

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 7th October, 1896.

Motion: Leave of Absence—Industrial Statistics Bill: first reading—Jury Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Public Health Act Amendment Bill: first reading—Kalgoorlie-Menzies Railway Bill: first reading—Cue-Nannine Railway Bill: first reading—Perth Racecourse Railway Bill: first reading—York-Greenhills Railway Bill: first reading—Kalgoorlie-Kanowna Railway Bill: first reading—Supplementary Order: Additional sitting days—Motion: Joint Committee *re* Hansard reporting—Motion: Proposed Railway to Norseman Goldfield (withdrawn)—Motion: Observance of holidays—Motion: District and Central Wineries (withdrawn)—Motion: Proposed Purchase of Great Southern Railway and Lands—Australasian Federation Enabling Bill: third reading—Loans Consolidation Bill: in committee—Adjournment.

THE SPEAKER took the chair at 4-30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

MOTION—LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On the motion of the PREMIER, further leave of absence for one fortnight was granted to the members for East Kimberley (Mr. Connor) and Plantagenet (Mr. Hassell).

INDUSTRIAL STATISTICS BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

JURY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

PUBLIC HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the ATTORNEY GENERAL, and read a first time.

KALGOORLIE-MENZIES RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by the PREMIER, and read a first time.

CUE-NANNINE RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS, and read a first time.

PERTH RACECOURSE RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS, and read a first time.

YORK-GREENHILLS RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS, and read a first time.

KALGOORLIE-KANOWNA RAILWAY BILL.

Introduced by the COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS, and read a first time.

SUPPLEMENTARY ORDER—ADDITIONAL SITTING DAYS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved "That in order to expedite public business, the House shall, in addition to those days already provided for by Sessional Order, meet upon Mondays and Fridays, at the usual time, for the remainder of the present session (unless otherwise ordered)." He said the time had arrived when every effort should be made to bring the session to a close, and the extra sitting days would perhaps not be too inconvenient for hon. members.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—JOINT COMMITTEE *re* "HANSARD" REPORTING.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved "That in accordance with the recommendation contained in the report of the 'Hansard' Committee, arrangements be made during the recess to place the 'Hansard' reporting staff on a permanent and efficient basis; and that the Library Committee, acting jointly with the Library Committee of the Legislative Council, be requested to take this matter into consideration, with a view to giving effect to the above recommendation." He said: Everyone will agree that this is necessary, in order to place the reporting of both Houses of Parliament on as good a footing as possible, and in order also that as much publicity as possible should be given to the reports of the debates in both Houses for the information of the people of the colony. The Library Committee, to which it is proposed to refer this matter, is a body appointed by both Houses, and the members of it are all very suitable persons to discuss and arrange this matter. It is better to appoint the Library Committee than to appoint a fresh committee; and probably the same

members would be appointed on the fresh committee, if we were to decide on that course as being preferable. I will take this opportunity of saying that, although difficulties did occur at the beginning of the session in regard to the reporting of the debates in this House, yet I may say that the arrangements which have been made, as far as the reporting is concerned, are most satisfactory. I have had "proofs" sent to me of all the speeches and remarks I have made during the session, and I must say the reports are most excellent—scarcely a correction at all has had to be made by me; therefore I think we have, at any rate, been able to secure most efficient reporters for the work. I beg to move the motion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I also desire to express my satisfaction, so far as the reporting is concerned; but I think, in reference to bringing out the "Hansard" reports, the intention of the select committee which inquired into the matter recently, and made a recommendation which was adopted by this House, has not been carried out in the smallest degree. I do say the "Hansard" reports should be brought out in small numbers, twice a week if possible, in order that these full reports of Parliamentary debates may be sent to newspapers in the different districts which hon. members represent, so that the local papers may be able to deal with local parliamentary matters of interest to themselves as soon as possible after the debates have taken place. I find that the "Hansard" reports in pamphlet form have not been published for weeks together, instead of our having the printed reports at short intervals as we expected, as a result of the recommendation of the select committee. Then, I hardly think the committee which the Premier has proposed is the best committee we can appoint to deal with this matter, for I do think this is a matter which ought to be placed in the hands of a special committee, representative of both sides of the House. There is a good deal of arrangement required in connection with this matter, and the whole question needs to be discussed from a standpoint perhaps different from the standpoint from which it has been dealt with in times past. I certainly think a committee should be appointed, but I do not think the Library

Committee is the committee in whose hands this matter should fall in the present case. I do not know the members of the Library Committee, and I am not speaking personally. The principle I object to is that these sessional committees are practically nominated by the Government, whereas this question relates to the whole House, and it is a committee representative of the whole House that we should appoint for this purpose. The matter which is to be referred to the committee is one in which every member is interested; and a committee to deal with an important matter like this should not be one nominated by the Government, but should be selected by the House. Whatever the Premier may think of my objection to his motion, I am taking the opportunity of expressing my own opinion of it; and I say this is a committee that ought to be selected from the whole House, because this question of making proper arrangements for reporting the debates in "Hansard" is one that affects every member of the House, and ought to interest every member. Therefore I say the House ought to have the appointment of the committee, and it ought not to be a committee nominated by the Government.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I do not see that it matters much, and I do not know what the hon. member is driving at. I think the members of the committee, whether nominated by the Government or appointed by the House in some other way, are certain to give their attention to the matter which is referred to them, and it is hardly worth while objecting to the motion now before us.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I object that the committee proposed by the Premier is a nominated committee. Pursuant to what I have said, I now move that the words "the Library Committee," where they occur in the motion, be struck out with a view of inserting the words "a Select Committee" in lieu thereof.

THE PREMIER: In explanation, I would like to inform the hon. member and the House that the reason I suggested the Library Committee is because it is a committee empowered by the Standing Orders to sit at any time when the House is not sitting, and, therefore, it could sit during the recess, and deal with this matter. No doubt we could

give the same power to a new committee, and there is not much in the point. Hon. members do not feel so strongly about this that they should object to the Library Committee undertaking this duty, and I may say I do not know who the members of the Library Committee are, but I have no doubt they were carefully selected.

MR. TRAYLEN: One argument in favour of the Library Committee undertaking this duty will, perhaps, weigh with the hon. member for Nannine, and it is that this is the plan pursued in the Victorian Parliament.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Not an argument in this case. If there is no seconded my amendment will go down.

MR. WOOD: I will second the amendment of the hon. member.

THE SPEAKER: I should like to take this opportunity of saying that the reason why the weekly issue of the "Hansard" reports has been retarded, as I am informed by the Government Printer, is that some hon. members do not return the "proofs" promptly, so that the work may be gone on with, and until the Printer has the corrected "proofs" returned to him he cannot issue the printed pamphlets. I am told that is the reason why there has been any delay.

THE PREMIER: The Printer told us at first that he was not prepared for the work. As to the amendment of the hon. member, I think he is pursuing this question further than is necessary. The Government, as everyone knows, in selecting the Library Committee and other committees at the beginning of the session, nominated the members in a formal manner, and the sessional committees are not appointed with any party view. As I have said, I do not know who are the members of the Library Committee at present. I have no doubt they were chosen because they occupied high positions in this House, and the same course will have been pursued in the Upper House. The Library Committee has power to sit during the recess, and it can therefore deal with a matter of this kind after the session has closed. The argument used by the hon. member as to the Library Committee being one appointed by the Government might apply with perhaps more force if the Government had a direct interest in the matter, and were

trying to get the support of hon. members in order to make use of the majority which the Government usually have in this House, for influencing the appointment of a committee. Personally, I do not care about the selection of this committee. I shall be glad if we can agree to appoint a committee with a due proportion of Opposition members on it—in fact, I would not care if all its members were taken from the Opposition side of the House; for I feel sure that, whatever body of gentlemen be appointed for the present purpose, they will do their best to secure that which we desire. Seeing that we have a Library Committee already, I think the House will agree that it will be convenient to refer this matter to that committee.

MR. LOTON: I believe the Library Committee consists of the Speaker, the Chairman of Committees, and another member. [THE PREMIER: Mr. Harper, I think.] In reference to two members of that committee, and I do not know who the third is, I think we could not possibly select more suitable men, for they occupy the highest positions which this House can place them in; and the committee is one that is empowered to carry on business during the recess, as well as during the session. When appointed, I hope the committee will go into the printing department and see if some renovation can be effected there. It seems to me that if about half of the hands in the department were dismissed and a different management were put into it, the work could be done more cheaply, though I do not say it could be done better. I believe the place is altogether overmanned according to what I can hear outside.

Amendment put and negatived, and the motion passed, Mr. Illingworth dissenting.

MOTION—PROPOSED RAILWAY TO NORSEMAN GOLDFIELD.

MR. MORAN, in accordance with notice, moved—"1. That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that a railway line should be constructed from Esperance Bay to Norseman forthwith. 2. That if the Government do not choose to undertake the work, they should be empowered to grant permission to private persons to build the line." He said: At

the present day, the chief subject of consideration by the public is the construction of railways to different parts of our goldfields. These matters have for some time agitated the public mind, especially with regard to railways in the more northern parts of our goldfields, in the way of a continuation of the present trunk line from the centres of Coolgardie and Kalgoorlie on to Menzies. The whole of these schemes, so far, have been considered in regard to the vast electorate which I have the honour to represent; and the present motion deals also with a part of my electorate. It is my duty, as well as my pleasure, as representing the different parts of these vast goldfields, to impress upon this House the necessity for giving railway communication to those centres that we know are going to be permanent goldfields. The favour which I have to ask for the southern portion of my electorate, Norseman and Dundas, is the same as I have had the pleasure of asking for and have had granted to other districts. It may not be unwise at the present moment to institute a comparison, or several comparisons, in reference to this matter. When the Southern Cross line was constructed, that centre was not in a more promising condition than is the Norseman goldfield to-day. In fact, I question whether the Southern Cross goldfield at that time was in as favourable a position as the Norseman and Dundas fields are to-day. This much we are certain of, and on this point I challenge contradiction, that there is more foreign capital available for the development of Norseman and Dundas goldfields by very many hundreds of thousands of pounds, than was set apart for the Southern Cross field when we built the Southern Cross line. In other words, I do not believe a single penny of outside capital had been invested in the Southern Cross goldfield at the time this House decided to build the railway to Southern Cross.

THE PREMIER: Nonsense! You are wrong.

MR. MORAN: I do not think I am wrong, for I am speaking of English capital invested in the Southern Cross goldfield. At that time, one or two Adelaide companies and two or three West Australian companies were interested in that field; and all honour is

due to those companies for having stuck to the Southern Cross field as they did, and for having paved the way for the great developments that have since taken place. I may point out that, for the development of the Norseman and Dundas goldfields, there is the enormous sum of £2,000,000 nominal capital provided by British and French investors.

MR. A. FORREST: How much of that is working capital?

MR. MORAN: The member for West Kimberley has only recently returned from the "little village," and no one knows better than he does how much of that nominal capital comes to Australia, and he knows as well as I do the value of the statement I am making. We can only look at this matter from the point of view that a huge amount of English capital is to be provided for the development of the Norseman goldfield. In addition to this English capital, however, a great deal of which I must admit has not been applied in the best way in West Australia, we have a number of Adelaide and Melbourne companies with large interests at Norseman and Dundas. Then we have Dr. Simon, who has invested largely in that field. We all know that Dr. Simon is an earnest mining man, and that when he says he is prepared to spend £50,000 in development works, he will spend twenty shillings in the pound of that money. He is the owner of a large number of mines on the Norseman field, and is prepared to spend a large amount of French capital in placing machinery on his mines, and in other development work. As I have said, there is, in addition to this English and French capital, a large amount of capital from Adelaide and Melbourne invested in this field; and we know that Adelaide and Melbourne capital is always applied in the right direction, and that the nominal capital is low and the proportion for working expenses is high. The Norseman goldfield, therefore, has every prospect of being rapidly developed, provided the mines there are given the same facilities of transit that are given to the other goldfields. I may mention, in connection with this motion, the various actual developments that have taken place on this Norseman goldfield, and I do this because I think the House will consider this motion upon its actual

merits. Hon. members will not, I believe, take into consideration at all personal interests; and I, therefore, present the facts so that the House may come to a fair conclusion with regard to my motion. I have received a telegram from Mr. Arthur Austin, Chairman of the Norseman Railway League, in which he says:—

“League heartily supports your action, and emphasises the necessity for immediate construction of the line, by the Government preferred; if not, then by private firms. Desirable mine yielded 400ozs. smelted gold from 200 tons, Friday, making total 900ozs. from 417 tons. Scotchman has crushed 1,500 tons for 1,500ozs smelted gold. Mawson's Reward, 15-head stamps, starts 15th October. We have 20-head stamps now running; 35-head ready in a few weeks, and 40-head *en route*; Dr. Simon has ordered 60-head, making total 155 ready before Christmas. Railway means prosperity; no railway, stagnation. Cost of freight prevents many other mines erecting machinery. Local capitalists, independent of number outside firms, are prepared to construct line if Government decline. Wire if further particulars required.”

It will be observed that in this telegram it is stated that from one mine they have got 400ozs. of smelted gold from 200 tons, and 900ozs. from 417 tons, and that the United Scotchman has crushed 1,500 tons for 1,500oz. of gold, a return which I consider to be remarkable. When we divest mining of all the fiction that usually hangs around it, and come down to a business basis, we shall realise the fact that one ounce to the ton is almost a world's record. There is only one field in the world that has consistently turned out over an ounce to the ton, and that is Charters Towers, in Queensland. Ballarat, which has so largely enriched the world's supply of gold, has not come up to an ounce to the ton, neither have Bendigo or the fields in South Australia or New South Wales. At Mount Morgan, Queensland, they have exceeded an ounce to the ton; but that is a single mine, and it is only at Charters Towers where they have succeeded in getting an average reaching so high as 1oz. 2dwt. to the ton. The big field of South Africa, which holds the record for yield of gold, has reached an average of from 10 to 12dwts., and of this only about 6 dwts. comes from the plates, the remainder being obtained by chlorination and cyaniding of the tailings. It

will be seen, therefore, that when we are told the United Scotchman yielded 1,500oz. from 1,500 tons, a very satisfactory state of things exists at the Norseman field; and the yield of the Desirable Mine, 200 tons for 400oz., may be taken to be doubly satisfactory. These facts and figures are more eloquent than any words I might use, and should receive the consideration of hon. members, even if the sentimental aspects of the question do not. Here is another telegram I have received:—

“Esperance-Norseman Railway League give you hearty support. If Government afraid construct railway, Dr. Simon tells me he is willing to do so. His company has cabled him to apply for concession immediately. Harvey Patterson also here willing lay line, and hand it back to Government in ten years time for nothing. Surely Premier cannot refuse to build line or give consent to private enterprise. Wish you every success.”

