater regard his utterances. In advocating a particular scheme or supporting a particular class of individuals, it is just as well to avoid those rash and careless statements which he must, after mature thought, regret he ever uttered. I particularly refer to what he said a few days ago, and which he has repeated this evening. [MR. A. FORREST: It was quite true.] What he says is that if this scheme of the Government is not carried through, the country will become bankrupt. This is too serious a question for any man claiming the public position and influence of the hon. member to allow it to go forth in the public prints that there is such a possibility, particularly in view of the fact, which must have been apparent to his mind, that in any event this scheme cannot have practical effect until the expiration of at least three years.

I do ask the hon. member to be more careful in his utterances. He is known to be a man of influence, and a man whose opinions are always listened to. We find this reference to the question in paragraph 8 of the Governor's Speech:—

My Ministers regret that, owing to the large works already in progress from loan funds, which it is impossible to interfere with, some little delay must occur before this great scheme can be undertaken.

The hon. member for West Kimberley said that a whole year had been wasted. But if a whole year has been wasted, I can only say the waste has been committed by himself, and by his leaders and friends. Authority was given last session to proceed with this work, but for some particular reason or other the work has not been proceeded with. There may or may not be very stringent and urgent reasons for his delay. If there are, these reasons have not been furnished, and I hope when the Premier addresses the House on this motion, he will favour us with particulars.

THE PREMIER: I did so last night.

A MEMBER: The leader of the Opposition was not here.

MR. LEAKE: Oh, yes, I was, and heard the debate. From the very initiation of this scheme, the great cry on behalf of the Premier and his colleagues was one of urgency. They said, "Whatever we do, we must start this scheme, and start it at once; there must not be any possible delay."

MR. A. FORREST: The plans had to be prepared.

MR. LEAKE: Because the Government have "overrun the constable," and become somewhat reckless and extravagant in expenditure in other directions, they have been forced to abandon their pet scheme. Nobody can deny that there has been a great conflict of opinion with regard to the necessity of the scheme now proposed by the Government. Objections have been raised, not only on the Opposition side of the House, but on the Ministerial side, and, what is of still greater importance, from the goldfields themselves. The public of Coolgardie and the Eastern goldfields generally, until within a few weeks ago, were by no means unanimous in their views as to the necessity for this scheme. [MR. MORAN: They are now.] I was coming to that.

The support given to the scheme was not whole-hearted. I know in that view I shall be supported by members of this House who now favour the scheme. Why are those members now so strong in their advocacy? It is because they tell us that, as practical men, they have given this matter thought, and discussed it with mine managers and those men who, at the outset, were opposed to it, and they have come to the conclusion that other sources cannot be relied on, and that they must look to the coast for a water supply. They are of opinion that water must be pumped from the Darling Range to the fields. I urge this as a justification for my conduct and for my criticism outside the House and, perhaps, on the hustings, and I say that if I erred I erred in good company. My views were supported by those who were in a position to understand what they were talking about. The chief objection to the scheme was that the conclusion to adopt it was too hastily arrived at. We are told that we cannot depend on the lakes, or on the wells, because the water-bearing strata have been pierced, showing that the subterranean supply is undoubtedly unreliable.

THE PREMIER: We told you that long ago.

MR. LEAKE: You told us so, but you were impelled to that opinion merely by that prophetic instinct which besets you on every possible occasion, and which supplies arguments which you are only too ready to force on the attention of the members of this House. Although it may not be pleasant for the Premier to hear me say so, I think it would be better to apply practical tests than prophecy. The only evidence which we have had up to this point has been the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, and the Premier's emphatic assertion that this scheme is necessary, and must be carried out.

THE PREMIER: We have geological opinions.

MR. LEAKE: What on?

THE PREMIER: We have geological opinions that this water scheme will be of service.

MR. LEAKE: What geologist?

THE PREMIER: Mr. Woodward.

MR. LEAKE: Unfortunately, at that time, there was the fact staring the Premier and the public in the face, that

water was being obtained in considerable quantities on the goldfields, from subterranean supplies. Now one word as to the measure. The *crux* of the question seems to be, shall the Government carry out this scheme and commit the country to it for all time, or shall it be left to private enterprise? That I consider to be the real issue, and I declare at once in favour of the encouragement of private enterprise. I shall not satisfy myself with bare assertions, but I shall endeavour to argue the question, and, though I may not be able to convince every hon. member, I hope, at any rate, it will be seen that I am trying to take a practical view, and urging what I honestly conceive is in the best interests of the country. This scheme will cost in capital value no less a sum than 2½ millions of money. That is admittedly the lowest price for which we can get the water pumped from the Darling Range to the top of Mount Burges, and reticulated through twelve-inch main pipes over distances amounting in the aggregate to 100 miles. That is what we shall get for 2½ millions sterling. But on the top of it we note that there must be an additional cost for reticulation in the immediate neighbourhood of centres of population. [A MEMBER: They will do that]. That is a very fair way to meet my argument; at the same time I think hon. members will see that it is a very fair question for me to put.

A MEMBER: Some one has to do it, of course.

MR. LEAKE: We must remember that it is not likely that the Government, if they get this huge scheme at work at the top of Mount Burges, will allow any other persons to come in in connection with it. There is that difficulty in the position. Will the Government allow a number of municipalities with conflicting interests to enter into competition for the water and raise trouble among themselves? If the Government are going to carry the scheme up to that point, it would be far better for them to do the whole thing, including reticulation in the small centres, and so retain the whole control themselves. Whether the Government or private enterprise undertake the scheme, they must have the control of it themselves. It won't do to divide it and say one person is interested in the main pipe, and

another person is interested in the subsidiary pipes. That is a danger, at any rate. Then we come to the annual cost. The annual up-keep—and here I rely on the figures, the only figures before the House—is estimated at £320,000. I am told by one hon. friend that the London engineers say that we may reckon on an annual expenditure of £350,000. We are told by the Government that we need not fear this annual expenditure of £350,000, because while we pay it away on the one hand we shall receive it on the other, since the people on the goldfields who use the water will pay 3s. 6d. for every thousand gallons produced. I put this question to myself: Will they take it? [A MEMBER: They must.] I think they will. I put a further question to myself: Will they pay for it?

A MEMBER: Of course they will. You pay for your water.

MR. LEAKE: You cannot take the water away if they won't buy it. The water will be there, and they will have it, but will they pay for it?

THE PREMIER: That argument was made last year.

MR. LEAKE: I don't care if it was made last year, or the year before last: I am going to make it again.

THE PREMIER: What do you pay for your water now? You don't repudiate, do you?

MR. LEAKE: I am not talking about repudiation. The question is: Will these people pay? I am putting a proposition to the House. I am not dogmatic. I am not assertive in this particular instance. I want information, and I hope the hon. member for West Perth, who seems to think there is a great deal of amusement in this matter, will apply his lofty intelligence to this important question, and come down from his exalted pedestal and condescend to discuss this matter with the members of the Opposition. We want to arrive at a proper conclusion. The hon. member was not in his place when we were told that this was not a party question. We want to save the country unnecessary expense. This scheme carried as proposed, to what we may call the Coolgardie centre—I do not limit it to the town of Coolgardie, but for the want of a better title I will call it Coolgardie—will prove to be only

the thin end of an enormous wedge. If I could be sure that for 2½ millions sterling we could have a scheme that would satisfy all the wants of these Eastern goldfields for years to come, then I do not think that I should feel disposed to get up and speak against or criticise it. I do not wish it to be thought that I am speaking against the scheme. I rather wish to be regarded in the light of a friendly critic. This is the thin end of a big wedge, gold pointed to the extent of 2½ millions, and every thrust, every drive that is given to the wedge means another amount equal to, if not perhaps, greater than, the sum already named, and when we have finished our expenditure of 2½ millions sterling, my own opinion is that there will be agitation and demands, irresistible demands, for further supplies to outlying districts, which will involve an expenditure of four or five times the amount. We did, indeed, hear last night from the Premier that he had no apprehensions on that point, that if necessary he would spend ten millions, but at the same time he told us shortly afterwards that our borrowing capacity was only at the rate of two millions per annum, and that is the difficulty. It is a political difficulty which we have to face. Here is a work which will necessitate the expenditure of 2½ millions to begin with, and the extension of these works may involve the expenditure of another ten millions. At the same time we are told that these works are of urgent necessity, and must be commenced at once. Yet, on the right hon. gentleman's own showing, the loans must be extended over very lengthened periods. [A MEMBER: We shall have more income.] Yes. It is a great argument that the works will pay for themselves, and, if you accept the right hon. gentleman's premises, it is, I admit, an excellent case to lay before the House and the country, because no one would be so obtuse as to say it would not be to the benefit of the country to carry out such a work as this if it were a paying one. If you can grant the right hon. gentleman's premises, there is nothing left to argue.

THE PREMIER: How about the private companies?

MR. LEAKE: One point at a time. Remember this—in all cases of this kind, in works either of this magnitude, of this

nature, or of this urgency, we find that there is one principle upon which the whole thing is based. What I may call the internal economy of the administration of such a scheme as this is a financial one. It is not a question of barter and sale—"You give me 1,000 gallons, and I will give you 3s. 6d.;"—it is not a question of contract, of option between the contracting parties, but it is one of rate and enforced payment. On the one hand the party who supplies is compelled to supply; on the other hand the party who takes is compelled to take, and to pay for it whether he uses it or not. [MR. A. FORRESTER: They do it in cities.] Certainly, they do. I ask the hon. member to apply that very test. We know perfectly that both in Perth and Fremantle, and in any other town wherever you may go, you have to submit to a water rate. It is equitable, it is fair, and people do not grumble at it. But there are no rates suggested in this scheme, and there is no guarantee that, unless you have a rate, you can sell your water at 3s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons. [THE PREMIER: There will be a rate.] Is the Premier prepared to tell us that he will insist upon a rate, I mean a local rate, a Coolgardie rate, and not a general rate throughout the colony? And will the members for the goldfields tell us that they will submit to a rate?

A MEMBER: Of course they will. The municipalities will levy it.

MR. LEAKE: It is a fair way to put it: Will the members for the goldfields submit to a compulsory water rate?

POINT OF ORDER.

THE PREMIER: I rise to a point of order. I ask your ruling, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member for Albany is in order in discussing the whole Coolgardie water scheme, which has been approved of by the House and embodied in an Act of Parliament, when the motion before the House merely asks for the appointment of a select committee to make further inquiries into the question. I do not take it that the whole expenditure of the scheme is under discussion. If so, I submit that the motion should be in the form of a Bill to repeal the Act.

MR. LEAKE: The right hon. gentleman is making a speech.

THE PREMIER: No. There is no motion before the House for the Act to be repealed, yet it seems to me that the hon. member is discussing the whole question as to whether we should pass the Act. I ask the ruling of the Speaker on the subject.

THE SPEAKER: I do not think the hon. member is out of order. I cannot see very well how he can discuss the question without dealing with it in the way he is doing. The motion is that a select committee should be appointed to inquire into this matter, and of course members must give arguments to show whether there should be a select committee appointed. The question of rate is, perhaps, rather beyond the scope of the motion, and I think the hon. member is out of order in discussing the question of a rate being levied for the purpose of this water scheme.

DEBATE.

MR. LEAKE: I thought my arguments were beginning to tell. [THE PREMIER: They are not.] We will not say anything more about rates. We have got that point in, and I trust the point will be considered by the select committee when this matter comes before them. There are other points I suggest should be considered by the select committee, when this scheme is considered by them. If the right hon. gentleman thinks, in the observations I am making, that I am out of order, I hope he will remind me of it, for the last thing I should wish to do, in discussing an important and serious subject, is to go outside the fair limit of debate. The point I want particularly to be considered by the select committee is a difficulty that the Government of the day will have to meet, and that is the political forces which will be at work. These political forces will demand a decrease in the price of water.

MR. MORAN: Does that not hold good in regard to railways and everything else?

MR. LEAKE: Yes, it does, and I thank the hon. member for the interjection. The whole basis of this scheme is that the 3s. 6d. shall be charged for 1,000 gallons of water. When the railway to Coolgardie was first advocated in this House, it was urged that high rates would be paid without a murmur on the goldfields railway, but no sooner was the

line constructed to Coolgardie, than political pressure was brought to bear, and the Commissioner of Railways at the time was compelled to reduce the rates.

MR. MORAN: That is not a fair argument.