The Premier, of course, knows the value of promises made by persons seeking concessions, and we have all in our experience of the world seen such promises broken. We may or may not believe in the *bonâ fides* of these people; but it is easy to require them to make a deposit of £20,000, forfeitable if they fail to carry out their proposals. If I were asked to undertake this work, and if the Government asked for a deposit of £20,000, I do not think I could find that money within ten minutes, but I feel sure I could do so within a week. The telegram says that Harvey Patterson is prepared to build the line and hand it back to the Government at the end of ten years, and that seems a very liberal proposal. From the Mayor of Norseman I have received the following telegram:—

“Council strongly supports you in bringing forward motion *re* Esperance-Norseman Railway. If Government will not construct railway, insist on them granting permission to private individuals to do so. The fact of three proposals from private firms being before them proves undoubtedly that the field warrants the construction of a railway, and that it will prove profitable.”

We have here two statements deliberately made by the people of Norseman, and those statements were also made by the deputation that waited on the Government from Esperance and Norseman a few weeks ago, to the effect that private enterprise is ready to undertake this work. The people of Esperance and

Norseman would prefer a Government line, and it is admitted that the majority of the members of this House and the people as a whole do object to private enterprise in regard to railways. This is a decision that has been come to not only by the House but also by the Government. In the past, where railways have been built by private enterprise, there has been a grant of land given with the concession, and there has also been a right of purchase by the Government on a valuation. Here we have, however, a man like Dr. Simon, prepared to construct the line; and another man, Mr. Harvey Patterson, who is not only prepared to construct the line, but to hand it back to the Government at the end of ten years. The statement is deliberately made in each case, and I would also point out that no concession is asked for beyond a strip of land for the laying of the rails. I now come to a third offer which has been made, and I must admit that the representative of the company making it has been instrumental in asking me to bring this matter before the House. I refer to an offer which has been laid before the Government by Mr. Moule, an ex-member of Parliament in South Australia, on behalf of South Australian capitalists. Mr. Moule proved his *bona fides* by offering to deposit the substantial sum of £10,000 in the hands of the Government. The Premier will be able to put me right if I am wrong in any of the statements I make. Mr. Moule has told me he is quite willing to hand the Government his cheque for £10,000, guaranteed by a bank, if he is given the right to build a railway from Esperance to Norseman, and that he would forfeit that £10,000 if he did not carry out the work immediately.

THE PREMIER: I do not remember it; it may be so.

MR. MORAN: I am perfectly safe in asserting that Mr. Moule is prepared to do this. Even if the Government are not prepared to allow private enterprise to undertake this work, these offers should certainly be considered in the light of a guide as to the commercial aspects of the proposed railway. Mr. Moule's offer is a very straightforward one. He does not ask for a concession, beyond the right to lay down his rails over the country between Esperance and Norseman, and he

gives the Government the right to purchase at any time. Further than that, he undertakes to erect a battery of 200 head of stampers at Esperance Bay. The Norseman field is suffering from a dearth of water, like the other goldfields of the colony, and Sir John Forrest's Mount Burges scheme will not be of any service to Norseman, nor do we know of any other scheme likely to be so good for the field of Norseman, as the construction of a railway and the crushing of the ore at the port. Mr. Moule guarantees to erect this battery, and I am sure any other company would give the same guarantee; and if two hundred head of stampers was not enough, two hundred more could be erected, and one thousand if necessary. Further, Mr. Moule offers to give the Government the right to fix the maximum railway rate per ton to be charged on the proposed railway. If it will pay private enterprise to build this line, it will pay the Government to do so, for I do not believe that private enterprise could get better results out of our railways than we are getting now. The motion I have placed before the House deserves the deliberate consideration of hon. members, and I feel that members will recognise it contains a reasonable and fair request. The motion may be treated with silence; but I do not think, in that case, the old adage, "Silence gives consent," would apply. I should, however, be justified in those circumstances in assuming that the arguments put forward in favour of the line were unanswerable. If the position could not be met by my opponents, and if the obstacles could not be got over, then, in colloquial phrase, it is better to "say nothing and chew grass." The motion I have laid before the House is divided into two parts, and I should like to ask the Speaker if the opinion of the House can be taken on each part separately—first on part one, and, if desirable, also on part two.

THE SPEAKER: If the House does not object, you can do that.

MR. MORAN: I should like hon. members of this House to say whether or not they are desirous of considering the question of giving Norseman a railway. If they are in favour of that proposal, then we can strike out the second part of the motion which deals with private enterprise undertaking the work. I

should also be willing for any member to move the striking out of the word "forthwith," leaving the first part of the motion as a general expression of opinion that it is desirable this railway should be constructed. There is, I believe, every substantial indication that Western Australia has another important goldfield at Norseman, and we must once and for all face the question of giving that field a railway. I may say I am, like others here, interested in Perth and Fremantle; but we have to look broadly at this question of giving Esperance and Norseman a railway, and in the light of day. We are building up a colony, and we are constructing railways to various parts of the colony, and we are not prepared to open Esperance Bay for the whole of the traffic of the Eastern goldfields. I am prepared to say we should not open Esperance Bay to the whole of that traffic, and I would ask whether any single colony has opened her ports so as to give the trade to other colonies. It is fashionable to say the people of this portion of Western Australia are conservative, but I might mention that Queensland has steadfastly refused to allow South Australia to cross the border, and thereby take trade from Brisbane, and that refusal will never be withdrawn. Victoria has not allowed New South Wales to take away her trade, and I do not think we are constituted differently from the people of Queensland or Victoria. I, for one, would bitterly resent the throwing open of the goldfields to the enterprise of the eastern colonies. We are spending a million of money in making a harbour at Fremantle, and this House would be fully justified in refusing and continuing to refuse to carry the railway from Norseman to Coolgardie. I for one would strongly object if this railway were carried on as far as Coolgardie. We would not be justified in opening up a new port to do the trade of the goldfields, when we have indebted ourselves so heavily in these parts for the same purpose. Holding these views, I think we can get over the difficulty by building a 2ft. gauge line from Esperance to Norseman. Such a line would satisfy the people of Norseman, for I have put the question directly to them, and they said they would be certainly prepared to

accept a line of that gauge. They are reasonable people, and are prepared to accept a moderate concession; and if, in future, the development of the field warranted the construction of a broad-gauge line, the 2ft. gauge could be lifted. Such a narrow-gauge line would be the best protection to the vested interests of this part of the colony, and at the same time it would serve the best interests of the Norseman goldfield. Esperance Bay is the port of the Norseman field, and that field is entitled to communication by rail of some sort; but the Norseman people are not entitled to a line to Coolgardie. The Government have already done for the Norseman people more than any other Australian Government have done for a goldfield. I place this matter in the hands of members, and ask for an expression of opinion upon it. We cannot ignore it, and if we are unable to give the people of Norseman a railway now, we can at any rate give them some hope.

MR. COOKWORTHY: I second the motion.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: If there is no objection on the part of the House, this motion may be taken in two parts, as desired by the member for Yilgarn.

MR. MORAN: I desire to strike out the word "forthwith" from the motion.

THE SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot amend his own motion.

MR. MORAN: I ask some other member to do so.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The position placed before this House by the member for Yilgarn is very different from the one that appears in his motion as it stands on the Notice Paper. In his speech, the hon. member desires that a railway from Esperance Bay to Norseman shall be made at some time, but his motion asks the House to affirm that it is desirable the construction of the line shall be undertaken "forthwith." This is a very different position, because the railway will have to be provided for sooner or later, either out of the general revenue or out of that small loan which we have entered upon for this year—I mean that it is the largest loan authorised in one year on any part of the earth. [THE PREMIER: Oh, no.] What is the use of talking like that? It is a loan of £50 per head of the population

of the colony, and it takes the record for the amount of borrowing in any one year. Of course we are making history, and making railways, but what I desire is that we may not be making mistakes as well as public works. I would simply say, in regard to the motion, that I should like to adopt its language in regard to other portions of the colony, and would be glad to add these words: "That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that a railway line should be constructed from Mount Magnet to Lawlers, from Port Hedland through the Pilbarra goldfields, and for the extension of the Nannine railway to Peak Hill." We might go round the colony and find most excellent centres having first-class prospects calling for the making of railways, and these railways will doubtless be undertaken and should be undertaken. I do not think this House or the Government is in a position to say that it is undesirable the lines I have mentioned shall not be made some day. I should like to add these railways for the places I have mentioned to the motion, and also to make it express the opinion that it is desirable to construct a line to any other place which any other member may desire to add to this expression of opinion. Now the question presents itself to my mind in this way, that seeing we have committed the country and this House to immense undertakings which the Public Works Department is unable to carry out because of their magnitude and number, what then is to be gained by affirming this motion? In the first place, I want to amend it by striking out the word "forthwith," but there is not the slightest doubt that it is desirable to construct a railway from Esperance Bay to Norseman; there is not the slightest doubt this line must be constructed, and that before long. The member for Yilgarn asks that, if the Government do not wish to undertake the work, they shall allow a private company to do so; but before I came to this House, and when I was seeking election, I laid it down that the national system of railways was the proper one for this colony, and I have never been able to get my mind from that proposition, notwithstanding the liberal proposal stated by the member for Yilgarn, that the private undertakers of the line would permit the

Government to take it over in 10 years time. In the Australian colonies it has been decided that the railways shall be owned by the State; and any departure from that rule would necessarily be a dangerous and difficult one, and I believe this House will not deem it wise to give any concessions to a private company to construct a railway. The construction of a line from Esperance Bay to Norseman involves the very important question whether the line is to go on to Coolgardie—in other words, whether Esperance Bay or Fremantle is to be the seaport for the Eastern goldfields. It is useless for us to shut our eyes to the fact that, if the line were to be made to Norseman, in a very little while it would go on to Coolgardie. No power on earth could stop it, and the people who are agitating for this line know it. I am perfectly satisfied of that. Now if we come to the question of national policy, are we going to establish in the colony another Midland Company's line, simply for the convenience of the other colonies? That is the question that has to be discussed—the question of the intercolonial trade with the goldfields of the Yilgarn district, and as hon. members know, is the question lying behind the construction of this line. There is a certain amount of traffic which, in course of time, will naturally flow into those goldfields from the port of Esperance Bay, and this traffic will have to be provided for. But if, by the construction of a railway from Esperance Bay to Coolgardie, Esperance Bay is to become the port of the Eastern goldfields, what is to become of the railway system we have built up from the port of Fremantle, and of the costly harbour works which we are carrying out at Fremantle in order to make Fremantle the great port of the colony? What of the £5,000,000 of money which we are going to spend upon supplying water to the Eastern goldfields? [THE PREMIER: £2,500,000.] Oh, yes; I always double such figures. [THE PREMIER: It is not fair.] It is quite fair. Is it wise for us to divert the whole of the traffic of these fields to another port—to divert the trade of Fremantle and the Eastern goldfields to Esperance Bay? That is a national question. I know I am expressing the thoughts of

hon. members and of the people of this colony, and not particularly my constituents—for, on this question, which does not affect my electorate, I am perfectly independent, for my constituents expect the transcontinental railway to go from Geraldton, and are not at all concerned in this question of a railway from Esperance. I am only expressing the thoughts of the people of the colony when I ask: Are we going to establish another expensive port at Esperance for the benefit of the sister colonies? The next question is: Is it desirable, in the interests of the fields, that we should carry the water to the ore, instead of the ore to the water? That is another question that is lying behind the proposal to make a line from Esperance Bay to Norseman. If it is decided that the ore should be brought to the water instead of the water being taken to the ore, then there is an admirable reason why Esperance should be made a port, and it would be worth while for the Government to expend the money that is necessary for the construction of a line from Esperance Bay to Norseman, for the purpose of putting to a practical test the question whether the ore of the Eastern goldfields can be treated at the coast in such a way as to render it of national value. The cost of constructing this line would not be so very great to men who are interested in the goldfields, and in ascertaining whether the ore should be brought to the water or the water to the ore. If the railway brought down ore for treatment with salt water—not fresh water—and if the result were successful, it would be of untold value to this colony, and we should accomplish it at no great cost. If the motion which is now before the House were carried, and supposing this principle were established, other ore would naturally find its way Southward. If the railway be constructed, as it will one day be constructed, it would open up other railways, and we should have direct communication for the particular purpose of bringing down the ore. But this is not the time to enter fully into the whole question. I think it is possible for the Government to consider, at the earliest date, this greater question than the mere question of constructing a line from Esperance Bay to Norseman—the question whether the ore shall be taken to

the water or the water to the ore? That this question can be so easily tested, and cheaply tested, is part of the consideration of this particular railway. Consequently, although I am anxious, very anxious, to have a railway made from Magnet to Lawlers, I think the Government should give their attention to considering the desirableness of constructing this particular line from Esperance Bay.

THE PREMIER: You are doing very well.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: The object of this line would be to test the question which I have put to the House.