MR. LEAKE: It is not right to say the argument is not a fair one. I do not say it cannot be refuted. It may not be exactly a parallel case, but it is analogous. There was a reduction of the railway rates as soon as that railway was an accomplished fact, and I predict that the same thing is likely to occur when this water scheme is an accomplished fact. I want the select committee to take evidence on this point, and to guard against these dangers. I do not care how often I repeat it, but the success of the scheme depends on the Government getting 3s. 6d. for every 1,000 gallons of water that go up there. If the eight or ten goldfields members combine and say, "We insist on a reduction of the rates from 3s. 6d. to 1s. 6d. or 1s. per thousand gallons," I say that no Ministry in this country will be able to resist the pressure. I submit it is a fair argument, and I trust hon. gentlemen will think it is an honest argument. If the people get the water for one shilling, then they will soon say, "Give it to us for nothing," and then the country will be saddled with this annual expenditure of £320,000. I want the select committee to understand that, if the country borrows ten millions of money for water purposes, it diverts the borrowed capital into one channel, and what must be the result? That other public works must be suspended, or abandoned, or neglected for the purpose of this scheme, and this scheme alone. Such abandonment would affect not only the members for the chief towns, but it would affect the goldfields themselves, because they could not have an extension of telegraphs or of their railway system, and they could not have progress with their public buildings. Are we to run the risk of everything being sacrificed for this one form of public work? I want hon. members to understand that I am not urging this as an argument against the scheme as a scheme, but against the scheme being carried out by the Government. If the work is carried out either by a private company, or is under the control of some board which is outside all political influence,

then these objections which I have urged will not obtain.

THE PREMIER: Cannot that be done?

MR. LEAKE: By private enterprise it can be done.

THE PREMIER: How will it pay them if it will not pay us?

MR. LEAKE: That is their trouble. We want the water scheme, and it is far more likely to pay in the hands of a private company than it is in the hands of the Government. I ask the select committee to consider whether the history of Australia has not shown the dangers which beset Governments which have advocated one particular form of work. Take the irrigation boards and the agricultural railways of the other colonies: they were all little chickens which were hatched, and they have now come home to roost. We do not want the same thing to happen here. All other works of public utility and necessity will have to be put on one side. If this scheme were in the hands of private enterprise, we must take it for granted that all proper inquiry would be made, and if our figures are correct, then it will pay, and the public on the goldfields, having no chance to bring pressure to bear on a private company, would pay and pay readily their 3s. 6d. per thousand gallons, which they are now ready and have promised to pay. That is the position I want to see affirmed. The Government cannot, owing to the difficulties which beset them, insist on the payment. I do not think any hon. member in the House will declare to the contrary. If he does, it will not be based on honest conviction. In illustration of that last argument of mine, I would remind hon. members of the conditions of to-day with regard to this very scheme itself. What is the reason that the scheme has not been carried forward with that speed which we have always been told was so important. It is because of the momentary strain on the finances of the country. It is because if this work were started, no other public works—and particularly let us instance the railway extensions and the harbour extensions—these works would have to be suspended. I say that is the position, and that is the reason. It is owing to the financial difficulty—well, I will not say difficulty, but the financial strain put on the

Treasurer for the moment, that this work cannot be done; and if in a moment of prosperity the strain is great, can we say there will not be a recurrence of a similar strain in the future. These are points worthy of consideration, and show the advisability of considering this scheme or considering the necessity of placing the construction of this scheme in the hands of private enterprise. We have it on the authority of a member who has gained the respect of this House, that such a thing would be done. The hon. member for Coolgardie told us yesterday, I think, that communications had been made to him to the effect that this water scheme could be carried out by private enterprise.

THE PREMIER: No; to do the work for the money, the Government paying for it.

MR. LEAKE: I do not want to misquote the hon. member, but I hope he will refer to it when he rises to speak.

THE PREMIER: I thought you were referring to something I had said.

MR. LEAKE: I want to predict that this matter, on the basis placed before this House, would be taken up by some private company, and if it would not on these merits which the right hon. gentleman is never tired of declaring to the House, I would go a little further and be prepared to give a guarantee to a limited extent, a guarantee or a bonus, I do not care which—it is the same principle that applies. Say they guarantee a small percentage, not necessarily the full percentage, on the cost. If the Government are so convinced of the value of their scheme, and the necessity of it, they should be prepared to come forward and pledge the colony's credit to a reasonable extent. I do not believe anybody would object to that. What I urge before hon. members is this, that we shall not pledge our credit beyond redemption, or to such an extent that we may hamper ourselves in the due administration of our affairs. Whilst considering such an important work as this, we should not hamper other works of public utility and equal importance. We should do everything we can, so that the policy of the country and of Parliament should continue unhampered and unfettered, and so that, above all things, we should not land ourselves in such a position as to find that we cannot

either go on with such a scheme as this, or cannot work in the best interests of the country in the direction of a firm policy; because I see ahead of us, in years to come, if we indulge in overborrowing and in unnecessary expenditure, great and endless difficulties. And what I submit is, that we cannot, with this vast territory, answer every demand, or even every necessary demand, which is and will be—nay, must be—made upon the public purse. Let us then, while we are doing the best with our public revenue, seek to attract outside capital. Let others lend a hand in the employment of labour, let others assist in the introduction of capital, and let others, if necessary, share in the general prosperity and the proceeds which may result from all these good things. The less risk we run, the better for the country, and the less chance there will be of our being branded with the stigma of adopting what will ultimately prove to be a policy of recklessness and extravagance. I submit these observations to the House in no captious spirit, but with an honest intent to see this great object attained, namely, the supplying of the goldfields with good water. That is the thing we are straining after. It is not a question of policy. It is not a question of turning the Government out. It is a question of national interests, and of what we should do to advance the national interests with the least possible risk, and with a minimum of expense.

MR. VOSPER: I wish, in rising to speak to this motion, to make some brief allusion to the remarks made by the hon. member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) when he spoke in the debate. I think it would have been better had he been a little more careful in some of his remarks, more especially in referring to what he considers to be the change of attitude on the part of certain members occupying seats on this side of the House. I do not think that, when an opinion is honestly changed, especially in the case of new members, it should be made a subject of reproach. It has been said that those who never change their opinions never discover their mistakes; and, if a man finds he has made a mistake, and is willing to confess it, and is anxious to remedy it as far as lies in his power, I think that change of view and of attitude

on his part should be welcomed, more especially by those who have been the apostles of the doctrines to which that man has become a convert. At the same time I can hardly claim the credit of being a recent convert to the merits of this scheme, or rather to the idea of the necessity of giving water to the Coolgardie goldfields in some way or another. When I was on the hustings, immediately prior to my return to this House, I told the electors very frankly that I would do nothing to hinder the carrying out of this scheme; and therefore, when I say the same thing in this House, I am only fulfilling the pledge I made to my electors. It is no change of front on my part: it is something which has been maturing for a long time through force of circumstances. I wish also to correct the hon. member for West Kimberley in one or two of his statements with reference to myself. He first asserted I had been in favour of artesian boring on the Coolgardie goldfields. Had the right hon. gentleman at the head of the Government paid as much attention to my articles on the subject of water generally as the member for West Kimberley did, and had my opinions had any weight with him, I venture to say that I do not think the task of boring for artesian water on the goldfields would ever have been undertaken by the Government. I believe, as I said long ago, that by boring or by putting down artesian bores on the Coolgardie goldfields, you would be more likely to get blue fire and brimstone than water. Now, before going on with the question at issue, I think I should be in order, and it may not be altogether unacceptable to the House, if I explain to hon. members the reason why there was so much opposition on the Coolgardie goldfields to this scheme, and why I especially took a prominent part in that opposition. At the time the matter was being debated in this House, I was making a tour through the goldfields; and it was impossible at that particular time to ascend to any elevated position through the length and breadth of the Coolgardie goldfields without seeing around you large sheets of water. If you went to the top of Mount Burges, you could see to the east, and to the north, and all around, large lakes, and these

lakes were for the most part filled with water; and, when you went down to the sides of the lakes to investigate the contents, you frequently found that the water was fresh, and in almost every case quite fit for the use of camels and cattle. Moreover, when I was at Black Flag during that time, I went to see an important mine. Being on horseback I had to ford my horse across two inlets of water to get to the mine, as it was surrounded by fresh water in all directions. I gave my horse a drink of it, and I drank the water myself, and found it very palatable. I also found alongside one of the principal shafts of the mine a large boat with a mast and sail, and was informed that this boat was used for the purpose of carrying timber to be used in the mine from a forest some five miles distant. When you see water all over the country like that, and when you know, as was the case at that time, that the deeper the mine went down the larger was the quantity of water, what could be more natural than for me to offer my opposition to a scheme which had so little to recommend it as the Coolgardie water scheme had at that time? I was twitted last night with having a very small interest in the colony. [MR. A. FORREST: I did not say so.] No; but whatever interest I have had has been on the goldfields; and therefore, when I had, as the editor of a newspaper there, to oppose a scheme which was so evidently for my benefit, as well as for the benefit of the rest of the population there, and took an unpopular course in order to act in what I considered the interests of the colony, that shows, after all, that even those with a small stake in the colony may sometimes be as patriotic as those who have a large one. At all events, I acted then according to what was my clear conviction, and I am prepared to act in the same manner now, on the floor of this House, as I did at that time. Since that time, a very considerable change has come over the goldfields, and especially the Coolgardie goldfields. Not only has there been an increase in the number of members representing the goldfields and the public generally, but a change of attitude has been forced upon us by the physical changes which have taken place on the fields themselves. At that time, you could go almost anywhere on the fields, and you stood a far greater

chance of being drowned than of dying of thirst. At the present time, a man who wanted to commit suicide on the Coolgardie goldfields would have to choose some less expensive method than drowning. The lakes which then gave large supplies of fresh water are now, almost without exception, dry. They can still hold water, and they are still useful for water-bearing purposes; but we are faced with this great problem, that we know the water-bearing strata have been pierced in most of our mines; that the mines, as they go down, are becoming drier instead of wetter; that the rocks have shown clearly enough that, in their natural state, they are not fit receptacles for the hoarding up of water; and the fields generally, during the last twelve months, have presented a gigantic object-lesson which no sensible man can afford to ignore. Our position is that water must be had from somewhere; and, speaking as a goldfields representative, I say the people on the goldfields are not so much enamoured of this particular scheme of the head of the Government as may be supposed; but they fully acknowledge that they must have water at almost any price and any hazard, and they are prepared to accept any number of schemes which may be suggested for the solution of this difficult problem. I would like to say, in reference to some remarks of my friend, the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), in which he made a comparison of the gold yields of the Murchison with those of Coolgardie, that, after all is said and done, perhaps this question of water has had a very considerable influence upon the gold yields of these two places. It is a well-known fact that the town of Coolgardie is, without exception, the driest part of the Coolgardie goldfields. At Kalgoorlie they have the benefit of a lake, and a fairly good subterranean supply—very much larger than is to be obtained at Coolgardie. At Kanowna and Black Flag, and several other places in my own district, the water supply is even larger than it is at Kalgoorlie. Coolgardie has always suffered from the lack of water; and that drawback has prevented the erection of such large quantities of machinery as have been erected in other parts of the fields with comparatively little difficulty. The Murchison, for

example, has been able to get a good supply of water, and a very large quantity of machinery has been erected there as a consequence, nearly double the quantity which has been put up at Coolgardie. So that it is not surprising, considering the lack of machinery, that such a large goldfield should have yielded, comparatively speaking, so little gold as it has done, when we see that Coolgardie is, at the present time, drier than it has ever been known before, so far as regards the water required for the working of the mines. It is not so dry, certainly, from a domestic point of view, as it has been in the past; because we know a little more about the country, and there are many more condensers. But, taking into consideration the work done, and the condensers erected, and the general progress of civilisation, it is fair to say that Coolgardie now is drier than ever it was; yet, in spite of that fact, we have Kalgoorlie in even a worse condition. I have it on the authority of the local press that, at the present moment, water is being brought up by train from Coolgardie to Kalgoorlie, and that is a very bad state of affairs indeed.

MR. MORAN: That is not true, except for railway purposes.