THE PREMIER: You can test it now.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: As we have been told that Dr. Simons is prepared to make the railway, and if he were allowed to do so, the testing of this question of the treatment of ore at a port would be in the hands of those best able to test it. The question would be tested without cost to the State. Dr. Simon's company would solve the question for the whole colony. I think it is worth while constructing this line, in order to have the result of the testing of this question; and, consequently, from this standpoint, I say the Government should seriously and earnestly consider the desirableness of constructing this piece of line, with the primary object of testing the question whether the water should be taken to the ore or the ore be brought to the water. I have very great pleasure in supporting the first part of this motion, for the reason I have endeavoured to bring before the House. I now move, as an amendment, that the word "forthwith" be struck out of the first part of the motion.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The hon. member who brought forward this motion must have known pretty well that there was not the slightest chance of his carrying it. I think anyone who has listened to the second speaker, the member for Nannine, must have come to the conclusion that he was blowing hot and cold in regard to this matter. Firstly, he asked: Was it likely that the colony, having gone to considerable expense in opening up the great port of Fremantle, was going to open up another port for the trade of the Eastern goldfields? To that, he said "No." Then he wound up his speech by advocating

that we should open up the port of Esperance Bay, by building a railway from it. The hon. member's reasons were, I think, more ridiculous than anything else. He said his reasons for making a line from Esperance to Norseman were in order that the ore of the Norseman goldfield should be tested with salt water, and that in order to test it we should spend £300,000 in building a railway to Norseman. I think those who have lived on the goldfields have had more experience of what salt water will do, in extracting gold, than to find it necessary to build a railway 120 miles long in order to do it. The speech of the hon. member was a most inconsistent one. The opinion of the Government in regard to this matter is thoroughly well known to the people of Norseman, to the people of Esperance Bay, and I think to the people of the colony. Moreover, I think it is known to the hon. member who introduced this motion. The Government have had several deputations—one from Esperance Bay, another from Norseman—in regard to this matter, and we have given our opinion as a Government in reference to it. Our opinion, as given a short time ago to the deputation which came from Esperance Bay, and also to the deputation which represented Norseman, was that the output of gold from the Norseman goldfields did not justify us in the construction of this railway. There is no doubt that there are also many political reasons surrounding this question of a railway from Norseman to Esperance Bay; and I do not know that we ought, in this colony, to quite ignore political reasons in dealing with a matter of this sort. Of course there are people who would say, "The railway will pay; let us build it." But if, by building that railway, we are to injure interests that have grown up in another place, at great expense, we have to consider that question; and I have not the slightest doubt that, when the time arrives for deciding that question, the Parliament of the country, whoever may be the members composing it, will deal with the question. I have to say that we have not to deal with that matter at the present time. The opinion of the Government is that the gold output from Norseman does not justify the construction of a railway; and in regard

to the second proposition, though we are only dealing with one thing, I think, the opinion of the Government is that the circumstances do not justify the construction of a railway. Further, when we come to deal with it practically, we shall have to consider all the political conditions that surround the question. As to the statement of the member for Yilgaru that there are local capitalists willing to build this line, of course we all know that the hon. member could get a hundred people in the city of Perth who would undertake to build this line, so long as a large deposit has not to be put down. Sometimes a deposit is necessary in a foolish transaction, and then it is not often that these people succeed in raising the required deposit. The hon. member wants us to say whether the Government will propose this railway to Norseman, or whether we will not. Well, my opinion is that there is no necessity at the present moment to say anything about it. There is no doubt that, at the present time, this House is not prepared to agree to the construction of that railway; and as that is the case, why should we commit ourselves in regard to it? Why should the House pass a resolution that it is desirable to build a railway to a certain place, when the House is not prepared to carry out the work? It seems to me this is a mischievous motion, because it raises the hopes of people which will not be fulfilled, and it therefore does more harm than good. I do not see that we should pass resolutions in such cases, and commit ourselves to saying that is desirable to construct this railway. I do not think this House would approve of the Government resolving, during the recess, to undertake this work, and to justify its action by saying, "We have the authority of the House that the construction of a line from Esperance Bay to Norseman is desirable." If the Government were to say: "The House has affirmed the desirability of this railway, and therefore we will undertake it in the recess," what would the House think of us as a Government? Hon. members could not say we had not carried out the wish of this House, because we could say it had been affirmed by a resolution of the House, that it was desirable this railway should be constructed, and therefore we had carried out the work. I am sure the

House will not be willing to put its head into such a noose as that, or give to any Government such a power, under some indefinite resolution of this sort, which might be construed into meaning that the House wished the line from Esperance Bay to Norseman to be constructed forthwith. Why should we not pass other resolutions of the same sort at the same time? I am sure, for instance, that the Pilbarra goldfields—a place I am looking to hopefully, and a place which I hope some day to do something for—it would be much more reasonable to place on record that it is desirable to construct a railway through the Pilbarra goldfields, where gold of the value of £400,000 has been taken out of the ground. It would be much more reasonable to pass a resolution affirming that a railway to the Pilbarra goldfields is desirable, than to record that, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that a line shall be made from Esperance Bay to Norseman. I am not sure of the quantity of gold that has been obtained from the Norseman field—I have not the figures before me—but I question whether more than £15,000 worth of gold has come from there altogether. Why not say it is desirable to build a railway here, there, and everywhere, wherever anyone thinks it desirable to do so? I say the motion before the House is mischievous, and I am surprised that an old Parliamentarian like the hon. member for Nannine is lending his countenance and support to it. He knows the motion is altogether improper, for it would place the House in a false position, and the Government too. The member for Nannine has said we will have to decide whether Coolgardie is to be the centre, with Fremantle as its port, or whether Esperance Bay is to be the port of the colony. I say it is not necessary to decide, for the matter is not before us. Therefore I do not think we shall be wise in passing either of the proposals in the motion of the member for Yilgarn. It must not be thought by anyone that the Government are sitting down and doing nothing for the rising places of the colony. We have spent a great deal of money at Esperance Bay; we have spent a great deal of money at Norseman; we are continually spending money and doing all that we can for them—providing telegraph communica-

tion and public buildings, and giving them assistance for sanitary purposes, for roads, for jetties at Esperance Bay, also for court-houses, magistrates' quarters, schools, and in fact doing everything we can for these rising places. But it seems to me that nothing short of a large expenditure of public money will satisfy some of these people. I think they ought to be satisfied, when they compare their gold output with that of Pilbarra. I think the motion is unreasonable, under the circumstances; therefore I must oppose, and I hope the House will support me in opposing, the motion of the member for Yilgarn.

THE COMMISSIONER OF CROWN LANDS (Hon. A. R. Richardson): If a motion such as this be passed by this House, the district I have the honour to represent (the DeGrey, including Northern goldfields) will have a grave and serious cause of complaint against this Parliament and this Government for injustice done to them, because it is well-known that the people in that district have been agitating for a railway to connect those goldfields with the coast, and their claim is supported by the fact that they have a considerable output of gold—an output very much larger than that contributed by the Norseman field. The district I represent is much larger than the one referred to in the motion, and is settled entirely by our own people, who have been waiting patiently, although they labour under greater difficulty in getting machinery and supplies to the fields, than is the case on the Norseman goldfield at the present time. They have well-developed gold reefs of unquestionable richness, which only require a railway for enabling machinery to be placed there for developing their abnormally rich productiveness; and yet the Government of the colony have not, up to the present time, been able to undertake the construction of a railway. I may say the Government are very anxious indeed to help that part of the colony by constructing a railway, as they are anxious to assist in the development of those parts; but they have not been able to see their way to do that up to the present; yet if, in the opinion of this House, such a motion as this, affirming that the time has come when a railway should be constructed from Esperance Bay to Norseman,

ought to be passed, then I think the Pilbarra goldfields would have a grave cause for complaint against the Government and against Parliament for culpable negligence and injustice. I reiterate that, before the question of a railway to Norseman should be considered, there are other places—not only Pilbarra, but places other than goldfields—which ought to have their claims for the construction of railways considered; and they will have a right to complain that they have been unjustly dealt with, if a motion like this be passed by this House. The Government recognise that the time will come when this question of constructing a railway from Esperance to Norseman will have to be seriously considered, and it is a question that will have to be thought over very carefully; but I do not think anyone can say the output of gold and the developments that have taken place on the Norseman field are such as to justify the claim now put forward for the construction of a railway. The unfavourable conditions which the people of these fields are stated to labour under are not nearly so unfavourable as those existing in other parts of the colony where railways have not been constructed. The mover has mentioned Lawlers, but can you compare the disabilities of the people of Lawlers with the inconveniences which exist on the Norseman goldfields, which are only 120 miles from the coast, and where they can get supplies and bring up machinery at a less rate than people have to pay in many other places? Norseman is specially favoured in being near the coast, and in that way having a direct trading communication with the Eastern colonies, so that everything they require can be obtained with comparative cheapness. They are also favoured with a beautiful climate, where all kinds of draught stock are able to haul more than is possible in a tropical climate such as the North-West. I say the disabilities which the people at Norseman labour under are not to be compared with those which have to be faced by people in tropical parts of the colony. Compared also with some inland districts, such as Menzies and Lawlers, where everything the people want to eat and drink, and everything they have to wear, and everything they have to bring up for equipping their mines, costs, for haulage,

100 per cent. to 200 per cent. more than such things cost if delivered at Norseman. I say the people at Norseman are favourably situated. If, therefore, this House is to seriously consider the claims and disabilities which the people at Norseman labour under, then I say the people in other parts of the colony, such as I have mentioned, may well envy them in living under conditions that are so favourable as compared with the conditions existing in many less favoured places. The people at Norseman may well wait until they have proved, by the development of their mines and a greater output of gold, that they are entitled to have this claim for a railway seriously considered by the Government and by Parliament.

MR. A. FORREST: The hon. member who has taken upon himself to move this motion should be satisfied with the expression of opinion he has obtained from those members who have spoken, up to the present, on the question of building a railway from Esperance to Norseman. As the Commissioner of Crown Lands has told us, there are many important districts in this colony that require railway communication—not only goldfields, but other districts. For instance, there is the claim of the people in the Marra-dong district, represented by the member for the Murray; there is also the claim for railway connection from Mingenew to Mullewa, for giving easier access to the Murchison goldfields from the southern parts of the colony, besides bringing down the produce of that country to market; and there are claims for railways in several country districts, requiring grave attention, in order that the productiveness of the country may be assisted. There are many other districts in the colony which have claims for railways, and such claims as deserve the attention of the Government, before a motion of this kind should be passed by this House. I have no doubt a railway from Esperance to Norseman would pay, and there are many persons who would be glad to get a concession from the Government for making that railway; but I think it is clearly understood that this House does not intend to favour the construction of any more private railways in this colony, because we have had bitter experience of these private railways already existing. We are buying one back now, and may

have to buy another back very soon. I think the hon. member knew full well, when he introduced the motion, that the members of the House would not, at the present time, agree to it, because the people at Norseman are more favourably situated for getting things delivered cheaply on the fields than are the people in any other mining district in the colony. The distance from the coast is only a little over 100 miles, and that is not a great distance to cart machinery to the mines if they are any good. Take the Southern Cross mines, for instance. The machinery for equipping them had to be carried by railway to York, and then carted from York 180 miles to the Cross. Then the mines at Coolgardie and those at Kalgoorlie, before the railway was opened, had to have their machinery carted from Southern Cross, a much greater distance than carting machinery from Esperance to Norseman. If a mine is good, there is no difficulty with regard to the cost of the machinery. I may tell hon. members that, at the present time, my firm is sending 100 tons of machinery to a mine 30 miles on the other side of Lawlers, and the transit will cost £40 a ton, yet we are not agitating for a railway. The people at Norseman, although close to a harbour where they can get everything brought in very cheaply, are demanding a railway. I say the time has not come when members of this House will feel inclined to deal with such an important question, because we know it is no use to ask for that railway at the present time; for there is staring us in the face the fact that, directly this railway is made from Esperance to Norseman, there will be a further agitation for connecting it with the lines at Coolgardie, for bringing the imports of the Eastern colonies on to our goldfields by way of Esperance. We have spent large sums in providing water and giving other facilities to our Eastern goldfields; we are building a Mint in Perth for dealing with the gold, and we are building a large harbour at Fremantle for bringing in machinery and supplies cheaply along the existing railway to our Eastern goldfields. Those people who have lately come to the colony, and been here perhaps two years, say that we in Parliament do not represent them, although many of us have larger interests in these goldfields than any of these

new-comers have. We know what it means—that directly the railway is placed there, an agitation will be started for connecting the Esperance-Norseman Railway with Coolgardie; and no Parliament can exist in this colony, when that stage is reached, without being forced, by pressure of agitation and circumstances, to make that connection between the two railways. Then if we get two competing lines of railway to our Eastern goldfields, will we be any better off? I do hope, and indeed I am sure, the good sense of the hon. member will show him that the best course to adopt is to withdraw his motion; and if he does not withdraw it, I hope the unanimous vote of this House will be against it.

MR. LOTON: I am a little surprised to see, after what has been done and what is intended to be done in the way of developing the Coolgardie and surrounding goldfields, that a motion of this kind is brought forward at the present time.

MR. MORAN: This is not for Coolgardie.

MR. LOTON: I know it is not; but the House has undertaken the responsibility of authorising the 2½ million loan for a water supply, and the House has undertaken the responsibility of the construction of two other lines of railway on the Eastern goldfields; and we have to consider those facts in connection with this motion. I am not going to discuss this question at any length, for it is too early to discuss it at all. The people at Norseman are doing very well with their present facilities, and they may continue to do well. Some of them can earn very good money by carting supplies of materials to the fields, the same as was done at Ballarat in the old days of goldfields development in Victoria. I only rose to say a few words, to the effect that, at the present time, we are not in a position, and we shall not be doing our duty to Western Australia if we undertake to construct a portion of a railway for the benefit of one of the sister colonies. That is practically what we should be doing, if we commenced this railway to Norseman as is now proposed. It is just as well that a statement of this kind should be made. I say we are not prepared, at the present time, to commence to build a railway for the benefit of South Australia.

MR. CLARKSON: The hon. member for the Swan has voiced the feeling of the members of this House. The construction of this railway would simply mean the handing over of the trade of our eastern goldfields to South Australia. That is, in plain words, what this motion means. The hon. member who brought it forward knew perfectly well that this House would not agree to it, and that the circumstances of the case do not warrant it. The output of gold from the Norseman mines does not warrant the construction of a railway at the present time; and taking into consideration the very large amount of money which has been expended by the Government for the development of the eastern goldfields, and in the interest of the colony generally, it would be suicidal on the part of the Government, or of this House, to undertake at the present time the construction of a railway from Esperance Bay to Norseman. That is putting it in plain English. I know the member for Nannine had that in view, and he made a good and strong point in saying that the making of this railway would necessitate an enormous expenditure in improving the harbour at Esperance Bay. It is quite out of the question, at the present time, for us to seriously consider the construction of a railway from Esperance Bay to Coolgardie; for that would have to follow, if a railway were made from Esperance to the Norseman field.

MR. GEORGE: I do not think the people on the goldfields about Coolgardie, when they consider this matter, will be very grateful to the member for Yilgarn for bringing forward this motion.

MR. MORAN: That is my lookout; not yours.

MR. GEORGE: Certainly, it is your lookout; but it concerns us also. I am quite sure that, if this House were to pass this motion, the next thing we must do, if it were possible to do it, would be to rescind those resolutions we have already passed this session for authorising the expenditure of close on five millions of money for providing water, additional railways, and other requirements on the Coolgardie goldfields. I say that if we passed this motion we would have no manner of right whatever to ask people to subscribe 2½

millions for carrying water to supply the Coolgardie goldfields from the Darling Ranges, when we know that water could be conveyed from Esperance to Coolgardie; therefore the various other public works which are to be undertaken for the benefit of the Coolgardie goldfields could not rightly be gone on with in the interest of the people of the colony. If I were disposed to give any support to this motion, it would be in reference to the second part of it, for granting permission to private companies to build a railway to Norseman; because I do not believe in the Government having all the railways, but am in favour of the other principle of allowing private companies to construct railways in the colony. I know the majority in this House do not agree with me, and I bow to their decision. I shall vote against this motion.