MR. VOSPER: Well, I take the report from the local papers; and if it be true, it is a very serious state of affairs indeed. When I look at such places as Kanowna and Black Flag—long recognised as the very wettest places on the fields, and which are now in a very dry state, so that the inhabitants are beginning to suffer for want of water—these instances are enough to cause any reflecting man to think a great deal. We all know, also, that during the month of September we had a very large output of gold. The various returns were more or less disputed; but the crushing returns, I think it will be agreed, were larger than they have ever been during any previous month. Now, during the first three weeks of the present month, as far as I have been able to discover, the output has been only some 43,000oz. It does not approach the September yield in any degree; and I may say this falling off is largely due to the want of water on the goldfields. Had a sufficient water supply been available, I feel sure the October output would have been greater than that

for September, and that the output for the next month of November would be greater still, also that, month after month, the yield would continue to increase; whereas now, from my knowledge of the gold output of the colony—and there is no man in this House who takes more interest in our goldfields statistics than I do—the prospects are that during the present summer the gold output will be affected considerably by the want of water at many mines. It will be seen, therefore, that the increase which occurred during the last summer is not likely to be maintained. Everyone knows that the prosperity of the colony and the confidence of people interested in our mines depend, in their turn, upon the amount of gold we can crush and export. Therefore, anything which has a tendency to diminish the gold returns is calculated to work serious evil to the colony; and the want of water is, at the present time, bringing about a diminution of the gold returns. A man would be absolutely foolish if he did not give some consideration to this fact. I have listened with attention to the speech of the Commissioner of Railways. I have had the pleasure, when in his office on different occasions, of seeing the map, on which I presume the map shortly to be presented to this House will be based, and I was impressed by the large amount of work done by the Government in connection with water conservation on the goldfields. But the work of the water supply department seems to have been directed more towards maintaining existing centres of population and keeping up existing roads, than to the conservation of all the water which the country is capable of producing. Take, for instance, the great northern road from Coolgardie to Menzies. On that road, at Ninety-mile, and also at Forty-two mile, there are two dams which have not been a conspicuous success. At both places there have been such serious floods as to occasionally stop the traffic. Some little time ago the coach from Coolgardie was actually washed off the road and the passengers had a narrow escape from drowning. These facts would seem to indicate that the dams are built in the wrong places. It would be very much easier and better to shift the centres of population and to change the roads, than to build

dams in places where the water cannot be properly caught. We have an example of that on the road from Esperance to Norseman, and as to the facts I am about to state the hon. member for Dundas will bear me out. On that road a number of condensers were erected and wells sunk, but the teamsters and others engaged in the carriage of goods soon discovered that the true water sources were some distance to the west; thereupon the teamsters and others deserted the Government condensers and went to where the water was.

THE PREMIER: The water there was cheaper.

MR. VOSPER: Precisely; and now that a large sum of money has been spent uselessly by the department in condensers on this road, we have the spectacle of the traffic being diverted some distance away. If something had been done in the first place to thoroughly explore the country around, the road could have been constructed where the water was. That would have saved a large expense and would have been much better for the convenience of the public. This is a matter worthy of the attention of the Director of Public Works. There will always be a considerable difference of opinion in regard to the rainfall on the goldfields, and I attribute this mainly to the fact that we have not had the rainfall recorded in zones. Everyone who knows anything about the goldfields knows that it is possible to distinguish between country usually arid and country which possesses a fair rainfall. This can easily be observed by noting the condition of the vegetation. There is not yet sufficient trouble taken by the Government to thoroughly survey the fields in relation to water-bearing resources. If that were done, it would be possible to find, not only good sites for dams, but also the areas of country in which the rainfall is larger than is the case where the post offices are located.

MR. MORAN: Those places might be away from the centres of population.

MR. VOSPER: That is true; but once establish a spot where water can be obtained cheaply and easily, and depend upon it the people will to a great extent naturally gravitate to that direction. As I have said, it is easier to shift small

populations than to shift watersheds. I have already urged on the Government the necessity of ascertaining something about the condition of the lakes. I do not altogether agree with the member for East Coolgardie when he utterly and unreservedly condemns the lake formations of the colony. On the contrary, these lakes are great natural dams, and anyone who has once seen them full of water must incline to that opinion. One of the objections to the lakes is that, for the most part, you come to the bed-rock at a very short distance below the surface level. That may be correct in many cases; but geologists notice that the lakes which are shallow are always those in which the strata are almost vertical. That is specially the case in the immediate vicinity of Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, and Lake Lefroy. But there are other lakes in which the strata are not vertical, but conform to the surface level. Where that is the case, it is found that you can go down 30 feet or 40 feet without striking bottom, and that when you do strike the bottom it often consists of cement or some other conglomerate, which is most probably a false and not a true bottom. That shows there are some of the lakes which might be turned to account for making deep dams into which the water could be drained. [MR. MORAN: They are all salt.] That is admitted; but it will also be admitted that very often, within six months after rain has fallen, the water remains fresh, or is only very slightly salt. It is only by digging below the bottom of the lake that you strike the salt.

A MEMBER: But there is evaporation to contend with.

MR. VOSPER: No doubt there is evaporation, and by that means the water gets saltier and saltier. But you can find lakes now where there has been no rainfall for eighteen months and where the water is still fresh. I myself saw one near Kanowna during my recent visit. I saw two square miles of water which was perfectly fresh, although I do not suppose there is a quarter of that water there now.

MR. MORAN: That is all salt water there now.

MR. VOSPER: That may be; but still there remains the fact that eighteen months after rainfall the water was com-

paratively fresh. I do not ask the Government to go to any great expense in this matter, but they ought to investigate the water resources of the colony. The hon. member for Albany (Mr. Leake) has said a great deal about private enterprise. I think the lakes present a very fair field for private enterprise. If the Government do not choose to undertake the work, they might offer facilities to others to do it for them, and I say that private enterprise might be turned to very good account in this way. There is sometimes room enough in a big lake for half-a-dozen companies to operate. There are two companies operating at Bulong, one at Menzies, and also one at the Kalgoorlie lake.

THE PREMIER: We never objected to them.

MR. VOSPER: I was informed to-day, by a gentleman who occupies a position in another place, that he had made application for a concession on a lake, and that it had been refused.

THE PREMIER: I know we have given concessions, with which nothing has been done.

MR. VOSPER: The grievance at the Norseman and elsewhere is that a sufficient area is not given as a water right to a company, and that it does not pay the companies to go to any great expense. If that be true, it might very well be remedied. It is possible to give a large area to a company and yet leave room for other companies to operate, and, where more than one company can operate, the benefits of competition ameliorate any evil conditions which may arise out of the private enterprise. For my own part, I would be most strongly opposed to the Government handing over such a gigantic work as the Coolgardie water scheme to a private company. Of all things else, that is a great evil to be avoided. It is absolutely necessary that if such a work is to be carried out at all it should be retained in the hands of the people of the country. I cannot conceive a more oppressive monopoly than that which would be set on foot, were such a work handed over to a private syndicate. That sort of thing has been tried repeatedly in various parts of the world, and it has invariably been found that regulations framed to keep big companies in order are useless. The result fre-

quently is that, by corrupt and other means, the companies have at last governed the Government, instead of the Government governing the companies. That is a bad state of things for any country. It is perfectly true that in the event of this scheme being carried out by the Government, there is a danger of hon. members making use of their seats and position in Parliament for the purpose of reducing the rates charged for water. But on the other hand, if the work were in the hands of a private company, what would we get? We might get as low a rate as was compatible with fair profit, but the company could easily, by various manipulations, and by inconveniencing the public, bring such pressure to bear on the Parliament, that the Government, in order to relieve themselves of the continual strain, might consent to the rates being raised. Once have a monopoly of the kind established, and the possessors of that monopoly are in a position to charge what rates they please. It is no use for hon. members to talk here about the various failures which have attended public enterprise in various parts of Australia. We have, no doubt, had log-rolling railways in the Eastern colonies, and very bad things done under political influence; but the worst job ever perpetrated in any Australian colony, or carried out by an Australian Government, would be no parallel to the misery and oppression which have arisen out of the development of some private enterprises in America, for instance. No doubt we have railways where there should be no railways, and water schemes where there should be no water schemes, but we have not such a concern as, say, the Standard Oil Trust. This country has never yet produced a Jay Gould, or any of those infamous crimes committed in the name of commerce which are the disgrace of America, and have reduced that country from a free republic to an oligarchy which is in danger of being upset by one of the most bloodthirsty revolutions the world has ever seen. It will only require a little consideration on the part of hon. members to see that any suggestion to hand over to private enterprise a great public work of this character is unpatriotic. I, for my part, would never give support to anything of the sort. I believe that of all the damnable inventions ever devised for the upsetting of free in-

stitutions and the destruction of free states, this so-called private enterprise in regard to national works is one of the very worst. I may possibly be accused of inconsistency when I say that private enterprise should be allowed to undertake work on the lakes, and yet should not be allowed to control the haulage of water from the coast to the goldfields. To remove misapprehension on that point I will say that in the lakes competition is possible, and, more than that, probable. At Bulong, for example, we already have two companies on the one lake, doing the same kind of work. The competition is of such a character as to prevent either of the companies doing very much damage to the people.

MR. MORAN: Let us have two pipes from the coast.

MR. VOSPER: I think that if you got one big company established for the purpose of pumping the water from the coast, it would put an end to any further enterprise in that direction.

THE PREMIER: A company would require a very big monopoly before they would undertake the work.

MR. VOSPER: Even if there were such monopoly and a man wished to invest his money in such an enterprise as pumping water from the coast to the goldfields, he would find it better to make a "corner" in shares of the going concern than to start a second scheme in opposition. That sort of thing has been tried before, and has been carried out successfully. I have already pointed out the distinction between private enterprise and Government work. To summarise my position on this matter, I will briefly say, as a representative of the goldfields, I find myself totally unable to offer any opposition to the Government scheme; consequently my voice will not be heard again in this House in opposition to it. While I say that I recognise to the fullest extent all the reasons that have been urged against it: I recognise the dangers to which the hon. leader of the Opposition has alluded. These will have to be carefully guarded against, and whatever Government is in power when the scheme is completed—I do not think there is much doubt what Government will be in power—it will be their duty to surround the work with as many safeguards as they can devise to make it an economic success. There are two dangers to guard

against—the danger of the scheme being an economic failure, and the still greater danger that our mines may not be successful. The output of gold is very large, but our dividend list is very small, and, until we can increase that list, our gold output is not of very much use to us. The tendency of the Government scheme will be to very largely increase the dividend list. Let us choose the lesser of two evils, and that is the construction of the work as proposed by the Government. I need not detain the House any longer. I regret that I am not able to see eye to eye with the hon. member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth). I recognise that the people in his district want water also, and that the hardships they are undergoing will probably lead them to view the Coolgardie water scheme in a more favourable light, and I may say that, whenever any scheme is brought forward to treat the Murchison people as well as the Government propose to treat the Coolgardie people, it will have as hearty a support from me as I am now giving to the Government scheme.

MR. KENNY (North Murchison): When I first heard of the Coolgardie water scheme, I considered it one of the wildest that it was possible for a Government to conceive. It is true that it had the approval of a Government geologist from the other side; but, for my own part, I quite hold with the general view of the digger, that few people can see what is beyond the pick. My idea was that the Government should exhaust every other means of procuring water, before they committed the colony to such a heavy expenditure as they proposed. But what have we before us to-night? We have proved here that the Government have about completed a bore more than half a mile into the bowels of the earth, without having touched the desired fluid. We also find that large sums of money have been expended in conserving water, and tanks have been constructed costing thousands of pounds, and in fact every possible means have been undertaken in order to secure a fair supply of water to the Coolgardie fields; but we have also in evidence before us that all these schemes have not been as successful as we would like; and, worse than all, it is now in evidence before us that the various mines

find that they have got through the water strata and that the supplies they were looking to recently, with which to carry on their work, are nearly exhausted. I say that this is a very serious state of things, and one which requires serious consideration at our hands. In short, it has resolved itself to this: it is proved beyond doubt that there is no alternative now but for the country to accept the scheme brought forward by the Government. Of course something is to be said in regard to private enterprise. What has been our experience in regard to private enterprise? I think we must all admit it has not been a very happy one. We have one or two very unpleasant remembrances of private enterprise in Western Australia. When in Victoria the other day, I met some contractors representing Chaffey Bros.' Irrigation Works, who were having an interview with the Minister there, and endeavouring to procure assistance from the Government towards a work which, according to the papers a few years ago, was going to be the salvation of that part of Victoria. We cannot help allowing this sort of thing to weigh with us in our estimate of the value of private enterprise. Western Australia, I think, produces some pretty plain speakers possessed of strong socialistic tendencies, and I must honestly confess to a certain amount of suspicion of private enterprise undertaking a work that the Government can carry out. I think it would be quite possible for the Government to devise means of carrying the scheme through that would free us entirely from the dangers that have been alluded to by the hon. member for Albany. I think that the Government should hand the scheme over to an independent board. We should then have very little to fear from anything in the way of political influence affecting the proper carrying out of the scheme. I may state that the conclusions I have expressed to-night have not been come to hurriedly. I have thought over them. I have read every line by the Engineer-in-Chief dealing with this matter. I have gathered information from every quarter. I have conversed with every member of the eastern goldfields, and I feel that my duty to-night is very clear, and that is to do what I can to support a scheme that will afford relief to the eastern goldfields. I am quite sure

of one thing, and that is that I am only doing my duty, and that I will be supported by every wielder of the pick and shovel on the North Murchison when I vote to accord relief to our fellow workers on the eastern goldfields.