MR. WOOD: I shall give this motion my most uncompromising opposition. I should never dream of supporting such a motion; and the best thing the hon. member can do is to withdraw it, because he does not stand the ghost of a show of getting it through this House.

MR. SOLOMON: I do not think the hon. member, in moving this motion, was really in earnest in his advocacy, for he could not expect this House, or any number of members, to support him in it. What the Premier said is the gist of the whole question, that there is not sufficient development on the Norseman goldfield to warrant the construction of a railway; and when we take into consideration the large amount of expenditure that is required in other directions, the votes for which have been passed by the House this session, it is absurd, at the last hour, to bring forward a motion of this kind. It has been truly said that railways are required in other directions besides goldfields. It is well known that even short lines have been asked for and been refused; not altogether because they would not pay, but the main argument in reference to one of these short lines, the one from Fremantle to Owen's Anchorage, was that used by the Engineer-in-Chief when he said this line would become of too great importance. I say that in many cases this argument tends rather in favour of a railway being constructed. In reference to the present

motion, I am sure the hon. member will see that the feeling of the House is against it, and that he has not a single supporter. I feel sure that, on consideration, he will withdraw his motion.

MR. MORAN: In reply to the remarks of hon. members, I may say a certain amount of warmth has been shown towards the hon. member who had the audacity to introduce this motion; but I want to bring certain points before the attention of hon. members. The case was put peculiarly by the member for the Murray, who is an authority on all things—on pig iron principally—when he said the people of Coolgardie would not have anything to thank the hon. member for Yilgarn for, in having brought forward this motion. If the hon. member wants to test the feeling of the people up there, I may remind him there will be six new seats available at the next general election, and he can go there and contest any one of them, and in that way find out what is the feeling of the people there on this and various other matters. The remarks of the Premier were perhaps a little strong; but he approached the question from a reasonable and direct Government standpoint. He has taken up a strong line of argument in saying that places like Pilbarra and Marble Bar are entitled to a railway just as much as the Norseman field is. I may remind him, in reference to those goldfields in the North-West, that I was the first member in this House to say that I thought the Marble Bar goldfield should have a railway constructed to it, for it was my opinion then, knowing something of the mines in that district, that the Marble Bar goldfield deserved the serious attention of the Government. No one who has spoken on this motion, except the Premier, mentioned the fact that here we have this startling proposition, that while a private company is willing to put up £100,000, if necessary, as a guarantee for constructing a railway to the Norseman goldfield, yet the people of Norseman are in the unfortunate position that they cannot get the consent of Parliament for the construction of a railway which private persons are willing to undertake at once. As to making a railway for the benefit of another colony, I do not want to be pointed out as a person who desires to destroy the prosperity of

the eastern parts of this colony, by promoting a railway which shall take away the trade and give it to the people of another colony. But, as I have said, here is this position, that several private firms are willing to build a line from Esperance to Norseman, and members of this House admit that a line will pay when built, yet they will not give their consent to its construction. That is the position, and nobody can deny it; for it appears that, as a Parliament, we are not prepared to put the willingness of these persons to a test by saying: "Very well; you shall have a right to build the railway, but we want £50,000 put down as a guarantee." [THE PREMIER: No, no.] That is the admission I want. I say we are not prepared, as a Parliament, to allow private persons to construct the line, even though we admit that the line will be payable; therefore I say we cannot shelter ourselves behind the argument that the line is not necessary, and that it will not pay. If we take the American view, which is also the English view, of the railway question, there are very many points in favour of the construction of railways by private companies; and if we were prepared to give effect to that view, the Norseman people would have a railway straight away. We are following the course taken by all the other Australian colonies, in reference to railway construction; but the effect of that policy is that the State ownership of railways in all the other colonies has landed them in a sink of debt, and we are following them. It may be a sound principle, in view of federation, not to have two systems running in Australia—one half the railways owned by the State, and the other half by private companies; therefore, from that point of view, the claim of the Norseman people for a railway will have to stand back for a while. I was pleased to notice that the Commissioner of Crown Lands took a more reasonable view than any other member. I may say that, from the Opposition benches, I have not got one single supporter for this motion. The member for Nanine, although he seconded the motion, did so out of courtesy alone. He made far and away the ablest speech against the proposition, by putting in a terse and concise manner all the objectionable features that would attend upon it, as a consequence of the colony having under-

taken to spend one million of money to construct a central harbour at Fremantle, besides making a main line of railway to the Coolgardie and neighbouring goldfields, and spending several millions on a water supply. No doubt, the Government anticipate that the long-expected transcontinental railway will be made in a few years, for connecting this colony and its goldfields with Adelaide and other capitals of Australia; but they have made this candid admission, that if the development of the Norseman mines goes on as satisfactorily as it has been doing, then the people there cannot be denied a railway.

THE PREMIER: No; I did not say that.

MR. MORAN: When the question has to be considered, the Premier recognises that Norseman will be entitled to a Government railway, if the developments go on satisfactorily. Therefore, leaving out the question of a private railway, I say that when the time comes, in the opinion of the Government, for the making of a railway to Norseman, the people are to get it. Those people will now know exactly the position of affairs, so far as this Parliament is concerned: and I can now tell the people there, and tell the country, that a railway connecting Esperance Bay with Norseman will not be constructed this session, and I have no doubt it will not be constructed next session; but I really do believe that, the session after, hon. members will have changed their opinions on this point. [MR. CLARKSON: No fear.] Perhaps the present membership of the House will have changed, and the next Parliament may find that a private company is ready to construct a line to the Norseman goldfield, or the next Parliament may be willing to authorise the construction of a light line under the ægis of the Government. I have to thank especially the Opposition benches for the most uncompromising opposition to this motion; and I have received more support from members of the Government side, not including the hon. member for West Perth, who does not appear to look favourable on the motion. Indeed, the only two friends we have in this House, *in prospectu*, are the Premier and the Commissioner of Crown Lands, who have voiced the opinions of the Government, and they said that in the very near future

this claim of the Norseman people to a railway will have to be seriously considered. I will, for the present, accept the veto of the House, and say that for a year or two to come the people of Norseman must rest with the present state of affairs. In representing them as a portion of the Yilgarn constituency, I may say I have always endeavoured to do the best I could for every part of my constituency, and I shall not be the member representing the Norseman people after this Parliament breaks up. I think I have stated the case as fairly as I could, and I leave the facts and figures before the country. I now ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MOTION: OBSERVANCE OF HOLIDAYS.

MR. WOOD, in accordance with notice, moved—"That, in the opinion of this House, it is desirable that all public and bank holidays falling on a Saturday should be observed on the Monday, or some other day in the week following." The motion, he said, might not seem very important to some hon. members, but it had importance for a considerable section of the community. His object was to ensure that any public holiday other than Christmas Day, falling on a Saturday, should be kept on Monday or some other day in the following week. He brought this matter forward in the interests of the commercial community.

THE PREMIER: You will have to bring in a Bill to amend the law, to effect what you want.

MR. WOOD said the matter was one of great importance to those engaged in commercial business. It was unreasonable to expect retailers to give up Saturday, which was, as a rule, a better day for business than all the other five days of the week; and there was no reason whatever, that he could see, why a holiday falling on Saturday should not be postponed till the following week. There was an idea that, by keeping a holiday on a Saturday, a half-day was saved; but that was a mean way of looking at the question. He would be glad if his proposal could be carried out without an alteration of the law, and perhaps the Government would see some way of dealing with the matter. The

matter was one of great importance to shop assistants and also those engaged in the retail trade. The holding of a public holiday on Saturday meant that half the shops would close and the other half would remain open, and that was manifestly unfair to those larger places of business which, out of loyalty and good heartedness to their employees, closed their doors. The Afghans, Chinamen, and members of the tribe of Judah kept open their places of business in spite of the proclamation of a holiday, and thereby reaped a large harvest. He trusted he should receive the support of hon. members both for the city and for the country districts.

MR. LOTON said he believed the public holidays and bank holidays were regulated by Act of Parliament. With regard to bank holidays, the Government had certain powers as to declaring bank holidays on days other than those named in the statute. The hon. member who had moved the motion had not given a single instance of the holding of a public holiday on a Saturday, and he (Mr. Loton) did not believe that more than one such holiday occurred in a year. There was one objection to the holding of a holiday on Saturday, and it was that in the case of Government officials and others a Saturday public holiday was only really a half-day holiday, for the reason that these persons usually had the Saturday half-holiday. It was highly important that these bank holidays should be fixtures, so that the public would know beforehand on what days they would fall. He could not see that the motion before the House would be of any real benefit to the people the hon. member was moving in favour of; but he could see that it was likely to inconvenience the public, if the day on which a holiday would fall could not be known until three or four days before.

MR. RANDELL said he quite understood that some inconvenience arose from the banks being closed on Saturday, but he could not see that any great inconvenience would arise from the public offices being closed on that day. Even greater inconvenience would follow from holidays being held on Monday than on Saturday, because the storekeepers would have to keep their Saturday takings until Tuesday, the banks being closed on the Monday. In the past, holidays had

been granted without due and careful consideration, to the great inconvenience of business men generally; and he thought the power of granting holidays vested in the Government should be used with the greatest care. The member for the Swan had pointed out that it was desirable the public should know well beforehand when the holidays would be held. Business people felt it a great hardship that the banks should be closed for several days at Christmas and New Year. There was no desire to rob the bank clerk, who had to work far more than eight hours a day, of his four or five days' holiday at Christmas and New Year. Saturday was no doubt a most inconvenient day to a storekeeper for the banks to close, but the objection to a holiday on Saturday could be obviated by making other arrangements. For instance, employees could be given more extended holidays on other occasions, but the object aimed at would not be served by postponing the holidays when they occurred on Saturday.

MR. JAMES said he had pleasure in supporting the motion, but he regretted it did not go further and provide that whenever a public holiday fell during the week it should be held on the following Monday. He took it that holidays were meant to give a day of rest to those in employment, to artisans or those engaged in manufactories or in shops. In considering this question, they ought to take into account the interests of those who were supposed to benefit by a holiday; and if they did that, they would see that it was fairer to give a holiday on Monday than on Saturday, unless there was an express law that no shop whatever should open on Saturday if it were declared a public holiday. In South Australia there was a rule that all public holidays falling during the week should be held on the following Monday, and thus there was no uncertainty about the matter. If that same rule were adopted in Western Australia, he was quite certain that it would give satisfaction to both employer and employee.

MR. WOOD (in reply) said he was sorry if the member for Perth was opposed to the motion, but he was much obliged to the member for East Perth for the attention he had given to it.

Motion put and passed.

MOTION: DISTRICT AND CENTRAL WINERIES.

MR. CLARKSON, in accordance with notice, moved "That, in the opinion of this House, the best interests of the country would be served by the institution of a system of district and central wineries as a State policy." He said: In speaking to this motion, I shall not ask the House to vote a large sum of money, or borrow a quarter of a million of money, or anything of that sort. This motion is a very simple matter. It is a step in the direction of settling people on the lands of the colony, an object which the present Government have had in view ever since they took office. I believe every member of this House will agree with me that it is a most desirable thing to do. I really do not see we are justified in borrowing large sums of money and expending them on public works, on building railways here and there all over the colony, unless our lands are being utilised to the greatest advantage. I do not think any country will be considered to be really prosperous unless its lands are being settled to the best advantage, and to as large an extent as possible. This motion treats of a small matter, and that is the lending of assistance to wineries. Perhaps it is a more important matter than hon. members may at first sight think; but I can assure the House that every year a very large area is being brought under cultivation and planted with vines. In my district, I can say that hundreds of acres every year are added to the area under vines. It is an admitted fact that this colony is particularly well adapted to the growth of the vine; in fact, the vine grows like a weed in almost every district of the colony. Although any man may plant vines, it is not reasonable to suppose any man can make wine. The supply of wine is not nearly equal to the demand, and a very inferior quality of wine is at the present time sold at a very high price; but the day is not far distant when we shall have to look outside the bounds of this colony for a market, and when we do that, it is desirable that the article we produce shall be of a better quality than it is now. In the Eastern colonies—in South Australia at any rate—wineries are established under the control of the Government, who erect the build-

ing and appoint an expert as manager, and make a charge upon those who use the wineries to repay the cost of management. We are expending large sums of money in developing our goldfields and our timber industry, and I think rightly so. I am not one of those who are at all afraid of borrowing money and spending it on works likely to be reproductive. We must remember that our goldfields, in which we have unbounded faith, may possibly, in course of time, pinch out—I think that is the proper term—and also, in course of time, our timber will be all cut. Every man, however, who plants an acre or 100 acres with vines provides a source of revenue which will last for ever. When that man is dead and gone, his vineyard will still be there, and be a source of wealth to whoever comes after him. I certainly think we should do everything we can to encourage those who are willing to develop the resources of the colony in the way of making the land produce that which it is admitted it can produce to perfection. As I have said, there are hundreds of acres of vines planted every year, and I think it only reasonable that the produce of those vineyards should be turned to the best advantage. I do not think it necessary that I should make very many remarks on this subject, because I think it must be patent to everybody it is desirable in the interests of the country that this produce should be placed under scientific treatment. I can mention a case in which as much as £11 per acre has been paid for Crown lands sold by auction in my district within the last few months. The purchaser is now busy clearing and planting his land with vines. The people in the towns have no idea of the extent of this vine cultivation, nor of the amount of money which has been expended in that direction in the country districts. I am speaking of what I know is taking place in my own district, and I believe the same remarks apply to many others. I believe that the same amount of development has taken place in all the Eastern and Southern districts of the colony. When the time comes that we shall have to go outside for a market, it will be necessary for us to produce wine of excellent and uniform quality. We are told by experts that, with proper treatment of the grapes, the colony can pro-

duce wine of a very superior kind, for the vine flourishes in any part of Western Australia, and hundreds of acres are being planted as vineyards every year. A large expenditure will not be necessary to carry out this motion, and I think it will be a boon to those who are engaged in the grape-growing industry.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest): The question of encouraging the establishment of central wineries has been under consideration for a long time, and the Government have expressed themselves in sympathy with the project, and I think we have been in communication with the Agricultural Bureau in regard to it. I do not know whether an abstract motion of this sort will do much good. We want some action taken in regard to it. I believe the Government should encourage the establishment of central wineries in the districts in which the grapes are grown, as such assistance to the wine industry would be productive of great benefit, by enabling good wine to be made; but the grapes must be produced in considerable quantity before it would pay anyone to go to much trouble and expense, and apply the requisite knowledge, to make wine that will be of something like the same quality year by year. Therefore, if we can aid in the establishment of the system of central wineries, I think it will be a move in the right direction. I believe that in the Swan district this principle is carried out to some extent by the larger producers purchasing grapes from those who produce in smaller quantities. While I do not pretend to have very much knowledge of the subject referred to in this motion, I am in sympathy with the idea that we should encourage the establishment of wineries; but I am not sure that the colony is quite ripe at the present time—whether the grapes are produced in sufficient quantities—to warrant the establishment of wineries in many places. It seems to me that the matter might fairly come under the direction and control, or—at any rate that it might be brought under the notice, of the Bureau of Agriculture. I know that the Bureau has moved in the matter; there has been some communication between the Government and the Bureau on the subject, but it has not taken any practical shape. The chair-

man of the Bureau (Mr. Harper), a member of this House, has taken a great deal of interest in this matter; but there has been so much pressing business upon the Government and the members of this House that, during the last year or two, there has not been much time to devote to this very important matter. I do not know what the hon. member who has introduced this motion means when he speaks of the institution of a system of district and central wineries as a State policy. It seems to me that a State policy would mean that the Government would undertake to construct these wineries and carry on their work as a Government department. I am not prepared to go as far as that.

MR. CLARKSON: They would be self-supporting.

THE PREMIER: I at once give my adherence to the scheme, if there is no money to pay; but if the Government had anything to do with it, I fear we should have to pay. It seems to me the hon. member goes a little too far, when he asks that a system of central wineries shall be carried out as a matter of State policy; for it would cost thousands of pounds to do the work and make it reproductive, by the time we had erected the necessary buildings. I shall be glad to listen to what hon. members have to say on this subject, especially to those who have any knowledge of the business; but I can inform the House that there are no funds available on the present Estimates to provide wineries; therefore any resolution that is passed would have no effect, unless we brought in Supplementary Estimates to provide for the expenditure that would be necessary.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piessé): The subject of this motion is one which I think has been under the consideration of the Bureau of Agriculture for some time; but I am not aware that the Bureau has brought forward any definite proposal. That the establishment of central wineries would be of great service in assisting this great industry of wine production, I think everyone will admit. I may say that I have taken an interest in the establishment of these wineries, and also with a desire to obtain such information as would enable me to judge

whether it would be desirable to ask the Government to look at the question from the producers' point of view, and assist the project in any way; but I have not been able to obtain very definite information on the point. Most people who take an interest in the wine production of this colony are anxious to see one uniform character of wine produced here; and the only thing that can bring about that result would be the treatment of the grapes in large wineries, under expert management. Until this is done, I am sure that the wine industry will not reach that stage of satisfactory development which I think we are all anxious that it should. The great drawback to the quality of our wine is that it is sold and passed into consumption before it has time to properly mature. A gentleman from one of the Eastern colonies who visited one of our vineyards, and who saw much to be pleased with in the progress and management of the vines, was much surprised when his host produced a sample of his wine that was only three or four weeks old, and, after the guest had politely declined a glass, drank one himself with much relish and pronounced it to be very good. Now this is just the sort of wine that is being produced and sold in different parts of the colony—newly fermented juice just pressed from the grape, and it is not in a state, I should think, although I cannot speak from experience, to be a wholesome drink. It is in order to raise the standard of our wine, and to see that it only goes into consumption when it is matured, that it is desired to establish district wineries, for under fair conditions I believe the wine of Western Australia could hold its own against any wine in the world; and if the Government can help forward the attainment of this object—I am speaking now as the member for my district—I think it would be a very proper thing for them to do. But the Bureau of Agriculture has not put forward any definite proposal in regard to these wineries, and therefore it is hard for the Government to make a move towards dealing with the question. I think it would be well to postpone the consideration of this motion until the question of wineries has been threshed out at the next annual Conference of Producers that is held under the auspices of

the Bureau; and then, with the recommendation of that body before us, we shall be enabled to arrive at some decision as to whether we shall be justified in carrying out the wishes of the Bureau and of the Conference. I am as much in sympathy with the object of this motion as the Premier has expressed himself to be, for if we are to produce wine, it should be wine of the best quality and of uniform character—something that is pleasing to the taste and also something that will recommend our industry to the world. The one quality our wine lacks is maturity, and under the present system of every vigneron making his own wine and sending it into consumption very soon after it is made, maturity is the thing that much of the wine is not likely to get, although it cannot be beneficial to drink it while it is so new. I shall be happy to assist the hon. member for Toodyay in carrying out the object he has in view, for I believe that it will do a great deal of good; but after the expression of opinion that has been given, perhaps the hon. member will see the propriety of allowing the motion to stand over, until the subject has been further considered and resolved upon in a definite shape by the Bureau of Agriculture.

MR. VENN: I do not think the House will pass such an abstract motion as this. It would be a sort of tinkering at a State policy, to have central wineries and what not as a State policy. It might be a very nice thing to run the whole of the industries of the colony on the co-operative principle. We might as well have central creameries and piggeries, at the same time as central wineries; therefore, let us have a universal co-operative system, so that the Government may deal with everything. As far as wineries are concerned, there is no doubt the industry of wine production can be left to local enterprise, as it is in other parts of the world. All over Europe wine is produced without any wineries being asked for as a matter of State policy. If we are to have a State policy, to make the wine, the next thing will be to find people to drink it. That would be a very good State policy, to encourage the consumption of wine. The object the member for Toodyay has in view is a good one, although we may not agree with him as

to the means he proposes for carrying it out. The time is coming—I think it will arrive within a few years—when Australia will be a large wine-producing country; and the only way in which it can become a successful wine-producing country is by making wine of some uniform character. Many years ago, the Government of the Cape employed an expert to instruct people in the manufacture of wine. That piece of State policy had a very good effect in helping vintners to produce a uniform character of wine. With regard to wineries, I think the moment there is a surplus crop of grapes, there are one or two gentlemen in this country who will be willing to buy the grapes or grape juice in large quantities; and that being so, I do not see that the industry of vine cultivation or wine-making is likely to languish for want of a purchaser. I do not think that the House will do well to pass such an abstract resolution as this one before the chair, which asks us to affirm that the best interests of the country would be served by the institution of district or central wineries as a matter of State policy.

MR. CLARKSON (in reply): Notwithstanding the somewhat satirical remarks of the member for Wellington, I can say that I am of the same opinion as I was when I introduced this motion. I cannot help thinking that the hon. member has read the motion incorrectly. I am sorry if I have not made my meaning sufficiently evident; but under the circumstances, and having obtained an expression of opinion, I beg leave to withdraw the motion. The fact that I have brought it before the House may have the effect of arousing that expensive body, the Bureau of Agriculture, to take the matter under consideration, because I believe that very shortly it will be necessary for something of the kind to be done. Certainly, it will be necessary if Western Australia is to produce a wine that will be valuable in other parts of the world, and that will be wholesome to drink. So much new colonial wine goes into consumption that I never drink it, if I can possibly avoid it. I am told that the wine we are making here at present is quite unsuited to the tastes of those who drink it.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

MOTION: PURCHASE OF GREAT SOUTHERN RAILWAY AND LANDS.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest), in accordance with notice, moved—"That this House approves of the purchase by the Government of the whole of the interests of the Western Australian Land Company in Western Australia, including the railway from Beverley to Albany, all rolling stock, unsold lands, unpaid instalments in arrear and in prospect on lands sold on deferred payments, and all other property of every description in Western Australia, and rights and interests under the contract between the Government and Anthony Hordern, dated 25th day of October, 1884, for the sum of one million one hundred thousand pounds." He said: The motion I have the honour to submit to the House may, in a few words, be termed one for the purchase on the part of the Government of the Great Southern Railway and all the interests in Western Australia now belonging to the Western Australian Land Company. There are some members in this House who were members of the Select Committee in 1884 (I think it was), when we framed a contract between Mr. Anthony Hordern and the Government, by which we contracted that, in consideration of his building a railway from Albany to Beverley, a distance of 242 miles, the Government would give him 12,000 acres of land per mile of the line, on certain conditions, in alternate blocks or something approaching the alternate system. Since that date, this contract has been in force. As we are all aware, the railway was built within the time allowed by the contract, and the trains have been running ever since in accordance with the terms of the contract, and the land granted by the Government has been selected by the assigns of Mr. Anthony Hordern. The Western Australian Land Company have entered into possession of and hold 3,000,000 acres of land which they have acquired under the terms of the contract, and they have also possessed themselves of very important localities in the town of Albany. In fact, I do not think I shall be going too far when I say we have handed over, to a very large extent, the whole of the country between Beverley and Albany for 40 miles wide on each side of the railway to the Western Aus-

tralian Land Company, under the terms of that contract. Now the policy the present Government, and I think I may say this Parliament, desire to carry out at the present time is that the railways of the colony should belong to the people of the colony. This is the rule all over Australia, whether for good or for ill. Some people think it is not good. For myself, I think it is; but at any rate the principle, in the Australian colonies and in New Zealand, is that the railways shall belong to the country. There are very few exceptions. We have a larger exception in this colony than any other colony of Australasia; for we have two privately-owned railways here, the Great Southern belonging to the Western Australian Land Company, between Beverley and Albany, and the Midland railway belonging to the Midland Company, running to Geraldton; something like 550 or 500 miles in all. In New Zealand, where there was a railway owned by a private company, the line has been taken possession of by the Government, under the contract, for breach of the conditions. In Tasmania, they had a private railway from Launceston to Hobart; but it was a continual trouble to the Government, and in the end the Government had to buy out the company. But in this colony, perhaps we may consider ourselves to some extent favoured that we have not had very much trouble, at any rate, with this Great Southern Company. Still, the arrangements have not proved such as to be satisfactory to the people of the colony, especially to those persons who live in the district through which the railway runs. I think I may say that in this colony, although we adopted this land-grant system of railways at a time when we were in very poor circumstances, yet since we have enjoyed a better position we seem to regret that we have handed over such a large piece of the colony to the control of private companies. And when we realise the extent of what we may call the temperate part of this colony and the part that has a good rainfall, the South Western Division, when we think that in this part there is a piece of land lying between Albany and the Greenough, 80 miles wide, and the best of which is held by private companies and not utilised—that is the worst point of all, for the land is not utilised in the

way we should desire it to be utilised—it is not likely that the people of the colony who reside within that area should be satisfied. One great difficulty in the administration of the lands of these companies has been the excessive value placed on their lands; for they seem to value their lands at such a high rate that there has been a difficulty in disposing of them to settlers, and the result has been that for the most part the settlement of the lands by these companies has not been successful. At the time this contract was made, I have said we were a poor community; for the revenue of the colony was then about £300,000 a year, and the population was something like 33,000. I remember particularly taking part, as a member of that select committee, in framing this contract; I know that the hon. member for the Swan was another member of the committee; and I have no doubt several other members of this House were also members of the committee. I remember particularly that the member for the Swan (Mr. Loton) and myself did our best to get some terms, which have since proved of very great value, inserted in that contract. There can be no doubt, I think, that the construction of that railway by the Western Australian Land Company has been of peculiar advantage to the colony. From the time it was commenced, and I think it was opened something like seven or eight years ago, the railway has proved of great benefit to the colony, and has fairly served its purpose. The contract for the construction has been well carried out, and the line is well built; the trains have been run regularly; the company have kept to the terms of the contract; and I think I am justified in saying the railway has served its purpose well. I regret to say, however, that the project as a whole has not been a successful one for the company. I believe the projector, Mr. Anthony Hordern, who unfortunately died shortly after the contract was made, did well in regard to it; but I do not think anyone can say that the company itself has been successful, because, so far as I am aware—and I think I know the facts—the shareholders have never received any interest up to the present time upon the capital they have expended. They have faithfully carried out the contract as far as regards the

railway ; but the great point of complaint, as far as the people of the colony is concerned, is that the company have not developed the land in the way that we expected and desired, the principal reason being, as I have said, that they place a higher value on the lands than they are worth. The Government—and I think we have the concurrence of a majority of this House, and I feel sure we have the concurrence of a great many of the people of the colony—have come to the conclusion that it is advisable for the country to hold these lands, in order that we may develop them under the land regulations and the land laws in force. I will inform hon. members that, although the company have gone through some hard times since 1889, yet up to the present they have never paid any interest to the shareholders who have contributed the capital which has been expended on this railway. There has, however, been a marked improvement during the last year or two in the revenue received by the company. I have it officially from the company that, for the first nine months of this year, some £55,000 has been received in revenue; and in fact, if we take the current quarter, from the 1st October to the 31st December, as being equal in revenue to the quarter that preceded it, from the 1st July to the 30th September, the proportion received being £20,000, then the revenue that will be received by the company for the current year ending December 31st will be £75,000. The company have already received, in round numbers, £55,000 up to the 30th September; and the expenditure during that time has, I am told, been very moderate—indeed the company have managed their affairs on a very moderate scale of expenditure—the expenditure has been 51 per cent. of the revenue. Taking it roughly, the total amount expended for the year will be at the rate of £40,000; so that at the end of the current year, ending December next, which is by far the best year the company have had, the profit on the working of the railway, and not including any land sales, land rents, or anything derived from other sources, will be something like £35,000 for the current year. Of course, in addition to the railway revenue and the profits realised from land sales, if the Government acquire the property, these land sales, the proceeds

of which may now be in some way mortgaged to debenture holders, would be clear additions to the revenue which the Government would receive. The interest payable on the purchase price of £1,100,000, which is the amount the Government have agreed to pay for the whole of the company's interests in this colony, subject to the approval of Parliament, may be taken at 3 per cent., as we have agreed to pay the purchase price in 3 per cent. bonds of inscribed stock, at the usual terms—that is to say, bonds having 40 years to run, and after 20 years the Government may repay them. Thus, at 3 per cent. the interest will amount to £33,000 a year; so that on this year's transactions there will be a small profit of a couple of thousand pounds—a profit not worth mentioning. Well, there is that small profit merely on the working of the railway, and without regard to the other sources of revenue from the land which will come to the Government when the property is acquired. Of course, in addition to paying £33,000 as interest at 3 per cent. on the purchase money, the Government will have to provide a sinking fund of 1 per cent., very probably $1\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the exact amount of the sinking fund being a matter now under the consideration of the Government, and will be settled shortly. It appears that our present sinking fund of 1 per cent. for loans is not enough; and as this has been pointed out by the Government Actuary, we must make our sinking fund in future sufficient to recoup the loan with a sinking fund invested at 3 per cent. I have no doubt that the Government will provide in future Loan Bills that the sinking fund will be a little more than 1 per cent., so as to make provision for repaying the loan. I am of opinion that a great deal may be expected from the large area of country we shall take over from this company; for I know that when the matter was being considered by the Government in 1894, the Commissioner of Railways and myself went into particulars to ascertain what we might expect to receive in revenue from these lands if taken over from the company at that time, and I made out that the land revenue we would be likely to receive from that 40 miles breadth of country by 200 odd miles in length was £40,000 a year. Therefore I see no reason why we

should not receive more, and perhaps considerably more, from the land in the present improved circumstances of the colony. As hon. members are aware, all the leases which were held from the Crown at the time when the concession was granted necessarily passed into the hands of the company, in relation to the land which they acquired; and as no security of tenure had been given to the pastoralists then holding the leases, they have, I believe, abandoned their leases, or at any rate the whole system of tenure which was then transferred to the company was considerably upset, as far as the pastoralists were concerned. We must not forget that this railway and the lands of the company, of which I am asking the House to approve the purchase by the Government, represent altogether an immense property, and are being taken over now as a going concern in full working order. Here we have a railway 242 miles long, running through a temperate part of the colony, well situated for settlement, having fairly good soil, and a rainfall averaging 16 to 20 inches, and more as you go further South. This railway is actually bringing in a revenue at the rate of £75,000 for the current year, and the traffic charges are practically the same as those on the Government railways. [MR. MORAN: Less in some cases.] I cannot say what the company may do behind those rates, but the rates chargeable are the same as on the Government railways, with the exception, I think, that they charge 20 per cent. more on some express trains, and I regret that they do so. We must remember that we are taking over a going concern producing a large revenue, and showing a sufficient profit on the working at the present moment to pay the interest on the amount of capital agreed upon for the purchase. Besides the railway revenue, we shall have all the land revenue to the good upon that calculation, though of course we shall have to provide a sinking fund in addition to the interest. In taking this property over, therefore, it cannot be said to be a concern that is not paying, but is one that will pay from the moment we take it over; and, in the present circumstances of the colony, I see no reason why the returns should be worse than they are in the present year.