MR. MORGANS (Coolgardie): I desire to record the satisfaction I have felt upon hearing the explanation of my friend the member for Central Murchison (Mr. Illingworth), in reference to the position he formerly took up in regard to the water scheme, and also with reference to the railways to the goldfields. I am bound to confess that the impression I have had for a long time in reference to that hon. member's position with regard to the water scheme was somewhat different. However, he has been good enough to tell us to-day that he is quite in accord with this scheme, or rather that he is quite in accord with the principle that the people of the goldfields should be supplied with water which they so much need. That being the case, I cannot say we have much to quarrel with, and I cannot say there is much difference between ourselves and the member for Central Murchison. The hon. member pointed out that time is of great importance in this matter; but, if the hon. member's suggestions were carried into effect, the appointment of a Royal Commission such as he desires would mean that there would be little chance of commencing any water scheme for another six or eight or perhaps ten years. My experience of commissions as a rule has been that the appointment of one commission involves the appointment of another, and I can see a period of interminable difficulty and argument if the suggestion of my hon. friend is carried out. The hon. member for Central Murchison read to us some statements from a letter by Mr. Reed with regard to this question. I may say that I know personally the whole district referred to by Mr. Reed in that letter, and I absolutely disagree with what he says. With regard to the particular point near Coolgardie that he speaks of as being suitable for the construction of a dam, I have examined it very carefully, and I do not for a moment deny that a dam can be made at that particular point; but I am perfectly certain that you could not make a dam to hold water without spending a lot of money to make it water-tight.

THE PREMIER: Five thousand pounds, he says.

MR. MORGANS: I know he said that, but it could not be made for £25,000 to hold the amount of water he said, nor for £40,000. There is another point in connection with this matter that has been overlooked to some extent by all of us, and that is the relative cost of conserving water on the goldfields as compared with the scheme of the Government. The construction of dams suitable for holding a large quantity of water, and capable of retaining it when once the water is in, means an extensive system of puddling or cementing, not only the bottoms but the sides of the tanks also. I have been down hundreds of shafts upon the Coolgardie, Hannan's, and other goldfields, and I have not seen yet, in one single instance, any spot on those goldfields where a dam could be constructed which would hold water without puddling or cementing. It is a curious fact with regard to the formations on the goldfields that they all appear to be secondary formations, and it is rare, indeed, to see a clay formation suitable for the retention of water. Therefore I contend that the construction of dams, in view of the fact that an enormous expenditure would be involved in their construction, on such lines that they would retain water, would, in the aggregate, be more than double for the same amount of water, and probably treble that proposed to be spent by the Government in bringing the water from the coast. I am not making this as a wild statement, because I have had—irrespective of my own observations, which I consider of some value—the opinion of the best hydraulic engineers on this question. It is not necessary to go into details, but I may say that one gentleman who has occupied a high position—I believe a position of confidence—in this country, a hydraulic engineer, Mr. Jobson was interested with a well-known gentleman, Mr. Samuel Wilson, in propounding a scheme for supplying the goldfields with water. The Premier knows all about this scheme, and he has looked into the details and has come to the conclusion, as I did, that it is not practicable. What are the facts of the scheme proposed by Mr. Jobson? Mr. Jobson proposed a scheme for supplying one million gallons of water per day to Menzies, Coolgardie,

and Kalgoorlie. He confined the details of his scheme to these three places. It so happened that the papers in connection with this matter were brought under my notice, and at the same time a Mr. Faithful Begg was in this colony. Like all sensible men on visiting the goldfields, Mr. Begg saw the necessity of some supply of water for the fields, and he was struck by the scheme of Mr. Wilson. The result was that a committee was formed in Coolgardie, of which Mr. Faithful Begg was a member, and the details of the scheme were laid before the committee. I had the honour of being chairman of that committee, and took a great deal of interest in it, because I felt the question was one of vital importance to the goldfields, and I thought that if nothing better resulted, we should get some valuable information in reference to it. We had two meetings. On the first occasion I pointed out that the supply of one million gallons per day was too small a quantity, and it was not good enough to attempt a scheme for the supply of such a small quantity. In consequence of this, Mr. Jobson was invited by the committee to re-model his estimates and give a further report, and state what would be the cost of supplying Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and Menzies with three millions of gallons of water per day—being an enlargement of his original scheme. Mr. Jobson was good enough to carry out the work, and he presented to the committee in Coolgardie the result of his investigations, and it resulted in this, that Mr. Jobson informed us that it was possible to supply, he believed from the northern goldfields, three millions of gallons of water per day. In the first place he was prepared to construct a dam to hold two thousand million gallons of water. This is not a small dam by any means, and in addition to that, knowing the uncertainty of the water supply on the goldfields, and doubting the regularity of the rainfall, he went further and decided to sink wells on this very spot, as he believed a certain amount of underground water could be found also. The result of all this was, that Mr. Jobson stated that the conservation of three millions of gallons of water per day, including the price of the pumping machinery and the distribution of that water to Coolgardie, Menzies, and Kal-

goorlie, would amount to a sum of three million pounds sterling. I took these figures as the figures of a man who thoroughly understands his business, and when I compare the figures as stated by Mr. Jobson with my own observations, and my own calculations, I am prepared to state that I cannot believe, and I am certain that no scheme for the conservation of water for the goldfields, for the supply of three million gallons of water per day, can be undertaken for less than three millions sterling. The question of conserving water on the goldfields is not the cheapest and most economical way of providing the fields with water. Mr. Jobson's scheme could have been carried out, but if it had been, I do not think the quality of the water would have been good; still, if it were, it would have been an expensive scheme, and it would have amounted to this, that for each million gallons per day the cost would be £1,000,000. The scheme proposed by the Government, if their figures are reliable, and I see no reason why they should not be, will enable us to secure to the goldfields a supply of water for exactly one half the cost of any scheme for the conservation of water on the goldfields. This is a strong point, and should be taken into consideration. With regard to the select committee, I hope my friend, the hon. member for Central Murchison, will modify his views on the matter, and will see, in view of some of the facts placed before him to-night, his way to withdraw the motion, and not let the matter go any further.

MR. A. FORREST: He means to do that.

MR. MORGANS: However, that may be, I hope he will see, in the face of all the support this water scheme, proposed by the Government, is receiving from the House, his way to withdraw the motion. Referring to the remarks of the Director of Public Works, that gentleman made some statement as to dams which have come under my observation. It is painful for me to be obliged to assert in the House that every dam made by the Government on the goldfields has been a failure. I do not for a moment wish, in stating this, to convey that the Government or their engineers have been in any way to blame; absolutely not. I am glad to be able to state that my observations have shown

me that the work has been faithfully and well done. The reason why the dams are a failure is that the rainfall is not sufficient to fill them. If there had been a sufficient rainfall and the Government engineers had had at their disposal enough clay to puddle the dams, or sufficient money to cement them, these dams would have been a success; but the Government could not be involved in any blame, neither can the engineers.

THE PREMIER: They are all good now.

MR. MORGANS: They are practically a waste of money. I believe at the present time there is not a drop of water in any of the dams.

THE PREMIER: The next time there is rain they will hold, I think.

MR. MORGANS: Supposing the dams do hold, I wish to draw the attention of the House to another matter which merits consideration at the hands of hon. members—the question of the quality of the water. It is a known fact that the soil on the goldfields contains a large proportion of soluble salts. They are found on every part of the goldfields south of Menzies. Twenty miles north of Menzies the percentage of soluble salts is much less, but from Menzies down to—I won't say Esperance, but nearly, down as far as Dundas—the soil contains a larger quantity of soluble salts than in any other soil I have ever seen in any part of the world. That means that when the rain falls on this soil it dissolves the salts, and they are carried into the dams. If the dams collect a large quantity of water, upon tasting, it appears to be moderately fresh, but as evaporation goes on the pure water goes and the salts are concentrated in the water left, and the water becomes absolutely useless for domestic purposes. If for no other reason than this, from a sanitary point of view, from every point of view, this is sufficient to condemn any system of conservation of water on the goldfields. Referring to this point a little further, I may say that an experiment has been made by myself upon a gallon of water. If you take 1lb. of earth from any part of the Coolgardie goldfields, and place it in a gallon of water, and allow it to remain there for twenty-four hours, that water becomes absolutely unfit for human consumption. I do not say that a man could not drink it. Of

course that can be done, but only at the expense of involving himself in the danger of a complication of all the diseases of the bladder and kidneys. No sensible man would ever think of drinking it. That being the case, I hope this fact alone is sufficient to convey to hon. members that the question of water conservation is not possible, practicable, or desirable on the goldfields of the colony. I was going to refer to one other matter in connection with this question, and that is the position of the Government in this water scheme. I desire to convey, on behalf of the inhabitants of the goldfields, my warmest thanks to the right hon. gentleman and his Government for having proposed this scheme, which I consider the only practical one. But we must always remember that the Government have some selfish interests in the matter. They are thinking of their own railways on the goldfields. And they are quite right to think about supplying the railways with water. It is of vital importance to the profitable working of the railways. We have been told that the Government will expend £100,000 a year in supplying the railways with water. My own opinion is that, when the railway gets to Menzies, and the traffic increases on that line—because the northern goldfields will make a great demand on that railway for the carriage of machinery—I believe the Government will finally find themselves involved in an expenditure of £150,000 per annum for water for these railways. This payment to the Government for water for which they are now paying other people will, in itself, mean a return of nearly half the revenue necessary for the payment of interest, and for a sinking fund, upon this great outlay. From a financial point of view, I think hon. members will see this fact is well worthy the consideration of the House, and that, supposing the public should not take as much water as is expected—some of my friends here seem to think they might not—still for this reason alone the Government would be justified in carrying out this scheme, because they could make a very large saving upon the cost of working their railways. But, on the other hand, I think there is no doubt at all with regard to this water being taken by the people, for it is perfectly clear that on a goldfield where you have to pay

from £5 to £7 per 1,000 gallons for water, it is reasonable to suppose that any Government or any company proposing to sell that quantity of water for 3s. 6d. or 5s. per 1,000 gallons would have a large demand for it. Is it to be supposed that any mine owner, having an opportunity of getting water at the rate of 3s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons will not take it? Every ton of ore the miner deals with requires 100 gallons of water to treat; therefore, supposing the Government charge 5s. per 1,000 gallons, I say that every mine owner on the fields will be only too glad to pay it, as it means to him a cost of 6d. per 100 gallons. This quantity of 100 gallons is the greatest amount of water lost in the treatment of each ton of ore; and as the mine owner would lose an amount equal to only sixpence per ton in the treatment of his ore, is there any mine owner on the goldfields who would not pay that sum to get water which is most suitable for his purpose? What does it mean? It simply means the sacrifice of one-eighth of a pennyweight of gold per ton of ore. I do not think it is necessary for me to say more with regard to this water being taken, because the facts I have given you will, I think, make it clear to the minds of hon. gentlemen present that there cannot be the slightest doubt that, when the Government bring this stream of water upon the goldfields, the whole of it will be cheerfully and gladly taken, not only for domestic purposes, but by mine owners as well. What does it cost now? Why, they are using salt water, and in many cases it costs half-a-crown per 1,000 gallons; but the salt water they are using at Hannan's, I believe, costs from 2s. 6d. to 12s. per thousand, and it is very dense salt water at that. No man who understands anything of the treatment of good ores would ever contemplate for one moment the use of salt water if he could get fresh, because it is impossible to obtain a proper extraction of gold where you have water of high density with which to treat it. I can give you the case of water from Hampton Plains, which I believe is not very abundant, but is at present being used by some of the mine owners in the Coolgardie district; and they all strongly object to it, for the reason that it involves a heavy loss of gold in the tailings in consequence of its great density. I may say, from my own experience—and

I think it is worth something, because I have been connected with the extraction of gold from minerals for many years—that personally I would rather pay £1 a thousand gallons for fresh water than use salt water in a gold mill at a shilling a thousand. With regard to some remarks made by my friend the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest), I may say that I do not agree with what he said in reference to ruin being brought upon the goldfields if this water scheme were not carried out. I agree with what the leader of the Opposition (Mr. Leake) said in reference to that matter, that the statement would be likely to convey a false impression to the minds of outsiders. My own view of this question is that the want of water upon the goldfields does not mean ruin to the goldfields, because we know that we are getting a large amount of gold now in spite of it; but it does mean retarding their progress very seriously; and, when we look at the progress of the production of gold upon these fields, and see what the effect of it has been upon the markets at home, and upon the confidence of the public generally, I think that all hon. members will agree with me that every possible effort should be made to secure such a state of things as will admit of the continuance of this splendid progressive yield of gold. The only way in which that can be assured is by the delivery of fresh water upon the goldfields. The member for West Kimberley, I am perfectly certain, did not mean to convey that impression to the minds of the public; but, at the same time, I think the correct view to take of that question is that we insist upon the necessity of bringing this water to the goldfields, not because we believe ruin will come upon them if it is not sent there, but because we believe that, unless we get that water, the progressive output of gold will certainly cease. My friend, the leader of the Opposition, asked if all other sources had been investigated. I say they have been. We have had the experience of the Government in the construction of dams, and I assert that they have been a failure. With regard to the water in the lakes, I have had some experience of lake water, and I, too, have had to drive a conveyance through water several feet deep upon Broad Arrow Lake the year before last.