In any case, there can be no great loss in regard to it. I have shown that the revenue at the present time provides sufficient profit, under the present management, to pay a little more than 3 per cent. on the purchase price of £1,100,000. Hon. members will be interested to know something about the lands of this company. I do not pretend to know the exact figures, although I had the figures given to me on the 28th February last, when the Government were considering the matter, but some alterations may have taken place since then. The area of land originally granted to the company was something like 3,000,000 acres. On the 28th February last the company had received, on account of 83,129 acres sold on deferred payment, a total of £14,400, leaving £60,122 remaining to be paid by the holders of the land. Hon. members will notice that, under the terms of this agreement for the purchase, and of which I have asked the House to approve, the deferred payments due to the company, and not yet received by it, will be collected by the Government on such terms as may be arranged between the Government and the tenants. The total quantity of land sold or agreed to be sold by the company up to the 28th February last, in round numbers, was a quarter of a million acres; so that there remained unalienated about two and three-quarter million acres still held by the company, and which are now coming back to the Government, together with the 83,129 acres which have been sold by the company on deferred payment. Besides this there is, as everyone knows who is acquainted with this matter, a large amount of property held by the company in the town of Albany, for which I know the company have paid over £30,000. On these lands in Albany the company have erected their station yard and other conveniences, all of which will come to the Government under this agreement. I may say the town of Albany has hitherto practically been handed over to this company. The Government have not been possessors of the place, and have had scarcely an inch of Crown land with which to do anything within the town of Albany. Only a year or two ago we desired, for instance, to give additional accommodation to the Customs department, and we had to

purchase a piece of land from the company in order to build a Custom-house. Then, a little while ago, we wanted to take a few feet off a corner of a street for a building extension, and we had to pay £250 to the company for that. At the present time there is a necessity for providing more accommodation for Customs purposes at Albany, and we are erecting a building in the water, having no land near the jetty for the purpose. In fact, the port of Albany has not belonged to the Government for many years past, everything belonging, practically, to the company, who were the possessors of that part of the colony. I hope that, if this motion is adopted, all this will be changed, and that all the country through which the railway runs will come back into the possession of the Government, so that we may re-possess it, and also make use of the foreshore in the town of Albany. When we consider that there is a magnificent port at Albany, in which the Government have taken considerable interest, and have spent a lot of money in improving it, and when we think that the public buildings, and the railway station, and the jetties will come back to the Government as belonging to the colony, and will not be in the hands of a foreign company, I think the change will be beneficial to the people concerned, and gratifying to all of us. I may inform the House that in February last, when this matter was under the consideration of the Government, I asked the engineering branch to make a valuation of the railway and all the works connected with it, and the land upon which it stood, in order that we might see what it would cost at the present time to place the works on the ground as they then existed. I am sorry to say the figures I will give you will not be very satisfactory to hon. members, because the estimate of the engineering officers was that if the whole of that country were unoccupied, and the W.A. Land Company were not there, then the whole of the railway and the land on which it was built, together with the station yards and the jetties at Albany, and everything connected with the business, leaving out the land subsidy entirely, were valued at £600,000. That estimate gave the Government cause for serious consideration, because we were then asked to pay an amount for it

which, if the company had not been there, would have been greatly in excess of what we could have created the railway and other conveniences for. But there is no doubt that, whatever may be the present value of these works, they were never placed in that position for the amount of money which our officers estimate they would cost if built by the Government. The railway and all the stations and works connected therewith, as far as I can see by the published accounts of the company, have cost them £914,000. The railway and works alone have cost £764,000, and the amount of money expended by the company, raised by hook or crook, and for the raising of which the company had to pay commissions in various directions, besides loans advanced on debenture bonds with special priority, amount to £914,000. We must remember also that the shareholders have received no interest whatever on all these amounts from 1885 to the present time. Of course, in making a purchase, one does not like to give more, if it can be avoided, than what the thing has actually cost; but, as a matter of fact, in selling a business, the vendors always want a profit on the transaction if they can get it, and no doubt these people would be loth to part with this property unless they could get their own money back and something more. Then we should remember there is generally some go-between who gets a profit out of it, or he would not interest himself in the business. I believe that when the commissions are paid to the go-betweens, and all other charges are allowed for, there will be nothing much left to the vendors, except that the shareholders will get their own money back and a reasonable interest for the time it has been lent; so that, under the terms of this sale, they will not only get their own money back, but get some interest for its use during the long period which has elapsed. After all, it is not unreasonable for people who hold a property, and sell it, to expect to get their own money back and something to the good. There is no doubt that the company are in a better position at the present time than ever before, for the railway is paying to a larger extent than it has paid hitherto. Of course, it can be said, on the other side—I have said it

myself—that this prosperity of the company might not continue, that there are the Fremantle harbour works opening up, and there is the chance of the P. and O. steamers coming into Fremantle. There is also the argument that Esperance Bay may become an important place, and so on. All these considerations have had to be taken into account by those persons who own this property and have arranged for the sale of it to the Government. For myself, and I may say for the Government, we have no doubt whatever that the company are doing better now than ever they have done hitherto in their history. I have already said that, in addition to the railway, which is paying its way and providing enough to pay interest on £1,100,000 at the present time, we will have a considerable revenue from the lands which the company have held; and the whole of the lands that are unsold, as well as the company's interest in the lands that have been sold on deferred payment, with any balances due or accruing, will come to the Government, and these balances will be a matter for arrangement between the present tenants and the Government. In fact, the Government propose to jump into the shoes of the company in regard to everything they hold in this colony. The company will go away, and we will take their place in everything appertaining to this property; except that we will not be responsible for any of their debts, nor will we have any interest whatever in any sums of money due to them under deferred payments for land sold conditionally. I have no doubt that, if the Government possess themselves of this property, as we ask the House to authorise us to do, the settlement of the country along that railway will largely increase, and we will be able to throw open these lands, with the advantages of the Homesteads Act and the Agricultural Bank Act applying to them, although they have not applied to these lands hitherto. The people who live there now and those who may come there will have all the advantages of the liberal land laws of the colony, including the facilities afforded by the Homesteads Act and the Agricultural Bank Act, in which the people settled along that line have hitherto had no part or interest up to the present time, and were not able to avail

themselves of these advantages and facilities. All along the line at the various towns we shall have many more land sales than the company have had in recent years, and the land revenue from this source will be considerable. I see no reason why the whole of the land could not be thrown open to pastoral settlement, in those portions which are not required for agricultural settlement.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: Where will the proceeds of the land go?

THE PREMIER: We shall have to consider whether we will keep a separate account of the revenue from these lands, and I have no objections to the land revenue being kept separate in the account, as it will let us know how we are getting on with our investment, and whether it has been a good or a bad investment, though I do not think there is much doubt about that. However, the railway revenue itself will be kept in a separate account, and we will know from that whether the investment as a whole is a good one. There is another question which will be settled, if this property comes into the hands of the Government, and that is the disagreeable question about the disputed lands. There has been a long-standing dispute between the Government and the company as to certain lands along this route, and also in the town of Albany, and that dispute will now come to an end. At present there is an action pending between the Government and the company in regard to these lands, for the company still contend that they are entitled to all the town lots that were not sold in the town of Albany at the time when the concession was granted to them, and they also question the right of the Government to make reserves as we have done. There is at present a deadlock in reference to this matter.

MR. LUTON: About the 12,000 acre blocks?

THE PREMIER: There is this litigation going on, and it might last for some years, and has certainly been troublesome and annoying up to the present. Also, if this motion is adopted by the House, and if the Government come into possession of all this property, then, looking at it from a social point of view, we would be more closely united with the people of the town

of Albany, and with the many thousands who are settled along the railway route, than we are at present, and I think that is a consideration we should not overlook. This has not been brought under the notice of hon. members so much, perhaps, as it has been brought under mine; but, as a matter of fact, all the people living along the railway between Albany and Beverley, and all the people in the town of Albany, have had very little interest in what has been going on in the Parliament of this country, or in this House, during many years past, because the land laws of the country have not applied to the settlers upon the company's lands. Those people have not been able to take advantage of the Homesteads Act or the Land Regulations, or the facilities for settlement afforded by the Agricultural Bank Act. They have not been in a position to make any representation as to whether the railway time-table has served the general convenience of the district or not, or whether the trains are suitable, or whether the railway rates are what the people would like them to be. In fact, they have not been in a position to take any part in the public life of the colony. They have practically belonged to another part of the colony, which has been managed by this company under a separate system. Their landlords are people living in a foreign country, or at any rate living in England; therefore one cannot be surprised that, to a large extent, those people have felt that they did not belong to this colony, and have not been under its land laws. That state of things will all be altered, if the purchase of this property is approved by Parliament; and all the country between Beverley and Albany, together with the town of Albany and everything belonging to it, will, *de facto*, belong to the colony again.

MR. RANDALL: Tell us about the condition of the railway at the present time.

THE PREMIER: I am informed that it is in good condition, and the railway is working well. We have a report from the Government engineers that the railway is working well, and is in good condition, and everything in good working order.

AN HON. MEMBER: What about the sleepers?

THE PREMIER: A great many sleepers have been replaced, though I do not think all the bad sleepers have been replaced. Of course for the first 50 or 60 miles from the Beverley end the sleepers were all jarrah, obtained in jarrah country; and the company have been putting in jarrah sleepers over the other parts of the line during several years past. The fact that the trains have been running without accident, or without serious delay, proves that the railway must be in good working order. There are workshops at Albany, and everything necessary for carrying on the business of this railway; and it seems to me to have been carried on well, and very economically, because the working expenses have been only 51 per cent. of the revenue for the present year. I do not know that I need say much more. I have taken a great interest in this matter for a long time. This is not the first occasion on which these negotiations have been entered upon. We have been talking about them and writing about them for years. Offers have been made to the Government by the company from time to time, but these offers seemed to assume better shape about the beginning of this year. In fact, the condition of the colony had then so changed that the Government considered they were at last in a position for dealing with this matter. We did not feel, in the past, that we were quite in a position to deal with it, though we always felt a desire to acquire this property. The matter required a great deal of consideration, and we had to think it over from every point of view. At last we came to the conclusion that it was a wise thing to make the purchase, in the interests of the colony. I myself have no hesitation in recommending hon. members to accept the motion which I have placed before them. You will notice, from the terms of it, that we propose to purchase the whole of the interests in Western Australia of the W.A. Land Company, including "the railway from Beverley to Albany, all rolling stock unsold lands, unpaid instalments in arrear and in prospect on lands sold on deferred payments, and all other property of every description in Western Australia, and rights and interests under the contract