But the grand point is this: which would be the cheaper of the two schemes, to conserve the water of these lakes or to bring water from the coast? The facts I have given will, I hope, show that the plan of water conservation by means of dams would be altogether too expensive; and I hope the leader of the Opposition will be convinced by the facts that I have placed before him in reference to this part of the speech. I do not think it is necessary for me to intrude myself longer upon the House; but I would urge upon the Government not to lose one moment in giving effect to the decision of the House in reference to that water scheme. The member for Central Murchison told us yesterday that there was a difficulty in regard to this, inasmuch as the Government had not yet been authorised by Parliament to do it. That will certainly not be the difficulty now; because I am quite sure that, upon that question, the Government will have a very much larger majority than they had upon the vote of want of confidence.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: You should leave it to private enterprise.

MR. MORGANS: With regard to this question of private enterprise, I do not believe, and never have believed, in the principle of grandmotherly government. I believe it is a bad principle for the rapid development of any country, and I am certainly inclined to the view that if the right hon. gentleman and his Government could secure an offer for the construction of this work upon a satisfactory basis, and upon lines that would ensure its construction, and which, at the same time, would not involve the country in any greater expense than their own estimate of the cost of this work comes to, then I should be favourable—in the face of the present difficulty of securing money on the London market—to handing this scheme over to a company. I know the right hon. the Premier does not agree with that; but my view is that the work could be carried out more quickly, and that it could be carried out probably for less money, and I think we have a proof of that in the fact that one firm has already offered to carry out this scheme for a smaller cost than the cost estimated by the Government—I believe for something like £300,000 less. The right hon. gentleman last night told us that

so far as the Government were concerned, they could borrow money cheaper than private capitalists. I think I must agree with the right hon. gentleman there. I believe the Government can do so; but I do not believe that the Government can carry out the work so economically as a private firm could do it. However, it is to me a matter of no importance. What I desire is to see the scheme carried out; and if the Government do not see their way clear to hand over this great work to a private company, even under the strictest conditions, then I will say that in whatever step they take they will receive my approval, and I will back them up under any circumstances. What we require is to have the water upon the Coolgardie goldfield; and what we request is that the Government should put this important work in hand at the earliest possible moment.

MR. GREGORY: I rise to oppose the amendment of the hon. member for Central Murchison. I may say that I have recently visited Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie. In a trip I took from Esperance to Coolgardie, the Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie people went to a lot of trouble to show me and other hon. members who accompanied me the absolute necessity for a water supply. We were shown several first-class mines, especially the Mount Burges, and we saw several mines in that locality shut up owing to the want of a water supply. In Kalgoorlie I took the trouble to get the opinion of several of the best people there, such as the managers of the Lake View and of the Great Boulder; and they assured me that their water supply was getting less day by day; and they felt satisfied that it was absolutely necessary that some scheme should be adopted for the purpose of supplying these fields with water. I was at first opposed to this scheme, because I thought the immense amount of 2½ millions was too great a sum to expend on the water supply, and because I thought that the working expenses would be so great, owing to the large number of pumping stations required, that it would be impossible to levy a rate sufficiently heavy to pay the interest on the expenses incurred. But what do we find? At the present moment the people of Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie are paying a greater amount for the very small and

unsatisfactory supply of water that they are having at the present day than they will have to pay for five million gallons a day when the scheme of the Government comes into operation. That being the case, it is absolutely necessary we should give this scheme every support. Comment has been made by the hon. member for Central Murchison in regard to the Bendigo water scheme in Victoria. That scheme was carried out at immense expense, and, although the returns have not paid working expenses and interest, it has proved of such national benefit that a considerable amount has been expended in enlarging it, and constructing a second reservoir. I am distinctly opposed to any private enterprise in the matter of the goldfields water supply. In such a great scheme as this it would be a great injury to the colony to allow a private monopoly. I am very pleased to see that the Government do not intend—I hope they do not, anyhow—to grant such a monopoly. I hope the Premier will not allow any time to elapse, but will push forward the scheme, so that within three years there may be a plentiful supply of water for Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie. I hope also that the Premier will remember that Menzies is only some 80 miles further on, and should, if possible, derive some benefit from the scheme.

MR. MITCHELL (Murchison): I must confess I am one of those who, though a warm supporter of the Government, have never looked on the Coolgardie water scheme with any amount of favour up to the present time. But having come to Perth and met the various members for the goldfields, and having heard what the condition of affairs really is, I have somewhat modified my opinion, and I am now prepared to vote in support of the scheme. I made no pledges concerning the scheme, but I candidly confess I have changed my mind. If one had not had a mind, he could not change it. It has been said that no other scheme has been tried to get water for the goldfields. I have a little practical knowledge of making dams in hot countries, and I know if you make a dam, it is ten chances to one you cannot get rain to fill it, and if you do fill it with rain, the hot weather takes the water away. Dams are virtually useless in many parts. I have not been to

the fields, but I can appreciate what has been said as to the dryness of the country, and the kind of evaporation which takes place. The hon. member for Albany said something about payment for the water when the scheme had been carried out. Knowing something about mining people, I think they have a sense of fairness about them, and not only that, but they have some knowledge and common sense. They will certainly pay for the water, and gladly, when it is brought to their doors. It would be a very fatal mistake to hand this work over to any private company. If a French company got the work, we should be inundated with French people. Then what would become of our own labourers? Surely we ought to give our own people a show first. I hope the Government will not “climb down,” and give this work over to any private company. I do not know whether the Government could carry out the work any more cheaply, but I think they could do it better than anyone else. On these grounds I support the Government in their determination not to give the work over to any company or individual. I hope the hon. member for Central Murchison will withdraw the motion. I believe he intends to do so, and he might just as well do it now, so that we might get on with the business of the House.

MR. WOOD (West Perth): I am in the happy position that I have not to apologise in any way for supporting this Coolgardie water scheme, of which I have been a most enthusiastic supporter from its very inception. All through my last election I supported it in the face of many obstacles, and I intend to support it until I see it an accomplished fact. The motion of the hon. member for Central Murchison has been a perfect godsend to the Government. It has reopened the whole question of the Coolgardie water scheme, and in doing that has saved the Government a considerable amount of difficulty which might have possibly arisen at a later stage. Very little has been heard during the debate of the proposal to refer the matter to a select committee, but the whole question of the water supply of the goldfields has been opened up and discussed by the new members—I am happy to say—who had not an opportunity of dealing with the matter

when it was last before Parliament. The hon. member for Beverley during last Parliament moved that this matter should be referred to a select committee. That motion I opposed and voted against, and I am certainly not going to change my attitude to-night. I cannot change front so quickly as that. The very best select committee that could deal with this matter has already dealt with it. I refer to the select committee that consulted with the Engineer-in-Chief in London. When a committee of experts deal with this matter, and support our Engineer-in-Chief in almost every particular—in fact I think they said he was rather over than under the estimate—I think we can take it as a pretty fair criterion that the work will be a success. The matter of private enterprise has been very fully dealt with. Some hon. members may ask why the Government, having full authority to deal with the scheme a year ago, have not done anything towards it. I hope it will not be taken as presumption on my part if I answer the question by saying that in this matter the Government made a promise that nothing should be done unless they were fully convinced that the whole thing was practicable, and would not land this country in a loss. The Government have carried out their pledges to the utmost, and have done everything they possibly could. It is to their credit, and shows their *bona fides*, that they have not involved this country in any liability beyond a few thousand pounds. Many a man as enthusiastic as the Premier on this question could not have held himself back, when he had the opportunity of furthering a scheme which he had so much at heart. It is all the more, therefore, to the credit of the right hon. gentleman that no obligations have been entered into and nothing at all has been done without the consent and sanction, or, at all events, without asking the approval of Parliament. I am very glad to support the Government scheme, and to welcome to our side those hon. members who have given up their opposition to it. I think it is only fair to give them every credit for the honest change in their convictions. I do not think it is quite right when a man, who has been opposed to you, changes his mind and becomes favourable to you, to throw a brick at

him. That has been done apparently by some hon. members to-night. I am very sorry I was not here early enough to hear all the speeches to-night, but I gather that something has been said in the shape of a jar to those who have changed their minds. The subject is too important to this country to lose anyone whose support we can get. I am happy to say that the subject has been now entirely divested of any party aspect. That to my mind, as I have said before, and as I will say again, has kept this scheme back more than anything else. It is a matter of the past altogether, and now that the scheme has been divested of that, and we have an almost unanimous expression of opinion in favour of the scheme, the carrying of it out is a mere matter of detail for the future. I hope the hon. member for Central Murchison will see fit to withdraw his motion. There is not the slightest chance of his carrying it, and I think, if he exercises that discretion which is the better part of valour, he will be doing very well.

MR. OATS (Yilgarn): As hon. members are aware, I have resided for a long time on the goldfields. My first experience of the goldfields led me to believe that water was to be got in sufficient quantities. My hon. friend the member who has just sat down may throw a brick at me. [Mr. Wood: No, I will not.] But I am going to give you my reason for altering my opinion. I thought for a long time that the goldfield we now know so much of was going to be a moderate goldfield, a goldfield like that in many other parts of Australia. I had no conception that the field was going to be a greater field than any other in Australia, yet that is my conviction to-day. I would go back and say that three years ago the first battery was started in the Kalgoorlie field, and that battery obtained its water from three miles away at a cost of 10s. per hundred gallons. I had my impression as to the water resources of the country, and soon after I took charge in that district, I told my directors in London and in Adelaide that I guaranteed within one year to get sufficient water for 100 head of stampers. That has been achieved, and to-day there are 200 head working about there; and there is sufficient water in that district for 200 heads at the pre-

sent time. The field has grown, and grown immensely, and I want to see the great production that is possible in that field. I have no hesitation in saying that with water we can work 2,000 heads in that field, and make it the biggest goldfield the world has ever seen. I am speaking now after mature consideration, and I have no hesitation in saying that this can be accomplished. We know not all the possibilities of that field. Therefore I shall support the Government scheme. At first in looking over the country and seeing the great rainfall that occasionally falls there—I have seen it come down in sheets, not often, but occasionally—I thought it was the duty of the Government to see if it could not be made available for the districts. If this could be done, it would be cheaper than pumping the water from near Perth. This point has not been fully gone into yet, but it is evident to me that, with only an occasional and not a regular rainfall, the difficulty cannot be met in that way. The supply of water must be constant, and therefore I shall support the scheme recommended by the Government.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir John Forrest): I do not intend to say very much in regard to the motion moved by the hon. member for Central Murchison, because the matter has been freely dealt with by many other hon. members. I am very glad indeed to have the opportunity of listening to the observations of the members for the goldfields. The hon. members for Coolgardie, East Coolgardie, North-East Coolgardie, North Coolgardie, Murchison—I think I may say every hon. member on this side and on the other side of the House representing the goldfields, including the hon. member for North Murchison and others, have spoken on this question. I could not but be struck with the difference between the manner in which these hon. members dealt with this question, and that in which the hon. leader of the Opposition dealt with it. One could not fail to be struck with the great earnestness displayed in their speeches by the goldfields members. That was of course very satisfactory to me, as I am sure it must be to all hon. members who supported this great scheme years ago. It seems that the support to the scheme has grown considerably during the year that

has intervened. Now with regard to the motion proposed by the hon. member for Central Murchison, it seems to me that it is not a genuine motion. It is too general in its terms to be genuine. To ask this House to appoint a select committee to sit during the next couple of months, and examine into the whole question of the water supply to the goldfields, is asking a select committee to do what is impossible for them to do in that time. They would be expected to carry out their duties in a few weeks, but I would like to know how they could deal with the whole question of the water supply of the whole of the goldfields in this colony within such a limited time. The motion, as I said, is too large in its terms, and that leads me to the conclusion that the object the hon. member had in view was not to have this select committee appointed to consider the whole question of the supply of water to the goldfields. That question has been considered, both in this House and out of it, for many years past; and the object of the hon. member when he proposed this motion, in my opinion, was to block and delay the progress of this Coolgardie water scheme. I have no doubt if the hon. member had framed his motion to-day, instead of a fortnight ago, he would not have moved it in the terms he has employed in the present motion. It is not a practical motion. It infers that we have never considered the question of a water supply for the goldfields of the colony up to the present time, whereas we have heard from my friend the Commissioner of Railways that last year we spent £160,000 in conserving water on the goldfields, and we have contracts on hand at the present time amounting to £180,000 more for the purpose of conserving water on the goldfields—about one-fifteenth of the whole amount we require to carry out this great Coolgardie water scheme. Therefore the hon. member asks us to appoint a select committee for the purpose of considering a question which has engaged the attention of hon. members for the last five or six years, and on which we have spent immense sums of money—quite half a million. We have conserved water, sunk hundreds of wells, and made dozens of tanks over all the Coolgardie goldfields, also away on the Murchison and on the Pilbarra gold-

fields; we have also a large water supply department, having its officers on every goldfield, with the object of attending to these matters; and, in the face of all this, the hon. member's proposal for a select committee to consider this question is certainly not complimentary to the Government or complimentary to this House, because it infers that we have been doing nothing, and that we have not considered this subject during all these years. And what does the hon. member suggest as an alternative? He suggests that we should give up this absolutely certain scheme of water supply for these goldfields, that we should allow ourselves to be carried away from our original intention, from the Bill we passed last session after full deliberation, and that we should follow him and Mr. David Reed in a project which we have not only been considering—but dealing with practically for half a dozen years—that is, the conservation of water. The hon. member has the audacity, I cannot call it anything else, to tell experienced men here representing the goldfields, and to tell the Government with all its experienced officers, that within a mile or two from Coolgardie Mr. Reed knows of a place where 100 million gallons of water can be impounded at a cost of £5,000. I think the hon. member is trifling with this House when he makes such a statement as that, and asks us to give him any credence.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I did not make that statement.