"between the Government and Anthony Hordern, dated the 25th day of October, 1884, for the sum of one million one hundred thousand pounds." In dealing with this matter, perhaps I have not done the justice to it that it deserves, as I really had not much time to prepare a statement; but I know sufficiently all the circumstances connected with the original contract, and also with the negotiations that have taken place, to give hon. members any information they may require. We have, I think, an opportunity of acquiring this property on fairly reasonable terms. I do not think the price is excessive, considering the change that has taken place in the condition of the colony. The concern has not been paying interest, and has scarcely paid working expenses in past years; but it is now assuming a different aspect, and during the present year, as I have shown, it will not only pay working expenses, but also interest at 3 per cent. on the purchase price of £1,100,000. We have an opportunity of buying this property on very good terms, the company being willing to take our 3 per cent. inscribed stock. Our financial agents have cabled me that there will be no difficulty in issuing this inscribed stock in the usual way. It seems to me the present time is very favourable for the completion of this business. Of course, if hon. members have little faith in the future of the colony, if they think the present prosperity not likely to continue, if they think hard times are near at hand, and that this business will not then pay and will become a burden on the colony, I can well understand their deciding not to approve of this motion. For my part, however, and I hope hon. members will be with me, I think the prosperity now enjoyed by the colony is only beginning, and is likely to continue, and that our future will be far better than the present. The shareholders of the company are willing to sell, because they are tired of waiting for returns: they having now waited for several years. They know, of course, that there is not much chance of the railway earning interest for some time to come, because as the colony develops, and their traffic increases, so must they increase their equipment, which means the expenditure of a large amount of capital, in order that the con-

cern may keep pace with the times. That increase of equipment would prevent them from getting interest for some time to come. At any rate, they are willing to hand over the whole of their affairs to us for a sum which will not pay more than the money they have been out of pocket, together with some little interest. I think those who really believe in the future of the colony will agree that we should grasp this opportunity. If we did not think the colony was going to make great progress, we should not embark on the projects we have approved of in the present session; and if that great development does take place, we shall be forced to acquire this railway; so that if we wait until then to acquire it, we shall have to pay a far greater price for it than is asked at the present time. We must also remember we are investing in an immense estate, an estate of nearly two and three-quarter million acres. Some hon. members may not value that estate at very much; but, for my part, I place a high value upon it, because it is attached to cheap and easy means of transit, a railway running through the heart of it; and surely with a railway running through the heart of it, and with a temperate climate, fairly good soil, and a sufficient rainfall, this land is worth something. We shall, at any rate, sell that land at 10s. per acre on deferred payments, on the same conditions as we are selling all our other lands. We will not make special regulations with regard to it, but will place the people who settle on it in the same position as all our other tenants and conditional purchasers. People will be able to select this land at 10s. per acre, payable in 20 years; and they will also have the advantage of taking up blocks under the Homestead Act, and, as I said just now, they will have the advantage of assistance from the Agricultural Bank. We have the opportunity of acquiring this property, and we should avail ourselves of it; and every hon. member who has faith in the country should accept this motion, which I have moved on behalf of the Government. If the motion is accepted to-night, I will be able, to-morrow, to inform the Agent General that the business is at an end, that the terms offered by the company have been accepted, and that it will only remain for the agreement to be made out and signed,

and the money paid over. We will then enter into possession of what I cannot help thinking is an immense estate, a principality, with a railway and everything belonging to it in working order, a going concern 242 miles in length.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: It is a matter of very great satisfaction to me, and I feel it must be a matter of satisfaction to this House, and also to the country at large, that the Government have tabled this motion. That this is a matter of public interest cannot be doubted by anyone who has entered into the question with any degree of consideration. There are only two ways of dealing with railway questions. One is that the State shall own the railway system; while the other is that the State shall have nothing to do with it, and that private companies or private persons shall own the railways. Whatever may be said in favour of the one system or the other, a mixed system is universally condemned; and for us to have a main railway such as this is, a railway linking on to our own railways, to have two systems working together is a condition of affairs that will never prove satisfactory to the country. The other question which presents itself is one of even greater importance, and that is the establishment of a colony within a colony. This is a most dangerous thing, which has worked a vast amount of mischief in the United States, and is calculated to work mischief in this country. Either this company will continue to hold possession of this land and prevent other persons occupying it, which will be a disadvantage in itself; or, if they succeed in settling this land themselves, they will practically hold control of it. What position would we be in if we had, say, 200,000 or 300,000 people settled upon the land whose interests were concentrated and held in control by a company that had no particular interests with the State? We might have very serious adverse consequences arising, as they have arisen elsewhere, and we should practically have a State within a State, and complications which perhaps we cannot even contemplate with any degree of assurance. Then, looking at the proposal to buy, we are not to consider that this land once belonged to this colony? Whether it was wise or unwise to enter upon the agreement which was made with

the company, the land has practically gone from the State; and what is proposed to be done in this motion, as I understand it, is for the State to become the owner of two and three quarter million acres of land, also to become possessed of a railway which, even on the estimate of our own engineers, would cost £650,000 to complete. I am not sure if that estimate includes rolling stock; but putting the value of the railway at £600,000, then what do we get for our money? We get a going concern that would cost us £600,000 to construct and place in its present position. Next, we get 2,700,000 acres of land, and if we were to say that 500,000 acres of that land will be absorbed under the Home-steads Act, which is not likely, we should have 2,200,000 acres of land to be disposed of at the original rate of 10s. per acre, thus producing £1,100,000. All that we are doing, therefore, is to buy back our land. We get for this £1,100,000 of purchase money a distinct asset in the shape of land which we can sell at 10s. an acre; but supposing we do not realise that much per acre, and get only 5s. an acre for it, then taking the value of the railway at £600,000, we would still have assets sufficient to cover the purchase money. As a commercial transaction, therefore, it cannot be said to be a bad bargain; and looking at it simply as a purely commercial transaction, it is clear that the State must profit largely by the purchase. Before passing from the commercial aspect of the question, I would like to remark that I have no doubt we should have to buy this railway in any case, and that there is no time in its history when we should be able to purchase it at so low a price. That we must buy it is inevitable, and we know the price must rise. If we were called upon to purchase at any future time, it would be at a disadvantage, because the company would then be selling their land, and there would be less for the State to sell. This subject also presents itself to me from another and more serious standpoint, and that is the standpoint of the settlement of the lands of this colony. We are called upon constantly, and shall be called upon, to construct railways to serve the districts of this colony, especially in the South. We have now a railway here existing, with a large area of valuable

land along it suitable for settlement, which the people are desiring to settle upon, and which they cannot settle upon under the conditions upon which the company are disposed to part with their land. The company cannot afford to sell their land at 10s. an acre; and if they did sell at that price, they could not afford to give the extended conditions and the facilities which the State can give. Consequently, we are in the position of opening up a large tract of country for early and profitable settlement. Then there is the reflex side of the commercial aspect of the question. If we succeed in settling a large number of people on this land, we make this railway increasingly profitable; and consequently we cannot fail to benefit both from the commercial standpoint and from the national standpoint of land settlement. The other question, ably dealt with by the Premier, is the social aspect. It cannot be denied that people who have business relations with this company, which has nothing in common with the ordinary interests of Western Australia, are necessarily estranged to a large extent, and do not and cannot take that interest in the Government and welfare of the country that they would take if directly responsible to the Crown. All these questions present themselves to me; and, without at all elaborating them, I put them forward as paramount reasons which call for the passing of this motion. As I said at the outset, it is a matter of great satisfaction that the Government can see their way clear to ask the House and the country to take this step. I am pleased they are able to secure this property at what I regard as an exceedingly low price, considering all the circumstances. I am pleased also to have an assurance that the railway is in good order. I was doubtful at first as to the purchase of this property, on account of the statement which was current that the whole of the line would have to be re-laid in consequence of the sleepers being defective. I have had the assurance of the Minister of Railways that that is not correct. It is circulated that a large proportion of these sleepers are absolutely rotten, and will have to be replaced; and although personally I have the assurance of the Commissioner of Railways on the subject, yet I will ask him to give us an

absolute assurance that there is no danger whatever in this particular direction. I understand that over a considerable length of this line the sleepers have been relaid, and that the railway is now in a sound condition. If that is correct, my objection will lapse; but supposing the railway did require to have a considerable amount of money expended on it, yet looking at the land question it would be difficult to over-estimate the value of the line which serves that land. Hon. members know that this railway took the whole of the foreshore of Albany, and that the company, if they chose to do a little black-mailing, or if their affairs fell under adverse management, might raise up serious difficulties, and most lamentable consequences might ensue in connection with the town of Albany, and also with the country generally. This is not a mere imaginary danger, for it is a thing that might arise at any moment; and, if it did arise, the colony would be in a most unsatisfactory position. We are not only buying the line, but are buying a going concern, and we are buying a large tract of country. We will open the land immediately alongside this railway for settlement, and thus increase the traffic on the railway, and at the same time we will be taking an important step with a view to making our railways a national system, which, to my mind, is the only system upon which we can carry on the railways of the colony. For these reasons, and without occupying more of the time of the House, I have great pleasure in supporting the motion.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I do not think many members of the House will object to the purchasing of this railway. The only question is the question of cost, and whether we are getting a fair bargain or not. That is the aspect in which the question presents itself to my mind; and I must say the Premier, in introducing this motion, has taken it for granted that we require no information. I would like to have been informed that an inventory has been taken of the rolling stock.

THE PREMIER: I told you that the railway and rolling stock had been valued at £600,000, and that the whole concern was valued by our own engineers.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: Have your own engineers examined everything?

THE PREMIER: Everything, including sheds, engines, station, and permanent way.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I did not quite understand that. I thought the sum mentioned was only a rough estimate, and that our own engineers had not gone over the rolling stock and made a careful examination before supplying the figures.

THE PREMIER: Everything has been done.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: It is satisfactory that our engineers have done this; but it would have been better if their reports had been placed on the table of the House for the information of members. I am pleased indeed to hear that the Government have taken this precaution. The remarks of the member for Nannine were rather misleading when he said we were getting such a good bargain, because we are getting three million acres of land in addition to the railway; for, in the next breath, he said the company could not sell their land at 10s. per acre.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: I said on deferred payments.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: We get the whole of this three million acres of land, and yet we are told the company cannot sell at 10s. an acre on deferred payments. I think the company know the value of their land a little better than we do. They have had long enough to find out the value of the land, and I think the company are well satisfied with the price they are to get from the Government. With regard to what the Premier said about the line now paying interest, we should not forget that it is at present managed by a private company, and that private individuals can work a railway cheaper than Government officials can do. We should not lose sight of the fact that the traffic on this line has enormously increased in consequence of the block at Fremantle; that a great deal of the goods imported now are landed at Albany, and that is the reason for the present good position of the railway. I must say I think it is the duty of the Government and of the colony to deal fairly with this company. They have carried out their contract loyally under very adverse circumstances. The value of their estate has been depreciated by the action of the present Government in reducing the value of

Crown lands and by giving land away, and also by advancing money for the making of improvements. I am not arguing against the policy of the Government in these respects, but I am pointing out that this policy has inflicted hardship on the company. When they took over that land they valued it at so much an acre, but that value has been seriously depreciated by the very liberal land regulations since introduced by the Government. As a matter of justice I think that, if we can possibly get a reasonable bargain, we ought to take over this property from the company. We are going pretty fast, this session, it seems to me. We are talking now of millions of pounds, where a few years ago we talked of hundreds. During this session of Parliament we have increased our national debt to the extent of something like seven and a half millions of money. This money is not yet expended, but it will soon be expended, and this seven and a half millions will be followed next session by other millions, and in course of time, the people who remain on the land will have to pay the piper.

THE PREMIER: You don't really believe that.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I shall take good care, myself, that my portmanteau is packed up in time. The Premier says the Government are crowded out of Albany and cannot get land for public purposes; but, on the other hand, it should not be forgotten that the Government are resuming land all over the colony for public purposes. To say the Government have no land at Albany is no argument in favour of the purchase of the railway, for they could purchase land there, as they have had to do at Perth and Fremantle. With regard to the deferred payments which the Premier made rather a point of, I do not suppose that, when the Government take over this railway, they are going to compel these people to pay up the deferred payments just as the tenants would have to pay them to the company.

THE PREMIER: I clearly said the contrary.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: With regard to the other land, you said you were entitled to the deferred payments.

THE PREMIER: I said the people would not have to pay the company.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: They paid the company, but they will not pay you.

THE PREMIER: Yes, they will, at the rate of 10s. an acre.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: I take it there will be some compromise, so that the lessees of the company will be placed on the same footing as the lessees of the Crown in other parts of the colony; and I do not think we can make much of the point that 250,000 acres have been sold on deferred payments.

THE PREMIER: There will be something to receive, any way.

MR. R. F. SHOLL: There is one thing, in purchasing this railway, that I do not like, and it is that it is the forerunner of the purchase of the Midland Railway. I think that is sticking out; and whatever sympathy I may have with this company, who have carried out their obligations loyally, I have none for the Midland Company. I do not oppose this motion, but I should certainly oppose the purchase of the Midland Railway. In buying the Great Southern line we get a fair bargain, and do not want to screw the company down to any bargain that would not be fair.

MR. LOTON: The contract for the making of this railway was entered into 11 years ago, when the circumstances of the colony were very different from what they are now, and we had a very small population. The main reason actuating members at that time, in assenting to the contract, was that it was felt we were not in a position to go into the money market and borrow sufficient capital to construct this railway. We felt that a private company would carry on the railway more economically than the Government could do; and there is no doubt that, looking at what it would have cost the country to make the line, it would have involved the colony in a very serious liability, as the line has not been paying any interest on the outlay for its construction during the last seven or eight years. Therefore, although we recognise now that the policy we followed when this line was made, is not one we should follow now. Yet it should be recognised that this policy was not unsound. While the company have, I believe, carried out their obligations in regard to the railway, we hoped, when the contract for this land-grant railway was made, the company, being an English

one, would be able to settle people from the old country upon the territory that was ceded to them, and that the land grants would be cultivated and developed. But in this respect we must all regret that the company have lamentably failed. To my mind, they have never attempted to make a success of land settlement, because they placed such a high value upon these lands that people could neither buy nor lease them. It is to be remembered, so far as the working of the railway is concerned, that there is no necessity for the Government to purchase this line, because if the trains are not run in accordance with the agreement, the Government have the right to step in and work the railway. We have not only the right to work the railway, in default of the company doing so, but we can inflict a fine of £100 per day for such default, although I think it would take a smart lawyer to collect the money. But although, as I have said, we are under no obligation to purchase the railway, and although the train service must be maintained by the company, it seems to me that, as long as the line is in private hands, there will be no settlement or development of the land grants; and therefore we are buying the line in order to get these lands into our own possession, to make them part of the public estate of Western Australia. I imagine that the Engineer-in-Chief's estimate of what it would cost to make this line at the present time, namely, £600,000, is a fair one. The line cost close upon a million of money, but at that time the cost of railway construction was higher than it is at the present time. Say it would cost £600,000 for the line and equipment at the present time, we shall get also the two and three-quarter millions of acres of land; but I am afraid that, to a certain extent, some of the best of this land has been sold under conditional purchase. The Premier has told us that 83,129 acres have been conditionally purchased, and we may assume that of the remainder of the quarter of a million acres which the company have disposed of, 180,000 acres have been sold outright. [THE PREMIER: Yes.] Therefore we shall not have the best land to take over. But the lowest estimate of the value of the land we shall get back is 5s. per acre; and if it were selected under the regulations of the Lands

Department, on deferred payment, it would bring sixpence per acre for twenty years, or 10s. per acre. But taking the land to be worth only 5s. per acre, we shall, if the line is worth £600,000, get value for our money, and over and above that we shall get control of this land which has been locked up. I do not think there will be a dissentient voice on the question of buying the line. The company have had the land grants for eleven years, and have not settled them. They have wanted too much money for them, and that is the reason they make us this offer. If the company could deal with the lands at a profit, you may depend upon it they would not come to the Government of West Australia to buy their railway from them. The member for the Gascoyne appears to be afraid of the Midland line being purchased; but if that could be done in this session, it would be one of the best things that ever happened to this country. The Midland Company are just going on in the same way as the Great Southern Company, for they are doing nothing practical with the land, and the condition of the people upon it could not be worse. We had some hopes that the Governor of Victoria was going to buy 50,000 acres of the land, but I fear he has changed his mind. During the eleven years the company have had the land between Beverley and Albany, they have practically done nothing with it; and even the pastoral lessees, who used to occupy this tract of country when it belonged to the Crown, and which ought to feed 40,000 or 50,000 sheep, have had to give up their holdings because they could get no security of tenure, and their rents have been greatly increased. I should be glad, indeed, if this House were in a position to acquire the Midland Railway under the terms of that agreement. As one who had something to do with the framing of the original agreement between the Government and the Great Southern Company, I cordially support the motion before the House.