THE PREMIER: You bring it forward and ask us—many of us having travelled over these districts, and knowing that to build a tank at Coolgardie, for holding one million gallons, has cost nearly double that sum—you ask us to accept that statement; telling us, in effect, that we have been so short-sighted, so incompetent, as to allow a site so near to Coolgardie to remain unutilised. To tell us that the rainfall could be conserved to the extent of 100 millions of gallons, at a cost of £5,000, is a most audacious statement, and one which should not have been made unless the hon. member had something to support it. We know something about conservation of water on goldfields; we have had a long experience of it; and what is the result? I am not going to say that conservation is not good, and that it should not be continued, be-

cause when rain does fall in that dry country it is desirable the water should be conserved as far as possible; but, after all our expenditure for this purpose on the Coolgardie goldfields, not one of the tanks we have built has any water in it at present—not because they will not hold water, for some of them have held water, and I believe that at present they are in a condition to hold water—but it is because of the uncertainty of the rainfall. Even when these tanks are full, in a wet season, we all know the source of supply is not very pure; and unless we have these tanks on granite rocks, as we fortunately have on the railway line to Coolgardie, the source of supply is not as good or as pure as we should desire, and not such as we should depend upon as a permanent supply for the goldfields population. The hon. member seemed to think I had in some way misrepresented him by stating, the other evening, that he had supported the construction of the railway to Coolgardie, and also the railway to Cue, by private enterprise or by companies, as opposed to the Government method of constructing these railways. If I have misrepresented the hon. member, I apologise for it; but I think the member for West Kimberley (Mr. A. Forrest) has proved that clearly, by the quotations he made from *Hansard*.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I never said it was wrong. That is all right.

THE PREMIER: Very well. The hon. member told us he thought those railways were necessary, and ought to be carried out without a single pound of expense to the Government, and be carried out, if possible, by private enterprise.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I said, if they could be carried out by private enterprise, they should be.

THE PREMIER: He forgets, and hon. members usually have forgotten, in dealing with private enterprise, that the people of the country have to pay just the same, whether the work is carried out by private enterprise or by the Government; only that the people have to pay a good deal more, when the work is done by private enterprise. A private company cannot build a railway or construct a great public work and carry it on, unless the work pays. As soon as it ceases to pay, the shareholders

will not provide any more money; and somebody else, perhaps some other company, comes in upon the ruins, as it were, and carries on the work with a lesser capital. That is the experience of all countries where private enterprise of this description is in force. The people have to pay—we can never get away from that, in either case; because, if the work is not reproductive, a private company cannot go on with it. Such, however, is not always the case with the Government, who have sources of revenue which are not open to a private company; therefore the Government can carry out a work, even if it does not pay, so long as Parliament is willing that the country shall bear the loss. The hon. member also complained that I had said the other evening that he would not give a drink of water to the people of the Coolgardie goldfields. I do not think I said that. I did not intend to convey that the hon. member has not a large heart, and also a strong good feeling for his fellow men; but what I said was that, while he was so anxious, he and those with him, that the food duties should be reduced a little so as to save the people on the Coolgardie goldfields a farthing on a loaf of bread and a halfpenny a pound on beef, he was not willing to assist the Government to relieve them of an impost amounting to £20 a year per man, so as to give them good fresh water for their use and comfort. The hon. member wants to turn that against me, by making me say that he had stated he would not give them a drink of fresh water. I said he was anxious to give them this small reduction in the food duties, whereas he was unwilling to do for them the great good which the Government were anxious to do. I am, however, glad of one thing. I think the hon. member deserves the thanks of this House for his action, because he did not try to sail under false colours. He said he was against this scheme; and, when an hon. member believes that any scheme is not a good one, and tells us that he is absolutely against it, then we know exactly where he is standing, and how to deal with him. I should also like to pay what is, in my opinion, a well-deserved compliment to the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Morgans), to my friend the member for East Coolgardie (Mr. Moran), and also to the hon.

member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), for what I think were their excellent speeches and their moderate utterances on this question. There was a degree of earnestness about them, even in instances where they have changed their minds, which deserves favourable consideration from hon. members of this House. I agree with the member for West Perth (Mr. Wood) that, when a member has occasion to change his mind and has come over to our way of thinking, it is not a good time to twit him with his change of front. I am not sure that I do not do that sometimes myself, because, in the heat of controversy, one says things which perhaps one would not do if he had time to consider the matter. I think that, when a man changes his mind and says so in public—is convinced, in fact, that he has been on the wrong track hitherto—it is not an easy or a pleasant confession for him to make; and it should not lie in the mouths of those on whose side he has come to say anything of him that will make the case more painful to him than it must naturally be already. I am sorry, however, that I cannot compliment in the same degree the hon. member for Albany. He certainly does not seem to have changed his spots to any extent. He still seems to have as great a regard for private enterprise as he had in 1894 [MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear], and demands that this great national work shall be handed over to private individuals. As I have just said, he forgets that, unless it is to be handed over to private individuals on a basis that will pay them, nothing but disaster can result, for no private individuals can go on losing money for the benefit of the people of this colony. If private individuals undertake an enterprise, they must make it pay; and for us to hand over a work to a private individual which we think would not pay him, would not, I am sure, be in the interest of this colony; because the desire of all good colonists should be that people who invest capital in this country in any industry or work, of whatever description it may be, should do well out of the enterprise, and make money by it. [MR. LEAKE: Hear, hear.] Unless that course is pursued, nothing but disaster can result.

MR. MORGANS: But you do not apply that principle to the working of your mines in the colony.

THE PREMIER: My great desire is that everyone who comes here to seek his fortune in gold-mining, as I told the people of London, should be enabled to do well in this country, because, as I then said, he would be a walking advertisement in our favour wherever he went, as he would speak well of the country which had treated him well. On the other hand, if people lose their money here, if disaster comes upon them in any enterprise undertaken in this colony, it is the worst thing that could happen to this country.

MR. LEAKE: Then we must not encourage private enterprise, in case it should be unsuccessful?

THE PREMIER: No; I do not say that, but I say we might do that if it were on a basis that would pay. This scheme will pay; but that is not a reason why we should hand it over to private enterprise. This project has been designed by the Government and by its advisers on a basis that will pay; and, although I am quite prepared to admit that the member for Albany may be quite right in saying that the carrying out of this project may interfere with other public works being carried out in this colony from loan funds, and that it will, to some extent at any rate, divert the borrowing capacity of the colony to this object, still I would ask everyone whether the promotion and development of the Coolgardie goldfields is not worth it. We are never tired of saying how much we owe to the goldfields of the colony. We know very well that, to a very large extent—I do not say to the whole extent, because, as I pointed out the other evening, the large amount of money that has been borrowed by the colony during the last few years has also had its influence in the same manner as the prosperity of the goldfields—I say the great factor in promoting the prosperity of this colony, the factor that has built up Perth and Fremantle and made the country altogether different from what it used to be, is the gold mining industry; and the goldfields of the Eastern districts, known as the Coolgardie goldfields, have had the largest share in doing this. Then surely, if that is admitted, and if we desire that this prosperity shall continue, it is our duty to see that every possible means are provided in order to develop and carry on

this great industry. My great objection to private enterprise I have stated over and over again; but as the question of private enterprise has come up in this debate, I will state it once more, though there are many other objections that may be brought against it. It is that, after the work has been completed, the rates to be charged, and the management of the business, and everything connected with it will be taken out of the control of the Government of the country, and out of the control of Parliament. But one of the great objections I have to handing over this work to private enterprise is that I know very well it will be difficult for a private company to raise in London, or in any other market, a sum of two and a half millions with which to carry out this work. A company would have to pay very dearly for the money—much more dearly than the Government would have to pay. Then again, a company would never think of raising the whole of the money at the beginning, but would raise only some portion in order to start the works. If hard times came, or difficulties arose, which would be very likely before the work was completed, the Government would be “between the devil and the deep sea.” We would be in pretty much the same position as we were in relation to the Midland railway. All the company would have to say to us would be, “We cannot go on with the work, and you must come and help.” They would come to Parliament, and the Government would either have to cancel the contract or buy the company out. Thus there might arise a very troublesome, dangerous, and altogether undesirable state of affairs. That is the experience of the Government, and experience, as someone has said, is what we have to rely upon. The sum of two and a half millions may not seem a very large amount to borrow, but it is a sum by no means easy for a syndicate to raise in the market. It would take at least twelve months for a syndicate to raise such a sum. Those in charge of the project would have to go to London, interview financiers and give many concessions. They would have to pay considerable sums of money to those who helped them, because in such a matter as this people will not look at you without payment. All these difficulties do not

exist in regard to the Government, who have this whole territory under their control and the finances of the colony at their back. The Government have their agents in London and everything ready. We are in touch with the London money market, and are in a position to deal with the matter when a favourable opportunity presents itself. We are also in such a position that, when once the work is commenced, it will certainly be completed. That is more than can be said for any private company. In this country there have been plenty of persons who have professed themselves ready and able to build railways and carry out other public works, but those works have not been completed. There is not one single syndicate I have had anything to do with that has been entirely satisfactory. That being so, I am altogether averse to handing over great public works to private enterprise. Then, we have to consider what will be the state of affairs if the work were completed by a private company. It is preposterous to think that the Government should have no control over the prices to be charged for the water. Some hon. members have said that the people of Coolgardie will not pay for the water. I do not believe that. I believe the people of Coolgardie will pay for the water just as do the people of Perth, and as they pay their railway fares. It is absurd to say they will not do so. If they do not pay, then they will not get any water. As to the management of the water works, that will remain with this House of Parliament, which will have complete control of it. Parliament can place the scheme under a board or a manager, or any other form of control they like, and they can deal with that control from time to time. We retain complete control over the management whenever a change may be deemed necessary. It would be absurd for this Government to bind themselves by contract to a private company for a period of 50 or 60 years, to conditions which might be altogether unsuitable for circumstances which subsequently arose. Any idea of handing such a work over to a private company will never receive any support from me. It is said that political interests may interfere in the Government control of this water supply business. Why should not political interests

interfere with this scheme in the same way as they interfere with everything else we have to do with? What we want is for this Parliament to be supreme. The member for Coolgardie or the member for Kalgoorlie might want certain things to be done, but there is no reason why these things should be done. Surely we shall not despair of the wisdom of Parliament. There is political interference with the lives and liberties of the people every time we sit in this House, and why should there not be political interference with the Coolgardie water supply, if that interference be in the public interest? I am at one with hon. members who regret the necessity for carrying out this great work. It would have been very much better for us if the Coolgardie goldfields had running streams; but after all, if we have to regret the necessity for this great expenditure, we must rejoice that the country is worthy of the expenditure. When we hear to-night from one hon. member that there is a piece of ground, which a few years ago was not worth a single penny, but which is now valued at two and a half millions, surely there is room for congratulation that we have such riches in our territory. We have this great auriferous belt, and the scheme to supply the people on the goldfields with water is a worthy project, even though it cost two and a half millions. If we had not had this great wealth within our territory worth millions and millions of pounds, it would not have been necessary to expend two and a half millions on the water scheme. But which is the better for us? Is it not better for us to have all these riches only waiting to be taken out of the earth, and to spend two and a half millions on a water supply, than to have the country the arid wilderness which it was a few years ago? Although I regret the expenditure, still I regard it as a matter for congratulation that we have such a rich territory deserving of the expenditure. There is no doubt that this water scheme is a great work, which casts much responsibility on the members of the Government and on Parliament. But we must not exaggerate the cost of the work. The hon. member who introduced the motion, if he did not tell us to-night, told us at some other time, that the scheme would cost five millions. But that figure is not correct. We now know

that the scheme will cost under two and a half millions. This is no uncertain project, but a project which will give a reliable and pure supply of water to the goldfields. I think there is a great responsibility upon us, but we must not exaggerate it. The sum required for the scheme does not amount, after all, to a year's revenue at the present time. And if it had not been for the gold discoveries which necessitate this expenditure, what would have been our revenue to-day? Probably half a million instead of nearly three millions. We cannot expect to have all the sweets and no disadvantages. We must take the sweets with that which is not sweet, and we should congratulate ourselves that we have a territory which is not only worth constructing railways to—railways that are self-supporting and do not cost the country a penny—but which is worth giving a supply of good fresh water to. Nor will this water supply place an extra burden on the people. After all, speaking for a moment to those who live in the older parts of the colony, where do they look for prosperity and for their markets? Why, to the Coolgardie and other goldfields. Where do people in Perth and Fremantle look to for the building up of their cities and the increase of their business? Is it to those who are here, or to those who are developing the auriferous deposits of the colony? That being so, what reason is there for anybody to complain? Is there any injustice about it? Is it unjust that a part of the country which has done so much good, which has given us so much prosperity, should also place obligations and responsibilities on us? You cannot have great riches or wealth without having something to counterbalance them. I am very glad indeed to find the feeling in the House at the present time is so favourable to the Government scheme. It seems to me that I may say to myself, this House is practically unanimous that no time should be lost in carrying out this great work. I would ask hon. members who formerly supported the scheme, not to go back from the views and ideas they held twelve months ago. It was harder then to come to the conclusion that this work was necessary than it is now. In that little space of time the colony has increased both in population and in revenue, and everything else has

increased; therefore, if we were able to make up our minds then, when we were not nearly so well off, that this project was a desirable one and should be carried out, surely we ought to be able to make up our minds to support it now. I do not ask the hon. member for Central Murchison to withdraw his motion. He will please himself about that. I am willing to give the hon. member credit for the best of intentions at all times; but at the same time I cannot help thinking—and I do not wish to say it in any unfriendly spirit—that at the bottom of this motion there is a desire to retard and delay the carrying out of this great work. He has confessed that he is not in accord with it. He promised to give us an alternative scheme, but he absolutely failed to convince a single member in the House; and, seeing that he has taken up this matter and placed it before the House and the country, I think it is his duty not to withdraw his motion, but to go to a division upon it, because if he states that the work is not necessary or not advisable in the interests of the country and in the interests of his constituents, I want a division so as to obtain the view of the House on the matter. If the hon. member will promise to go to a division, I am willing that the debate should be adjourned. We shall have a full House here to-morrow, and if a division is taken then, the Government will learn who are with them and who are against them on this question, and whether there is a majority or not in favour of going on with the work. For my own part, anxious as I am to proceed with this work, I am only in the hands of the House. I must bow to the decision arrived at, but I believe that the wisdom and the patriotism of the House will be sufficient to show that, in a House of 44 members, the member for Central Murchison almost stands alone in opposing the scheme. If that is the case, a division will strengthen our hands, and we will go on with the scheme as fast as we can. If there is an equal division, which I do not anticipate, and a delay ensues in the carrying out of the work, it will be the fault of those who are endeavouring to retard this great project. I thank hon. members for listening to me in the way they have. I am pleased indeed to have had the oppor-

tunity of again placing my views on this subject before the House, and I think we owe a debt of gratitude to those who have so clearly and earnestly placed the views of their constituents before us.

MR. OLDHAM (North Perth): I move the adjournment of the debate.

THE PREMIER: I do not think the hon. member should move the adjournment. It should be done by the leader of the Opposition, if at all, and I object to an adjournment in these circumstances.

MR. LEAKE: This is not an Opposition motion at all. I am not in charge of the debate.

THE SPEAKER: I have to take the motion moved by the hon. member for North Perth, but it can be challenged.

THE PREMIER: Divide.

MR. OLDHAM (after a pause): I withdraw the motion for the adjournment.

THE SPEAKER: Do you intend to speak to the motion?

MR. OLDHAM: Yes. I did not intend to speak to-night on this important question, but I am going to take a somewhat unusual course. I am going to support the Government, and it is needful therefore that I should offer some explanation. Although I am going to support the Government, I cannot help thinking that the Premier was not quite correct when he stated that the leader of the Opposition lacked earnestness in his speech last night, and I think also he was not particularly correct when he accused the hon. member for Central Murchison of a desire to block the progress of this measure in moving his motion. The reason that decided me to support the Government on this particular point was that it is necessary, as everyone connected with the goldfields knows, to supply them with water. The question raised to-night is one of private enterprise *versus* Government control; and I am convinced in my own mind that the Government can supply this water cheaper, better, and to more advantage to the country than any private enterprise can do. We have had a good deal of experience with monopolies in this country, and it is not necessary that we should give any more monopoly. We have had the monopoly of the Perth Water Supply Company, and that was not particularly satisfactory. We have had the mono-

poly of the Midland Railway and the Great Southern Railway, these not being satisfactory; and we have also got the beef monopoly, and that is not satisfactory either. The control of these works is a question which deserves the serious consideration of the House. I am not afraid that the people on the goldfields will not pay for the water when supplied; but I am very much afraid that some of the mine owners will not pay if they can get out of it. I know there is hardly any analogy between a mine owner and the private users of water in Perth and Fremantle; for you can compel private owners to pay, whereas I question whether you can compel mine owners to pay, if they do not want the water.

MR. MORAN: You can get a lien on the mine, if they take the water.

MR. OLDHAM: I think it is necessary that some system of control should be adopted, apart from any political influence; but I should object very strongly to the control of this water supply being vested in any board nominated by the Government. I do not think the control of the Perth water supply, as it is now vested in the existing board, has proved up to the present a great success; and I dare say that, before very long, I shall be able to place something before this House in respect to this control which will very much astonish hon. members. I shall content myself now with reiterating that, upon this question at any rate, and not against my will, I intend to support the Government.

MR. SIMPSON (Geraldton): I am sure it is a fortunate thing that this debate should have occurred to-night, if only for the expression of opinion that fell from the Premier. Speaking on this scheme, the Premier said he did hope the time would come, or that it had nearly come, when he would have the whole of the people of the colony at his back in carrying out this scheme. Last year I considered it my duty, in connection with this matter, to move in this House on the question of the Water Supply Loan Bill,

That, in the opinion of this House, the proposal of the Government is premature, and ought not to be sanctioned until the large centres of population are more equitably represented in this House.

I did that with the object of securing the distinct representation of the goldfields.

We have that representation now, and we have an expression of the opinions of the goldfields members; and I think it will readily be conceded that the conditions on our goldfields have altered marvellously. I have seen our goldfields covered with wild flowers, and at other times I have seen them a howling wilderness, so that you would wonder how men could live there; and it has been established beyond question that, notwithstanding the huge expenditure in conserving water, we have not there a really trustworthy and sound basis of supply for the people. I think it is generally admitted that there was never any objection, either in the country or in this House, to supplying the people of the eastern goldfields with water. It was only a question of what was the most expedient method of securing for them a cheap and good supply. The motion of the hon. member is for a select committee; but a select committee would, in my opinion, be useless in this matter unless the exact date on which they were to report to this House were determined by Parliament; and, to give them a sufficient time to make their services of any value, would mean that their report could not be laid before this House soon enough to give us any opportunity, during this session, of coming to a conclusion with regard to this great question. I am of opinion that we cannot too urgently press forward a scheme for supplying the people of the eastern goldfields with fresh water; and I am extremely sorry to learn that the financial position of the Government is such that they are compelled to delay the project. This is very much to be regretted, whether it results from extravagance, or whether it is simply that the colony has got a hint from John Bull that it is "over-running the constable," and that it had better borrow in proportion to its means of production. But I differ from the right hon. gentleman as to what constitutes the security of the British money-lender. I say that our population is the sole basis of security we have to offer; and I never heard any financier suggest, as a security for a loan, any other basis than that of population. This motion of the member for Central Murchison does not come from the Opposition at all—I think that is distinctly understood—and I think the Premier recognises

the fact that there has been a great deal of light thrown upon this question by the discussion which has taken place. When we realise the fact which has been so prominently before us during the last few months, that the mines in the Kalgoorlie district especially have pierced the water-bearing strata, I think it will make every member of this House face the question in a very serious mood. Personally I am willing to run any risk in incurring the outlay; and I am going to put forth every possible effort to urge the Government to bring this work to a successful issue. To my mind, however, there is only one really serviceable way in which it can be done, in the interests of the country, and that is by private enterprise. I have never budged from that position; and when we hear hon. members talk to-night about the danger of committing to a private company the right to supply the public with this absolutely necessary fluid, I am surprised at their ignorance. Do they not remember that London, the great centre of the universe, as it might be termed, is supplied by private enterprise with every drop of water it drinks? For members to use such arguments in this House is futile.

THE PREMIER: The principle operates in Australia, at any rate.

MR. SIMPSON: I am an ardent admirer of Australia, but I am not vain enough to imagine that we here have secured all the intelligence and wisdom in the administration of public affairs. The proposed charge of 3s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons is really the key to the financial position. I am not one who says the men of Coolgardie will not pay for their water. They will pay for their water as they pay for everything else. I know the goldfields people pretty well, and a policy of repudiation belongs to them no more than to anybody else. How can the Premier possibly justify the financial basis of the scheme? The money for the construction of the work is borrowed on the credit of the colony as a whole, but the people on the goldfields are to be charged 3s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons, while those in Perth only pay 1s. 6d. The people on the goldfields are our relations, brothers, and fellow citizens.

THE PREMIER: Both schemes are self-supporting.

MR. SIMPSON: The people on the goldfields have as much right to demand water at 1s. 6d. per 1,000 gallons as have the people of Perth, seeing that the credit of the whole colony is pledged for the construction of the work. The proper plan would be to give to the goldfields people that which would induce increased consumption. I do not know the financial position of the Government. It is now nearly November, and there is no report from the Works Department. Another cat slipped out of the bag when the Premier stated he had learned in London that we should borrow no more than £2,000,000 a year.

THE PREMIER: I think it is very good news.

MR. SIMPSON: It is very good news, and I am glad the old gentleman in London has given that advice. I hope now that millions of capital, and not Government loans, will come into this country for the development of private enterprise. I profoundly regret, under these circumstances, that opportunity has not been given for the prosecution of this waterworks scheme by private enterprise. I regret that the Government should have so shattered the credit of the country, and got us into such a wretched financial condition that, according to the hon. member for West Kimberley, the bankruptcy or solvency of the State depends on the carrying out of this scheme. That is the sort of extreme, mad statement which often comes from the same quarter. Coming, as the statement does, from an extreme supporter of the Government, it is very much to be regretted that the Government have got themselves into such a position that they cannot proceed with their pet scheme. The hon. member for Central Murchison having by this motion secured a further discussion of the question, I think he has accomplished his object; and now we have an opportunity of giving a really intelligent and reasonable decision as to the scheme. The scheme is the result of the careful thought and experience of Mr. John Maher (contractor), who originated the scheme, and brought it under the notice of the Government through the hon. member who then represented Yilgarn (Mr. Moran). It is our duty, as public men, to weigh this matter seriously. I think there are certain public works suggested that might

very well stand over in order that there may be money for carrying out this great scheme. I shall give my support to the carrying out of the scheme as soon as possible, but I wish it to be distinctly understood that this motion did not come as an opposition motion to the Government scheme. I hope that the hon. member for Central Murchison will, in his wisdom, see fit to accept the suggestion, and withdraw the motion.