THE COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS (Hon. F. H. Piessé): I think no more important subject has come before the House this session than the motion now before us, not excepting the Loan Bill and the Coolgardie Waterworks Bill. I may say that, in bringing

forward this motion, the Government ask Parliament to emancipate at least 5,000 people who, for a period of eleven years, have been under the government of the Great Southern Company; that is to say, they have had a foreign landlord, and were not able to participate in the liberal regulations of the Lands Department, or in any of the concessions which have been granted to holders of land under the Crown. The Great Southern Railway runs through three of the largest electorates of the colony, one of which I have the honour to represent; and I may say the people residing in those districts will hail, with the greatest satisfaction, the passing of this motion, for it will enable them to enjoy the advantages and privileges of our land laws, and of the Agricultural Bank Act, from the benefits of which, up to the present time, they have been shut out. Neither have they had any voice in the management of the railway, its freights, time-table, or such matters as the provision of cold storage. In regard to the railway itself, it has been stated that the line is not in good condition; but we have the report of one of our engineers to show that the railway is in good condition. Of course there were some defective sleepers, which I have no doubt are to be found in every line; but most of them have been replaced, and consequently the line is almost in a new state again. I think the way in which the train service has been carried out affords proof that the line must be in a pretty fair state. With regard to the rolling stock, it has been well kept, and the Locomotive Superintendent of my department tells me the rolling stock is in excellent condition. No doubt some of the locomotives, owing to the great strain placed on them during the last twelve months, will need minor repairs; but the locomotives are of the best make and type, as you will admit when I tell you they are all by the renowned firm of Beyer, Peacock, & Co., who are so full of orders that we cannot indent from them at the present time. The buildings of the Great Southern Railway Company are also in good order. As the Premier has pointed out, the foreshore of the harbour at Albany belongs to the company, and will be acquired with this purchase. It has been a very sore point with the people of Albany that the fore-

shore should be in the hands of the company; and those who have watched the course of events will remember the part taken in connection with this matter by our late lamented friend, Mr. De Hamel, as far back as five years ago, when this important subject which has caused so much trouble was prominently before the public. Now, under the conditions of this purchase, the foreshore is released, which will be a great benefit to the town of Albany, and will enable us to connect the town jetty with the railway, and give us possession of the harbour. It will also enable us to further extend our railway system and provide extensive storage accommodation for the Customs Department, in view of the increasing business that will be done at the port of Albany when the Great Southern line belongs to the Government. We shall also have room for locomotive shops, and when all the improvements are carried out they will be of great advantage to the port of Albany. The increase that has taken place in the traffic over the line during the last six months is very satisfactory, and the current half-year should furnish still better returns owing to the large number of people who are travelling to the Eastern colonies during the December quarter. In regard to what has been said about the land sold by the company, I would point out that a large proportion of what has been alienated is held under conditional purchase, the deferred payments for which, up to 10s. per acre, the price of conditional purchases from the Crown, will be payable to the Treasurer during the remaining 13 years of the deferred payments. Although, as some hon. members have pointed out, some of the best land granted to the company has been parted with, there are still many thousands of acres of the most valuable blocks available, for the reason that the company wanted such a high price for them that selectors could not take them up. This has especially been the case at Wagin, where, out of the 250,000 acres in the fertile tract belonging to the company, only 20,000 acres have been selected. The whole of that land is of good agricultural quality, and will be rapidly settled now that it is to be in the hands of the Crown. The land at Katanning, too, comes back to us, because the com-

pany wanted £2 per acre for it, at which price my own firm bought some; but no doubt there were others who would have liked to take up some of this excellent piece of country, but had not enough money to pay for it. There is one thing which the Premier omitted to mention, namely, that the purchase money of £1,100,000 includes 100 wagons and four saloon carriages, which have been ordered, and are to be taken over by us when they arrive. The value of this rolling stock is about £10,000; so that it is a fairly good asset in connection with the purchase. The Premier pointed out that the three-quarters receipts of this year from the Great Southern Railway amounted to about £55,000; and as the December quarter is the best of the year, we may expect to receive £20,000, making about £75,000 for the whole year, owing to the increase in the passenger traffic that always takes place in the last quarter of the year. I wish to point out that we shall be able to deal with a much larger traffic on the line than the company have been able to do, as they have been short of rolling stock, and unable to take full advantage of the increase in the goods traffic, which I am very glad to see, and which I hope will continue. We intend to relieve the pressure of the goods traffic at Fremantle more than we were able to do while the Great Southern line was in private hands, and we shall receive a great deal of cargo from the port of Albany. I hope the jealousy between Fremantle and Albany, which I believe has been due to the fact that Albany has not been looked upon as a port of the colony while the foreshores were owned by the railway company, will now cease to exist. I hope the people of the colony will benefit from Albany becoming, in the fullest sense, a port of the colony, and that the people of Albany will also be benefited. I may say that, when the purchase of the line was first mooted, the people of Albany were not favourable to the project, because they feared that out of regard for centralisation and the interests of Perth and Fremantle, the train service would be reduced; but they have come to know how groundless are their fears in that direction, and to look upon the matter in the right light. When the orders now issued for supplies of rolling stock are executed, we shall be better able

to deal with the traffic than we are now ; and in spite of what has been said of the company being able to work the line more economically than the Government, we shall endeavour to keep the working expenses below what the company have done. They have worked the line with 51 per cent. of working expenses, while we have worked our railways at 49 per cent. ; but, of course, we have had exceptional advantages. Taking into consideration the improved service that we shall introduce, I do not expect we shall do it under 50 per cent. of working expenses. I hope we shall be able to carry out that service for 60 per cent. or thereabouts, for the first year, until we get into the running. I do not see why we should not be able to do it. One thing was mentioned by the member for Nannine, that if we did not buy this railway now we should have to buy it at a much greater price at a future time. I am confident that is so ; and although the purchase price now agreed upon may appear a large sum to pay for this railway and the lands of the company, still the payment of this amount would be increased probably 25 per cent. if the purchase were left over for another year or two. If we believe the country is going to make the progress we hope it will, then this railway must become still more valuable to us as time goes on ; and by even admitting that the mail steamers may not continue to call at Albany, as it is said they are willing to call at Fremantle, and even admitting that the port of Esperance will be opened up and considerably improved, still there will be a large traffic through the port of Albany. If we are going to advance as we are now doing, and as we hope to do, there is a great future for Albany ; and by having this railway in our hands we shall be able to deal with the immense traffic there. If we had left this bargain a few months longer, we should have had to pay another £250,000 for acquiring the company's property ; and it is better not to risk the annoyance and delays we should have to put up with if the company held this railway any longer. With regard to the rate of interest, it has been pointed out that we shall be able to obtain sufficient from the railway revenue to pay the working expenses and the interest on the capital, and that, I think, has been proved to-night. I am sure hon. members

are satisfied on that point. Most hon. members are perhaps quite satisfied with what has been said, and I need not trouble you with any more points ; but as you know, it is proposed to build a railway from Pinjarrah to Marradong, and that this line will probably connect with the Great Southern Railway at some convenient point ; therefore, looking at the fact that it will be desirable at some future time to connect the Marradong Railway with the Great Southern Railway, I say if we did not possess this railway we could not, in fairness, carry a railway near the line of this company, because we should be taking away some of their business, and if we found it desirable to connect with their line, we should be connecting with the line of a foreign company. We have also to look to our mineral resources in that extensive district, and I may say that geologists have expressed the opinion that the district of the Great Southern Railway is worth prospecting, but there is no inducement given to prospectors for minerals in that district, under the conditions laid down by this company. But if we possessed the railway and the lands adjacent to it, and if inducements were offered similar to the liberal inducements offered in other mineral districts of the colony, there would be inducements for prospectors to look for minerals in that extensive district. Taking everything into consideration, I think it is wise that the House should agree to the purchase of the railway and lands of this company ; and I think it is admitted by all hon. members who have expressed opinions on the question in this debate that we are doing the right thing in taking over this property, and I am sure the country will be quite satisfied with the result, as far as the working of the railway is concerned. I have given you the history of the settlement from time to time ; but I would like to point out again that it has often been said the country through which this railway passes has not been settled as rapidly as it might be. I have said there are quite 5,000 people between Beverley and Albany, and most of them are living along the railway and deserve consideration from the Government. That consideration can be given in no better way than by this House agreeing to the motion which has been submitted by the

Premier, by which you will emancipate the people throughout that district. I leave the matter in the hands of the House, and I think hon. members will deal fairly with the subject, and will approve of the motion.

MR. LEFROY: The important matter embodied in this motion has such an interest for me, as hon. members know, that I need not apologise for the few remarks I have to make at this late hour. I cannot help feeling pleased that the negotiations which have been pending between the Great Southern Railway Company and the Government, for some time past, have apparently reached this position, that the Government are able to bring forward this motion for the consideration of hon. members. My opinion with regard to land-grant railways is well known to hon. members, as I have expressed it on more than one occasion in this House. I have always been of opinion that this policy of building railways on the land-grant system would be found to be a mistake. I have felt that in many instances a company would, in such a case, first ruin the people along the line and then ruin themselves. In this instance, this opinion appears to have come true, for we have heard that many settlers have been obliged to leave their holdings along the line of the Great Southern Railway, abandoning the pastoral areas they had leased from the Government, and have had to sell their flocks and herds and retire, because the conditions required by this company would not permit them to carry on their occupation with success. Now the company are not exactly ruined, but at any rate their work is ruined, and they have to sell out to others. I was pleased to hear this evening the sympathy expressed by hon. members on both sides of the House, more especially from the Treasury bench, with regard to the people who occupy positions along this railway and in the country which it is proposed to purchase. We have heard one member on the Treasury bench say these people expect to be emancipated—a word used, I believe, only with regard to slavery—he says these people expect to be emancipated by the passing of this motion for authorising the purchase of the Great Southern Railway and the lands of the company. It may well be under-

stood what my feelings have been, when I addressed hon. members with regard to acquiring a tract of country and the railway running through it, held under similar conditions in another part of the colony. I am glad to hear that the Premier realises that the people of the country between Beverley and Albany are under foreign landlords. I am pleased that he realises that fact; and I hope that, within a short time, he will be able to bring negotiations to the same stage they have reached here, as regards that other question which, as hon. members know, is very dear to my heart. I hope the Premier will have the same kind of pleasure, on a future occasion, in submitting a motion to this House embodying the same principle in regard to another land-grant railway company. I believe the advantage to the colony will be great, for I think that, under the Government, a large settlement will take place on this country, and that a large number of people there will be added to the producers and the consumers among our population. There is one thing I should like to see done in regard to the Great Southern Railway and lands, and it is that, if it were possible, the money we shall derive from the sale of those lands which are being taken over from the company should be invested in some way, so as to repay the principal of the amount borrowed for the purchase. I should like to see some system established by which that can be done, because it must be remembered that we do not inherit those lands or that railway, and we are not heirs to the estate we are purchasing. I think it is the duty of the country to see that we are in a position to pay the interest annually, and repay the principal within a given time. Therefore, if it were possible, it would be well if some arrangement could be made by which money that came in from the sale of land should be placed at interest and deposited, so as to repay the principal of this amount. I am pleased there is so much unanimity of opinion with regard to this matter; and I cannot help offering my congratulations to the people who live along this railway on the fact that this motion has now come before the House, and that they will, before to-morrow morning, have flashed to them the news

that it has passed through the Legislative Assembly.

MR. RANDELL: As a member of the select committee who, many years ago, had this matter before them, I rise only to say that, with a good deal of pleasure, I find we have arrived at this point, though I did think we should have been a considerably longer time in arriving at it. We should remember, in these changing circumstances of the colony, that if the railway from Beverley to Albany had not been constructed on the land-grant system, we should not have been likely to construct a railway through that country so early as it has been done. I look back with satisfaction at the part I took in that select committee, in trying to secure for the country the best possible terms in its interests; and, as the Premier will remember, we had a hard fight in securing what we did, for protecting the interests of the country, inasmuch as some members of the committee were desirous of giving everything. However, after the very able and lucid explanation of all the circumstances we have had from the Premier on this occasion, there is no need for any lengthy remarks; because I think it is satisfactory that we are getting back into our own hands this very important work, and we may expect that the coming back of these lands under our own control will be fraught with very beneficial consequences to the whole colony. I trust such may be the case, and that we shall not regret the step we are about to take in agreeing to the purchase of this property. I believe the House is unanimous that it is in the interests of this country the purchase should be made, and I think the price to be paid is a high one, yet for the good of the country it should be paid. I do not think this House or the country desires to drive a hard bargain with people who have had to contend with difficulties ever since the inception of the work and the formation of the company.

MR. CLARKSON: I have very much pleasure in supporting the motion, and I hope the time is not far distant when we shall have an opportunity of supporting a motion to the same effect in regard to the Midland Railway. There is no getting away from the fact that these companies have not done what the colony expected

of them; that they have not settled the lands. The W.A. Land Company have not settled people along their railway, and I am glad to have an opportunity of supporting a motion for buying them out.

MR. SOLOMON: I am glad to be able to support this motion, for I think it is one of the most important motions of the session. There is, no doubt, a great deal of dissatisfaction caused by the management of this railway. I feel it my duty, in a matter like this, to give the Government my support, as the proposal is one which will be unanimously accepted by the people.

MR. GEORGE: I shall support the motion.

Motion put and passed, without dissent.

Ordered, that the resolution be transmitted to the Legislative Council, for their concurrence.

AUSTRALASIAN FEDERATION ENABLING BILL.

THIRD READING.

Bill read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

LOANS CONSOLIDATION BILL.

The House went into committee to consider the Bill.

IN COMMITTEE.

THE PREMIER (Hon. Sir J. Forrest) said there were certain amendments to be made in the Bill, and perhaps it would be convenient if the Bill were reported, and ordered to be re-printed with the amendments. He moved accordingly.

MR. R. F. SHOLL asked whether the Premier was in order in moving as he had done. The House had gone into committee to consider a Bill which was not ready. If some of the figures were wrong, it might happen that many others of them were wrong.

Question put and passed.

Bill reported, with amendments agreed to in committee *pro forma*.

Ordered, that the Bill be reprinted with the amendments, and be reconsidered in committee at the next sitting of the House.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10-29, p.m., until next day.