MR. WILSON (the Canning): I am prepared to support the motion of the member for Central Murchison, if only because it will give the select committee opportunity of considering the advisability of allowing private enterprise to undertake the work. It is not a question with me as to whether the scheme will pay, nor as to whether it will be completed for the amount estimated. I do not mean to say that it will not be completed for the amount estimated, but I would like to remind hon. members in this House that the majority of large undertakings of this description in other parts of the world considerably exceed the estimates of their construction. The work certainly can be carried out successfully. Give me sufficient money, and I would undertake to pump water from the Indian to the Pacific Ocean right across the Australian continent. That is not the question at issue. I wish to consider the question whether the Government scheme is what is called a national work. I admit it is a great work, but in my opinion it is merely a local supply. It is a supply for Coolgardie, Kalgoorlie, and probably one or two centres which adjoin those towns. Therefore I cannot look upon it as a national work, or as one the cost of which should be placed on the inhabitants of the country at large. The hon. member for East Coolgardie admitted in his speech that this scheme, which is to cost 2½ millions of money, would not supply Menzies, and that it would be necessary to duplicate the plant before Menzies could be reached. Therefore I advance that as an argument that the work, for the construction of which it is proposed to tax this colony to the enormous extent of £16 per head of the present population, is a local work to give a local supply, and not a national one. The hon. member also advanced the argument that the places *en route* must not be

supplied by this scheme—in other words, that Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie should have a monopoly of the water.

MR. VOSPER: I meant Southern Cross.

MR. WILSON: If you are going to establish a national work of this description which we are all to be taxed to support, how can you refuse any citizen of this colony, if he wants the water and is willing to pay for it? The Premier, in introducing the Bill last year, dilated on the advantages of having the water for irrigation purposes between the coast reservoir and Coolgardie.

THE PREMIER: No; you are wrong there.

MR. WILSON: You said it would irrigate the arid plains and sand plains on the route, and that people occupying land would be able to produce vegetables, and feed live stock.

THE PREMIER: I said they would be able to water stock on the route. That is all I said.

MR. WILSON: If the country is to be settled on the way to Coolgardie by agriculturists and farmers, is it to be supposed that, if they want water from this source alongside them, they should not be supplied with it? Certainly not. They will have just as much right as others to be supplied along the route. My whole argument is that the water supply scheme is brought forward for the benefit of the mining industry. Then, I say, let the mining industry find the money to supply the water. It is not a question of life or death; it is not for domestic purposes only; but it is admitted that the supply is intended for battery purposes on the goldfields, to enable the mines to produce gold. Is that a valid object for which you can tax the whole community? The Government might just as well supply sawmills with the plant necessary to cut their timber, or supply any other industries with the requirements of their trade.

THE PREMIER: We supply the water everywhere along the road.

MR. WILSON: No Government is justified in plunging a small population into this enormous debt for the purpose of supplying one small centre with water for carrying on a private industry, so long as there are reasonable offers from private syndicates or private persons to supply the necessary capital. I say the

Government are not justified in plunging the country into debt for that purpose.

THE PREMIER: We have never received one yet.

MR. WILSON: I am given to understand you can get offers of this description; that not only can you get offers to construct the works, but to maintain them under a maximum price; also, that the promoters would be inclined to enter into an agreement to hand over the works free to the Government at the end of a term of 40 or 42 years. If you can make such terms as these, and bind down the company, I say you are not justified in carrying out the work by pledging the credit of the colony for raising the money. Let private enterprise do the work, by all means. The Premier has advanced a strong argument in favour of this view, when he intimated that our borrowing capacity is limited to about two millions per annum. I agree with him. The borrowing capacity of any country is limited by the number of its population, and I believe that two millions per annum is the full extent of our borrowing capacity at present. If the Premier wishes to develop the vast resources of this country, he must get outside assistance; and I should like to see this colony developed at the rate of five or ten millions per annum, and let private capital assist wherever possible. [THE PREMIER: It has come in, too.] It has come in for the gold-mining industry. The Government are going to run farms shortly, in competition with the farmers now settled on the land, but I do not agree with that at all. Some comparison was made between the case of the Midland Railway Company and the Great Southern Railway Company working with private capital, as compared with this water supply scheme, and there was a suggestion that this scheme should not be carried out by private enterprise. Reference was also made to the great amount of trouble and loss which certain members of this House had suffered from the locking up of lands by the Midland Company. I have been in this colony for over six years, and know a good deal about the Midland Railway; and I say that, in my opinion, that railway and the Great Southern Railway have been a godsend to this country, and they were both undertaken by private capitalists.

THE PREMIER: I do not think the Midland Railway was much of a god-send.

MR. WILSON: I differ from you there. I think the Midland Railway carried on this place for several years; and, no matter what may be said about private lines and the trouble the Government have had in taking them over, the Midland Railway has been decidedly beneficial to the country, and we ought not to speak ill of the bridge that carried us over, as I maintain that the Midland contract carried this colony over for several years. I should like to refer also to the remarks of the Premier when he was in England. He said there that he was struck with the fact that all the railways in the old country were conducted by private companies. I think he remarked—he will correct me if I am wrong, and I am anxious to quote him correctly—that what struck him most was that, if we had adopted the same principle in Western Australia, the country might have been free of debt to-day. Well, I say that is a very desirable thing; and I wish the Premier would act up to what he said in England. Let us get free of debt, if we possibly can.

THE PREMIER: We would have to pay, all the same.

MR. WILSON: I do not agree with that. Surely other countries are an object lesson to us in this respect. We have only to cast our eyes on the United States. Some people do not agree with me in this matter; but, with all its faults, with all the abuse of public works in the United States, the aggregate result has been such as no other country on the face of the globe can show. The United States have acquired more wealth and increased more rapidly in population than any other country; and that is due to the freedom of private enterprise which obtains there. The railways are owned by private companies; so are the telegraphs; and I believe that even the post office is run by private enterprise; in fact, the whole country has been pushed forward, because private capital has had a legitimate sphere of action, and has freedom to expand and carry out the great works. Why should not we do the same thing here? No other country has had the same chances of developing its resources by means of private

enterprise as have been offered to Western Australia. Take the matter of railway construction: I believe that private capitalists have offered to construct railways for no other return than the traffic receipts for a given number of years. Surely we could seize these opportunities, and do our level best in this way to attract population to the country. I maintain that a private company, running a successful industry here, does more to attract population than any amount of public works that the Government can undertake.

THE PREMIER: The people pay.

MR. WILSON: The people do not pay.

THE PREMIER: Who pays, then?

MR. WILSON: The people who find the capital pay, if it is a failure; and, if it is not a failure, they reap a profit.

THE PREMIER: The people pay, then, of course.

MR. WILSON: That is the best thing you can have in any country, and the best advertisement you can have—a number of profitable industries, which will tend to the prosperity of the whole community. Considering that the Government have adopted State railways as a national policy, they might very well limit their borrowing powers to that end. Although enormous work in railway construction has already been accomplished, at least another 1,000 miles of lines are required to open up the goldfields thoroughly. Let us concentrate our borrowing powers and our attention on enlarging the railways and giving cheap means of transit, leaving private enterprise to come in and supply the other wants of the goldfields. No amount of argument the Premier could bring forward would make me change my opinion on this point. The objection is raised that, with private enterprise, the rates for water would be in the control of a company, and also that a company would have great difficulty in raising money to carry out the work. There ought to be no difficulties of that description. It is with the Government to stipulate on what terms they will grant the concession to a private company, and surely the Government could safeguard the rights of the people. There are men in London whose credit is quite good enough to raise £2,500,000 for this work, which is not

very large in comparison with enterprises we hear of in the old country and elsewhere. This £2,500,000 is nothing at all compared with the millions invested in railways and other large works at Home. To say there would be difficulty in safeguarding the rights of the people, is no excuse for the Government refusing to allow private enterprise to have full scope. I hope my opinions may have some influence with the Government.

MR. ILLINGWORTH (Central Murchison): I had an object to serve in submitting this motion; and, at the outset, I say there was no need to impute any other motive to me than the one I gave. The last Parliament, when this question was discussed, was a moribund Parliament. I desired that a new Parliament, with new members, should have an opportunity of discussing this question and have a voice in so prodigious an undertaking. Since last March a great deal of light has been thrown on the question; and to-night the House and the country are indebted to hon. members for the vast amount of information which has been imparted, and which will go a long way to settle the public mind in reference to this undertaking. There are only two arguments which have any weight at all with me in favour of the undertaking itself. When I opposed this scheme at the outset, it was with the deep-seated conviction that, long before the Government could possibly get a gallon of water into Coolgardie, the mines would be overflowing with water. That conviction was based on my experience of the Bendigo mines. But I have already had a painful experience on the Murchison, where it was supposed we had almost an unlimited supply of water. I have had the duty laid on me of asking the Government to assist in obtaining water for the carrying on of several of the mines in that district. I very much regret that I did not get the reception I deserved from the Government. That, however, is not the matter I desire to discuss in connection with this particular motion. When I take into account the evidence that has been placed before this House in reference to Kalgoorlie, where it was supposed there were floods of water—when I listen to experienced men like Captain Oats declaring last year that this was a mad scheme, and when I see that the same fact

that weighs on me weighs on him, it is time to consider as to whether there is not an entirely different strata in the goldfields from that which our first experience would lead us to suppose. If it be true that we are passing through surface strata and that there is really no water for our deep mines, the question assumes an entirely different aspect from that which it presented 12 months ago. There are certain things which press upon me at the outset. I suppose I must be one of the most hardened sinners in the House because, after all the evidence that has been poured on me, I must confess I am not wholly converted, though my faith is wavering. I do not think, in spite of the evidence we have, that the scheme can be completed for 2½ millions sterling. I do not think for one moment that it can be completed within three years from the present day, and I do not believe you will be able with that supply to reach the fields outside of Coolgardie. I believe that Coolgardie will probably want the whole lot. At any rate, Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie will be able to absorb all you have.

A MEMBER: They take a lot of moisture, up there.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: My object was to get the voice of this House in contradistinction to the last House, because the additions made to this House are largely from the mining districts, and when I see that the whole of the experience of the goldfields goes to sustain the proposition that it is not possible to obtain a supply of water at a cost which I supposed it could be obtained at, my faith distinctly wavers in this particular. Now, I promised that, if this House manifested itself in favour of the Government scheme, I would certainly never oppose that scheme again, and I am not going to oppose it now. I am convinced that, whether I am right or wrong—and there is *prima facie* evidence that I am wrong—this House is perfectly satisfied with the Government scheme. Of course some hon. members have expressed themselves in favour of private enterprise, and that has something to recommend it; but I am not, and never have been, in favour of private enterprise if the Government can carry out the work. I have said that ever since I have been in the House. But the Government cannot

undertake all the work in the colony. It would be impossible for them to do it. In carrying out this scheme at the present day we are exhausting, for the time being, all our borrowing powers, and we must be prepared to let all other public works stand over until this work is completed, and until we are recuperated. I do hope that this House will not consider that I have wasted the time of the new Parliament by bringing this question up in the way I have done. I believe it is for the good of the country that the information which has been elicited should be placed on record, and that the country should know the reasons why hon. members are prepared to support this scheme. I have finished with my opposition to the Coolgardie water scheme, and, while I am not convinced that it is the best scheme, yet in view of the absolute necessity that something should be done for the fields, and seeing that this House is of opinion that this scheme should be carried out, it becomes my duty to assist the Government in carrying it out in the most effective and most speedy way possible. I beg leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 11:40 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. on the next Monday.

Legislative Assembly,

Monday, 1st November, 1897.

Papers Presented—Afghans and the Queen's Enemies (further reply to question)—Question: Dock for Fremantle—Question: Public Works Annual Report—Perth Gas Company's Act Further Amendment Bill: second reading; committee—Jury Act Amendment Bill: second reading; referred to Select Committee—Public Notaries Bill: second reading; in committee—Sale of Liquors Amendment Bill: second reading—Cemeteries Bill: second reading—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 7:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the PREMIER: 1. Financial and statistical facts relating to the colony of Western Australia, showing population, revenue and expenditure, public debt, gold production, customs revenue, imports and exports (1896-7), also a complete list of goods at present admitted into Western Australia free of duty. 2. Select Committee's report on the Perth Gas Company's Act Further Amendment Bill. 3. Schedule 33 of Mineral Lands Act, 1892 (scale of survey fees).

Ordered to lie on the table.

AFGHANS AND THE QUEEN'S ENEMIES.

THE PREMIER (Right Hon. Sir J. Forrest): In accordance with the promise made on Wednesday last, when answering the question put to me by the member for North-East Coolgardie (Mr. Vosper), I have caused inquiries to be made as to the alleged remittances of money by Afghans for the support of the Queen's enemies, and cannot find that any money has been so remitted, nor can I find any foundation for that statement.

QUESTION—DOCK FOR FREMANTLE.

MR. HOLMES (for Mr. Higham) asked the Director of Public Works, Whether the Government have decided upon a site for the dock at Fremantle; if so whether, in view of the urgent necessity, this work is to be started at an early date?